PAT FOOTE INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Pat Foote
U.S. Army General
5/23/2011
Interviewed by Betsy West
Total Running Time: XX minutes and XX seconds

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America

Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Pat Foote

U.S. Army General

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BETSY WEST:

General Foote, I want to talk to you a little bit about your childhood and upbringing. Tell me a little bit about how you were brought up in your family

and maybe in retrospect, how that prepared you for what you wound up doing in your life?

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PAT FOOTE:
I was born in Durham, North Carolina in 1930. The youngest and the only daughter in the family. I had two older brothers. My parents, Henry A. Foote, was a printer in Durham. My mother, until I started the first grade, was a stay at home mom with all of us. And when I started the first grade, she went to work at the American Tobacco Company.

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So we were latchkey kids during those years. We had a couple who lived at our home, to help take care of us to help keep us out of too much mischief.

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Pat Foote & Her Brother

PAT FOOTE:
But generally speaking, my brothers were required, older Henry Jr, to watch Richard, the middle, to watch me. So my position on the hierarchy was at the very bottom and I spent my whole youth fighting those two for my little piece of space in the world.

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I didn't have many little girl friends in Durham, North Carolina at that time. We lived out in the country, or relatively in the country, and there were no young girls around who could be my playmate so, whatever sport my brothers were playing, then I played. If it was football, baseball, whatever, I filled in. So I got to play with them.

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BETSY WEST:
How did they treat you? Were they okay to you?

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PAT FOOTE:
Most of the time, but there were times where it got to be bare-knuckle time with us. But we tried to keep it from my family that we were doing this. My mother tried desperately to make a little lady out of me, dressing me up in little frilly dresses on Easter with patent leather shoes and pink socks. She did that Easter Sunday morning I remember and then while I was- while she was getting dressed, I got on my tricycle in the hall, rode it straight down the hall and down two flights of stairs,-

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-out the back, into a mud puddle and she came out and I was just sitting there. So I did not have my new dress for Easter Sunday that day. I was rambunctious. I was more like a little boy than a little girl because they were my role models. My older brother, of course, tolerated both of us, barely. He

was six years older than I was and four years older than Dick. And Dick and I always have been closer in age, temperament, everything else.

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But we lived in Durham. You can imagine during the depression years, we did not have a lot of money, but my mother and dad both worked. We always had a roof over our heads. We always had a pot of beans on the stove. We had something to eat. A place to sleep and we never considered ourselves deprived of anything. During WWII, my dad took a great chance.

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He was recruited by the government printing office to come to Washington to work, and- which would have quadrupled his salary immediately if not more so. And as much as he did not want to leave the family behind, he did it for the financial security involved, so he came up a year ahead of my mother, who then followed to work at the FBI.

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And my brother and I stayed back in North Carolina with my aunt and uncle. My older brother Bill was out in Vallejo, California working at a naval shipyard. So we came into Washington towards the tag end of WWII.

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BETSY WEST:
Did that open up your horizons in some way?

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PAT FOOTE:
Oh yeah. I hated it at first. I absolutely hated leaving Durham and all my friends because by the time I got in junior high school, I had a group of girl friends and that was so neat. I'll tell a little story. My mother stopped me from playing football. We were playing touch football. One day, my brother and his gang and me, when she realized that I was the only member on the team being tackled. So that ended my football career right then and there. I had to go to other pursuits.

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BETSY WEST:
How old were you?

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PAT FOOTE:
I was about thirteen. Twelve or thirteen. But she looked out the window and said, "Mhm." And so my football career ended there, about twelve or thirteen. But I was really quite outgoing and, full of adventure. Always loved adventure.

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BETSY WEST:
Did you feel… You know, other than some of these stories that you told, in any way restricted because you were a girl?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well yeah. There was no question there were constraints on what we could and could not participate in as girls in school, and what opportunities we would have. There was a math professor I have never- not a professor, he was a teacher in junior high school,-

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-that I've never forgiven because he poisoned the minds of every girl who came into his math classes by telling us we were a waste of time in his class, we shouldn't be there, and we didn't know how to learn math in the first place. That was not a good way to start off. So there was bias against some of the courses we could take.

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BETSY WEST:
How would that make you feel?

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PAT FOOTE:
Angry. Very, very angry because I loved math. I had excelled in algebra. I loved it. I wanted to go on with geometry and higher orders of math, but Mr. Jones just did not see fit to let us in his class. So that bothered me.

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BETSY WEST:
It's kind of amazing to think of that now, that a teacher could get away with saying something like that.

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PAT FOOTE:
Oh, I know. And to stop and think we were all herded towards home economics. We had to go learn how to sew and how to cook. And I really didn't care about that. My mother sewed beautifully. I'm a miserable seamstress and she taught me everything I wanted to know about cooking. That was when she would trap me as I was running through the house, throw me up on the stool and tell me to, "Sit there, we're going to make biscuits."

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So I learned how to do a lot of these things. I didn't want home-ec, but I had to take it, because I was a girl.

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BETSY WEST:
So tell me about, being a working woman in the 1950s. What was that like?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, you know I went to Wake Forest—what was then Wake Forest College—and I worked the first year after I graduated from high school,

because I graduated right after my 17th birthday. Was flat broke, even though the University of Maryland had accepted me. But I realized, because my parents couldn't afford to send me either, that I had to work and save some money. So I went to work at the FBI for a full year.

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And I worked as many hours as they would let me, ten hours a day, until they realized that I was only 17 years old and then they cut me back to eight hours a day and took me off the night shift, which I had wheedled my way onto 'cause they made more money. But during that year at the FBI, 1947, 48, my salary was a total annual salary of $1980, of which I saved a $1000.

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BETSY WEST:
What was your job?

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PAT FOOTE:
My job, I was a GS-2 File Clerk. Miserably boring job. I had to go and research applications for security clearances of people to see if there were any indications that they had been engaged in subversive activities. That was during the height of the House Un-American Activities Committee work. So I would sit there night after night, going through all these stacks and applications and write up the findings that I found.

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But- and it was during the years that John Edgar Hoover was the director. I can remember a couple of times standing there to get on the elevator and suddenly here comes the director and Clyde Tolson, his deputy. And all traffic stops, they get the elevator to themselves and away they go. But he was the was the ruling czar of the FBI in those years and had very, very stringent rules as to what men and women could wear,-

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-where they could walk on the streets even. We couldn't walk up Ninth Street in Washington then, because there were....

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BETSY WEST:
"We" meaning?

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PAT FOOTE:
The girls. The women. There were burlesque theaters up there. The men were discouraged from walking up there also, and Lord help you if you got a driving under the influence ticket or were found drunk. You'd be fired immediately. It was... It was kind of constrained, to say the least.

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BETSY WEST:
What about your opportunities?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, there were no women agents in those days, a special agent. A woman could not aspire to that at all. A woman could aspire to heading the typing pool or being a chief clerk, maybe making it up to a GS grade 7. But that was as high as a woman would ever get in the FBI. But that first year I was only a GS-2, then I went to Wake Forest with my $1000,-

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-and while there got a job as a waitress in town working forty hours a week, for which I was paid $11 a week and two meals. But that plus the thousand got me through that first year of college.

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BETSY WEST:
You get out of college, then what?

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PAT FOOTE:
Then I came back to Washington, lived at home, paid room and board for my parents, went to George Washington University for my sophomore year, worked as a grocery storage clerk, and then went back after the two years, then I realized that I really should go back to the FBI and when I did, I was a GS-4. So I had advanced two grades. Probably made $2500 by then.

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But I went back to work to earn enough money to go back to Wake Forest, I really wanted to go there. And I did, to complete my junior and senior years and, then I came home full of myself. Took me six years to get it, but I had a bachelors degree in sociology, a minor in psychology and Spanish—a weird combo but that's what I had—thinking full well that it would get me a very good job in Washington.

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And every place I went for interviews, the only thing they wanted to know was, "Can you type?" And no, I could not type and if I could, I wouldn't have told them anyhow. I was vowed I was not going to be a secretary or a typist in any job. The glass ceiling was down around our ankles. There at the FBI, you were prohibited. I left there went to work at the Washington Daily News as a copy girl. And I had to write byline articles.

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I had to produce, in my spare time, byline articles that would be published in the paper. I used to go sit in Ernie Pyle's old desk at the Washington Daily News and get inspiration. But I wrote twenty-plus byline articles and then the managing editor offered me a staff-reporting job to write about foods and fashion. I said, "No, I don't want to write about foods and fashion. I want national news, sports, anything, but not foods and fashion."

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So I left there and had a very brief stint as the director of public relations for Grayline Sightseeing in Washington. And it took me about two months to

realize that although I enjoyed writing, I don't like writing commercially and I don't like selling tickets for bus tours, that type of thing. So I left, went to the Group Hospitalization Incorporated, Blue Cross Blue Shield.

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Within the year, was the enrollment secretary for the sales department. So I had 18 salesmen to run and a manager, but I could not be a salesman and I could not be a manager. So that was the environment in the '50s, at which time I met the first woman I'd ever met in uniform. Wonderful lady, she was the captain in the army at that time.

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Met her at a picnic and in that time, I was already actively seeking employment abroad with USIA, the US Information Agency, as a Foreign Service officer. The application was well under way. But at the picnic, I asked the captain what the Department of Army might have to offer a civilian abroad. And she said, "I don't know but I'll get some material together and bring it to you." And she did.

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And she snuck a booklet in there on the Direct Commission Program for the Women's Army Corps. And I was leafing through it and reading it. Oh, a very select publication, showing a beautiful young woman sitting in a convertible bracketed by two handsome young men—a red convertible at that, as the Executive wanted, pitched. And being twenty-nine years old, I think, “This is all hokum. This is not basic training by any means.”

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But I went ahead and read it and I said, “The first advantage is as a woman in the military, I get the same pay a male lieutenant would get from the start.” The very same pay. Miserable pay, yes. But equal. So I said, “That's a leg up. That's good.” Pay and benefits, thirty days leave, free medical, and the opportunity to travel, and leadership training, I read it all,-

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-but the line that captured me was a line emblazoned boldly that said, "WAC officers do not type." Okay, that sold me. So I raised my hand for two years. Incidentally the lady, who I first met as a soldier, remains a wonderful friend today. She's 87 years old, retired colonel. Her name is Julia Elizabeth Ledbetter and at the age of 21,-

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-in WWII, she was a member of the Women's Air Force Service Pilots flying B17s, B25s, P38s from the factory to the army field and hitch hiking back and picking up more and taking them. They finally—I believe it was around 1975—were given credit for their service, military credit for their service,-

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-and last year, I went to Congress when the Congressional Gold Medal was awarded to the members of the WASP who were still alive, and I went representing Julia Ledbetter. Got her medal and delivered it to her down in Newport News, Virginia.

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BETSY WEST:

What did everybody think about you joining the military?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, all my friends thought I was out of my mind. My mother and father who, when two years earlier I had explored the possibility of joining the Navy—I always liked ships and oceans and stuff—but the Navy at that time was certainly not putting women aboard any ships unless they were hospital ships and you were a medical personnel. So at the age of 29, when I finally decide I'm going to apply, I did it all on my own.

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I had my own commissioning board. I went to Fort Holabird, Maryland in Baltimore for the commissioning board. I did the physical. I did everything and then the letter came telling me I would be appointed a first lieutenant, first rather than second because of my age and supervisory work experience. And I took the letter and sent it home with my parents and said, "I'm joining the army."

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And my mother and dad who had really opposed my going into the Navy, just kind of blinked at me. And my mother looked at me, she said, "Well, if I were twenty-five years younger, I'd probably do the same thing." So I said, "Well, why did you fight me?" Because they didn't want me to leave home. I was still living at home at that time and it was time to go.

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BETSY WEST:
What did people in general think about women who went into the military? What were the feelings about…

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
Pat Foote On Recruiting Duty
Portland, Oregon, 1962

PAT FOOTE:
Well, they were negative. Much of it generated by some terribly adverse publicity in World War II. There was total propaganda, and the general sensing of the public hearing from the men who were in the military, or reading the leery books that would be out and about women in uniform assumed you would either a prostitute or a lesbian if you joined the service, which was the furthest thing from the truth it could have been.

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In WWII, some of the most qualified individuals to serve were the women who came into all of the various services. Many of them, were they had been deans in colleges, PhD's, presidents of colleges, women very well educated who came in to fill the ranks and to the point where in World War II over 400,000 women served. But the negative publicity hung around for quite a long time.

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BETSY WEST:
What was that about?

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PAT FOOTE:
We were intruding in a man's world. That's what it was all about. In 1901 and 1908 respectively, the Army Nurse Corps and then the Navy Nurse Corps were formed, based on the experience truly from the Civil War, the Crimean War and the Spanish American War, that these women were skilled and their services were needed in the military.

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But when they formed the corps, the women were given comparable rank but not equal rank of the men. They were not lieutenants. They were first officers or second officers. They were not given the pay or the benefits that the men had. And they did not achieve that until World War II was well under way, so we were intruding into what was very much a man's world and a lot of men didn't like it.

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To this day, the Combat Arms train by themselves. The infantry, the armor, the field artillery, although a few women do go through some field artillery training, but they can not serve in cannon field artillery because there are policies prohibiting that. Or service in ground combat.

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
Women's Army Corps Graduation
Fort McClellan, AL, July 15, 1960

BETSY WEST:
Tell me what the WAAC's was, if you could just give me a declarative sentence?

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PAT FOOTE:
The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was founded and established on May 14th, 1942 by act of Congress. President Roosevelt signed the bill, and General Marshall selected Oveta Culp Hobby, who was a very distinguished newspaper publisher, really, a very modern woman who lived in Huston, Texas, selected her to be the first director of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

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Now here's a women with no military experience, coming from producing newspapers, very much an executive, and she's given the job of not only creating a force, hopefully up to a 100,000 by the end of the first year, but finding the barracks for them, the training for them, the uniforms, and she did.

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BETSY WEST:
But when you joined, what was the WAAC?

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PAT FOOTE:
We were 18 years down the line, had survived the end of World War II, when there was a concerted effort to demobilize all of the women except the nurses from service. But Eisenhower by then, General Eisenhower was then the Chief of Staff of the Army after the war in Europe ended, and he called in the third director,-

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-a fantastic little lady named Mary Hallaren, who had the rank of colonel, stood about four feet, eleven, and told her, her job was to develop the Army legislation to continue the service of the Women's Army Corps.

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BETSY WEST:
Was the name changed?

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PAT FOOTE:

It went from Army Auxiliary Corps to Women's Army Corps by legislation a year after it was established, because up until then, the women had no medical benefits, no leave, no retirement benefits, if they got wounded or killed or anything, there was nothing to support them. So it had to become a corp, a permanent corp and it did.

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
W.A.C. Officer Training School
Fort McClellan, AL, July 15, 1960

BETSY WEST:
And when you joined, how did it compare to the others? There was the army, there was the Women's Army. How big? What was it actually?

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PAT FOOTE:
We used to call them MAC and WAC, Men's Army Core and Women's Army Core. The Men's Army Core, in the year that I joined, I was commissioned in '59, came on active duty in '60, just before the Vietnam build up began. We had 900 officers and about 11,000 enlisted women in the Women's Army Corps at that time.

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We had one woman with the rank of colonel, and she was the director of the Women's Army Corps and that was a temporary rank. Because if she completed her tour as director and left, then she reverted to a permanent rank of lieutenant colonel. Because at that time, from '42 until '67,-

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
Pat Foote With Fellow Officers

PAT FOOTE:
-the highest rank a woman officer could hold permanently was Lieutenant Colonel. The highest rank a noncommissioned officer woman could hold was E-7, Sergeant First Class by law.

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BETSY WEST:
So, how did it relate to the rest of the army? Like the WACs and the Army, what was the relationship?

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PAT FOOTE:
Most of the men of the army never served or went to WAC. The women were assigned all over the army in the non-combat groups, and usually at headquarters levels or garrison levels, but not out with the combat

battalions, brigades, companies, divisions. And they were in small companies or small detachments. Now whoever commanded that WAC detachment company, would be a woman.

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That was the only command opportunity women had from '42 until '75, actually. And, if you got to command a company, you were very lucky because most women never got to do that. The men, many of them, never even knew there was a WAC detachment there. And if we had a WAC company at Fort Belvoir or Fort Meade or wherever, generally speaking, the building was behind cyclone fence-

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-with people walking sentry duty and we'd used to say, "Well, I wonder if they're doing it to keep us in or to keep others out?" We weren't quite sure. We were of the army, but not in the army. We were very constrained in how they could utilize us too, as medics, as public affairs people, as secretaries, as typists, administrative work, but we were not across the whole spectrum of the army, and that stayed for a long time.

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BETSY WEST:
So how did your career progress?

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PAT FOOTE:

Well, when I first came in of course, I came into the WAC as a first lieutenant. It was the only way I could get into the Army. The only other way women could come in, was through the Army Nurse Corps or the medical departments if they had the professional credentials. So I came in with WAC, with only intending to stay two years. I was going to get a little leadership experience and leave and I knew from day one,-

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-I was a reservist, I was not eligible for regular army appointment, although in training I was designated the Distinguished Military Graduate, which normally would give you RA status, regular army status immediately. I couldn't have that because I was too old. So I didn't care. I'm not gonna stick around too long. So I was a reservist serving and I served in the only WAC training battalion to train enlisted women that we had.

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It was located at Fort McClellan, Alabama. And I was in Delta Company of that battalion. The only battalion where women could aspire to be a battalion commander, one at a time, for two years. So the women didn't get much experience in commanding or leading troops. I never thought I would get above the rank of captain. I thought maybe I'll stick around long enough to be a captain, and then I'm gone. But things begin to happen.

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It was in 1967, when I was in Vietnam that President Johnson signed into law a public law that modified Title 10 of the US Code, and removed the restrictions on promotion of women to be above the rank of Lieutenant

Colonel or Sergeant First Class. And made it theoretically possible for a women to be promoted to general and we said, “Oh yeah. Big chance that that'll ever happen.”

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BETSY WEST:
That’s what you said?

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PAT FOOTE:
Oh yeah. “Big chance. That will never happen on my watch. No.” In fact, it was not until 1970 that we got the first two women generals and they were both specific to positions: the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, the Chief of the Women's Army Corps.

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
Basic Training
Fort Jackson, SC, 1974

BETSY WEST:
You were going to be there for two years max?

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PAT FOOTE:

I was going to be there for two years max, and when the career assignment people came down from WAC branch in Washington to interview each of us graduating, they were nice enough to ask where would we like to be assigned. And I said, "The presidio of San Francisco, or Hawaii, or New York City at Fort Hamilton." And the officer said, "Lieutenant Foote, I'm sure you'll enjoy your assignment at Fort McClellan, Alabama."

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That's where I was assigned, to be a platoon officer in Delta Company of the WAC training battalion. Well, I had a quiet hissy fit and kicked a wall locker and everything else about that. I didn't want to stay there. It was an all female training environment, all female catteries, all female companies, and any men at Fort McClellan were on the other side of the post in the Chemical Core.

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So it was, it was a- And don't get me wrong, there was some of the best and brightest soldiers we had these women, and they trained us well, but I didn't particularly want to stay there. However, it's the best thing that ever happened to me because I was given every eight weeks, thirty-eight young women from civilian life to train in the army, to bring up. Now I was responsible for them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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And it was a revelation, but what it really told me was how much I like people work. I really enjoy training. I love the process of taking some raw kid and helping them develop the requisite skills that they need to succeed in the

Army as a soldier. And believe me, as a woman soldier, you better have some strong skills because, and they'll say it to you today even, you got to be twice as good as the man to be rated as well as he is.

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But that hooked me and then I went from there to recruiting in Portland, Oregon for three years to recruit women.

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BETSY WEST:
Tell me about going to Fort Belvoir.

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, I came to Belvoir after I completed my tour. I wanted to come back into the D.C. area and be near family after being 3,000 miles out in the boonies, but I really loved Oregon also. But when I was told that I was coming back to command the WAC detachment at Fort Belvoir, I thought, "Wow. That'll be great." So in 1964, I came back to take command of the company.

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The previous commander had been relieved weeks, months before, and a young second lieutenant was doing everything she could to hold body and soul and company together until I got there. But again, all female, ages 71 to 18. I had a number of senior noncommissioned officers, women, who had

served in WWII and through special legislation, could stay and complete 20 years of service.

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So I had about six or seven of these wonderful old soldiers in there, that scared the heck out of the 18 year olds and kept them pretty well in line. I had one of them named Master Sergeant Mildred Dryfus who wore pince-nez. Always impeccable in uniform. And the kids would see her approaching on a walk and they would stop,-

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-because they would've rolled their skirts up to make them shorter after they left the company, and they'd be standing there rolling down as fast as they could. It was great. I was at the Engineer Brigade. I was, the WAC Company for the Engineer Brigade. I worked for a guy named Benjamin Bush, a colonel and an engineer, who really didn't think he had any use for women in the army and made that point to me in our entrance interview.

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Meeting him—a rough, gruff, old soldier, tough old guy, and "he wasn't sure if women should be in the army in the first place blah blah blah blah." But you know, we brought him down with his sergeant major. We didn't have a command majors at that time, but his sergeant major. Both of them carrying swagger sticks. Like so. And they come in to inspect my company. Well, I had the Volunteer Army outlook on the company from day one.

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You want chenille bedspreads? Put a chenille bedspread on your bed. You want a throw rug on the floor, put it on the floor. You want a stuffed dog on the bed, put that stuffed dog. Hang pictures. Make it home. This is your home when you're away. And they came in and they'd never been in a barracks quite like that and the colonel, he literally too his swagger stick and beat the fool out of every stuffed animal he saw, but they weren't dusty. They were fine.

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And the sergeant major just walked through, he would look at the line up of shoes, the military shoes always first, and then the gold lamé ballet slippers and high heels, and he would be muttering expletives that I won't repeat here. But that's all he said all the way through. But after that, the WAC Company was on Colonel Bush's list to bring to which visitors were brought. Steady stream all the time.

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BETSY WEST:
Tell me about your first meeting with him.

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PAT FOOTE:
My first meeting with him, I reported in as a company commander, and my first meeting with him, was simply one to tell you, "Well, the WAC detachment is under the brigade, and I'm not sure we should have WAC's here in the first

place." They were working all over post in three commands. I only have five of the women assigned to me. They were cadre. The rest of them were assigned to other people but I was responsible for billets, rations, quarters, discipline, everything.

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Everything except their assignments. He didn't have any concept at all of what the women were doing and how they were being utilized and who they were. He'd never made the effort to go meet them. You know his wife, I will tell you this, Mrs. Bush carried a set of silver stars in her purse knowing that Benjamin was going to be promoted. And frankly because of Mrs. Bush, I think Benjamin was not promoted because she wore his rank just incredibly.

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
Pat Foote
Vietnam, June 1967

BETSY WEST:
You once found yourself in a dangerous situation in Vietnam, and kind of at an disadvantage. Tell me a little bit about that.

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PAT FOOTE:

Now I should never have gotten to Vietnam because the director of the Women's Army Corps twice turned down my application to go and serve. '65, '66. “No.” I cannot go. Women freed men for combat. “You stay back here.” It was the old World War II pitch, then the director. But when it came chance at the end of my command tour, as a captain to go to the advanced corps, which was the next educational step,-

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-I was offered either the Women's Army Corps Advanced Course or the Adjutant General's Corps Advanced Course. And I took the Adjutant General's course, because I knew full well that those men, some of whom are going back for their second and third tour, that that corps would send me to Vietnam in a heartbeat. And it did. As soon as I graduated in December, I was on orders to go to US Army Vietnam.

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BETSY WEST:
And you wanted to go?

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PAT FOOTE:
Yeah!

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BETSY WEST:

Why?

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PAT FOOTE:
Because I felt if we're getting the same pay and benefits that the men are getting, why should they have to do all the dirty work? Why couldn't we go and fill non-combat jobs there? And there were thousands of jobs that women could perform other than nursing or medical. And just because of the bias of one individual against letting women go there, it was not fair. It was not fair to the men.

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And it was that type of thing that constantly kept the men referring to us as second-class soldiers. We didn't do what they did. We didn't serve where they did. So I went to Vietnam. Got there in January of '67, was promoted to major in route, which promoted me out of the job to which they had assigned me, which had me winding up in the public affairs office at the US Army Vietnam, which is like no military public affairs office I'd ever seen.

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There were 62 people assigned at headquarters to deal with the correspondence in the country because we had over 600 of them. So it was a huge operation and we had two public affairs detachments coming in that were being assigned to us. Just a huge operation.

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BETSY WEST:
Must have been amazing…

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PAT FOOTE:
Amazing. And I was the only woman. I was assigned temporarily to be the public affairs officer because the public affairs officer was coming back to the States. Two master sergeant, males, Bill Church and Don Perkins, had a rip-roaring fit when they heard that a woman was coming to be the public affairs officer and they told Colonel Russ Meacham, who was the commander of the public affairs cell,-

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-they told him that they would go AWOL if they had to work for a woman. But needless to say we worked things out over time and they became very good friends of mine.

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BETSY WEST:
And even though you weren't—as a woman—you weren't supposed to be in combat, you did find yourself in dangerous situations.

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PAT FOOTE:

The whole year in Vietnam was a very dangerous situation for everyone, but I think particularly for the women, because not a woman came trained in the use of a firearm, equipped with a firearm, either a .45 or an M16, no combat training, no field training, no field clothing, no boots, no helmet, no flak vest, no nothing.

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In a country where the combat zone was 360 degrees around you.

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BETSY WEST:
And did you find yourself in particularly hairy situations?

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PAT FOOTE:
Oh, yeah. I had one of the few jobs in the country as a woman, which had me traveling to both core tactical zones, every division, every separate brigade, as part of the public affairs team to help, or accompanying correspondents who were going out. So, but I'd go out wearing my lightweight nurse's fatigues.

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I had scrounged combat boots, the jungle boots, so I have a couple of pairs of those. I had a soft baseball cap, like we like to wear. I had my camera. I had what I call my M16 purse. I had no weapon. I had a tape recorder and that

was my equipment. No helmet, no flak vest, no weapon, no training, no nothin',-

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-which really angered me because I felt that we were a detriment to any unit to which we were- where we went and visited. When we- the incident, the particularly hairy incident we're talking about was a time when I was out with my boss Russ Meacham, Glenn Canon, the public affairs officer and me, and we were at An Khe at the headquarters of the 4th Infantry Division.

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We went by helicopter up to a field artillery, literally blown out of the jungle, site, nine miles from the Cambodian border. And that field artillery battalion was up there to draw the North Vietnamese across the border to attack them. So, in we whip on a “Huey,” a helicopter, clipping triple canopy jungle all the way in,-

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-bounced in it, went underground in bunkers immediately to meet the commander of the battalion and the staff. And those guy were sitting there with bandoliers across their chests and grenades hanging off their shoulders. And I looked and I said, "This is insane. We should not be up here, we're a detriment." And when I got, when we finally got- and no, there were no incidents, but I had a young man with me, a young spec 4 who was in charge of watching that woman,

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-and we were out walking around the area and they had these quad-40 guns, mighty canons that they were. And I told this young man, "You better be ready to show me how to fire these if we have too." He said, "Not to worry, ma'am. Not to worry." So we put women in very dangerous positions there, and I came back and I was just mad as a wet hen and sent some word back to Washington.

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"Look at what we're doing. Look at what we're doing." Also to General Westmoreland, that we have got to ensure that if we're bringing any man or woman into this theater, that they come properly equipped and properly trained. That really did not happen until Desert Shield, Desert Storm.

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BETSY WEST:
During the '60s, during Vietnam, you were there, obviously the anti-war movement, but more particularly the women's movement started to roil at home. And I'm wondering if you have a memory of when you first started hearing about the women's movement, and then how it impacted the military.

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PAT FOOTE:
Yeah, I began really tuning in on what was happening in the '60s when *The Feminine Mystique* came out, Betty Freidan's book. And I said, now this book's going to be a revelation to most women who read it because it hit right on the

head, the nail, about why there was restless discontent in some people who wanted it all. They wanted not only to be wives and mothers, have families, but they wanted careers.

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They wanted something more than taking care of children for 20 years. In this timeframe also, we knew that with the change in legislation, with the removal not only of promotion constraints, but size constraints on the Women's Army Corps, we knew that we would be increasing the number of women too.

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We knew that we were moving towards a time, especially aware of that in the late '60s and the beginning of the '70s, that the Volunteer Army was coming and the draft was going to end. So the obvious immediate source for additional manpower, to speak, was womanpower. My whole career was, was a series of steps up of accidental assignments that I was never supposed to have in the first place.

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I was never supposed to be a battalion commander because they only had one battalion, and I wouldn't get it because I was a reservist. I wasn't gonna last more than twenty years as a reservist. I wasn't going to do this, I wasn't going to go to the Army or college. I wasn't going to go to commander general staff college. All of these were, "No. You're not gonna do these things because of your circumstance." And all of them happened. "And you're not gonna get your masters degree." And it happened.

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But what was really happening was the military itself was beginning to wake up to see that the women managed as a separate entity could not be sustained in that form in a volunteer force. We promoted against each other, we assigned against each other, and the Women's Army Corps mission was simply to preserve itself in the event we had to mobilize again and we need a great number of women to train.

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It would be the training base for women who came after. But the times, they were a-changing. So, we get up to the '70s, and Anna Mae Hays becomes the first woman general, is Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, and Elizabeth Hoisington at the same ceremony, is the second one, then we know things are going to begin happening. We had a wonderful general named Bob Gard. He went on to be a third star.

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Very, very supportive of women and he used to come popping down the hall in the Women's Army Corps section with his blouse unbuttoned all the way, eating a box of popcorn and he would stick his head in the director of WAC's office and say, “We're gonna get rid of ya. You're gonna go. You're gonna have to compete with the men on everything. School, promotion, da da da… It's gonna happen.” And colonel- I mean, the general would get a little bit upset about that. But it was gonna happen and Bob Gard was trying to prepare.

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BETSY WEST:

So, what exactly was gonna happen? Can you…

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PAT FOOTE:

What was gonna happen is we knew- we were planning for two years for the Volunteer Force. When it began in '73, no, '72, I had just been reassigned, I'd been in school at the Command and General Staff College. I left the Command and General Staff College to be assigned to the Office of the Director WAC, to be her plans officer.

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And I walked right into the first generation to the first generation of the expanding utilization of women, where we were gonna go from 11,000 to 50,000, one battalion to six, a whole lot of things were just coming, and there had been no preparation. We went from a very strongly contained, intentionally contained number of women who were merely a speck in the sea of men who were serving at that time,-

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-to suddenly realizing that in the volunteer force, if we wanted to be able to fill the positions Army wide, we had to open everything to women that could be opened. And that was every combat support, combat service support position, and as much within the combat arms as we could, down to including brigade level. So this is literally wiping the slate clean of those jobs that are female only,-

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and opening it across the board. It is changing the culture of the Army on a scale unheard of. With no real preparation. There was a Defense Officer Personnel Management Act passed in1980, which did away with separate promotion list, did away with women only competing with other women,-

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-and opened up all of the non-combat jobs virtually to women. And it also, was the occasion where my status as a reservist—I had been extended two years beyond my twenty years that I was to have as a reservist, because I was elected promotion to colonel, they gave me two more years—during that period, the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act passed and I was offered regular army appointment.

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BETSY WEST:
What did integration mean for you and for other women to suddenly now be part of the regular army?

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PAT FOOTE:
What it was, to me, was an enormous period of threatening opportunity without preparing the military environment, one iota, women were showing up after basic training at one of six battalions, in units where they had never been assigned, with the commanders of those units getting no notification

that they were coming, with no arrangement for billets, and it became a bloody war in some cases.

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Between the men who did not want them, they would turn the women down and send them back. This went off and back, and we kept- We and the Directors' office, who were working, trying to work with the Army. "You have got to prepare the Army for the level of changes that's coming." And they were so eager to get the strength numbers up, that they threw the women in helter skelter.

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And I'm dead serious, we did not have sufficient uniforms to put on their bodies, shoes to put on their feet, when they were going to northern climates. I was buying things to put on these women that should've gotten me in jail. But we did it. But we did what we had to do, to get it going and in the meantime, all of the women who were experienced were doing everything they could-

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-to help put the break on wherever they were, and to get some planning into this that was not there.

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BETSY WEST:
Is this the background to the Sergeant Benjamin, the movie?

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PAT FOOTE:

Oh, *Private Benjamin*. Oh, *Private Benjamin* was one of our favorite movies and it remains as one of my favorite movies. She was funny with- The greatest line in there was when Goldie Hawn stood up and said, "Does anyone ever die from basic training?" Because she was so tired. She thought it was going to be such a picnic to come into the Army. But that's a great movie. But this is when things began happening.

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BETSY WEST:

Did that movie sort of illustrate- Give me some examples of the unpreparedness, you know, the mistakes, the- How bad it was.

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PAT FOOTE:

I remember going to Fort, I went to Fort Carson, Colorado, because after two years in the WAC office, the current director then, General Inez Bailey, sent me to forces, Army Forces Command Headquarters at Fort McPherson, Georgia, where all the divisional and core troops who weren't overseas were, were commanded.

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She sent me there to be a WAC staff advisor. That was a statutory position to be filled and I would be the advisor to the Commanding General, of that

command four star. And my job was to go out to the various installations and find out what in the name of heaven is going. What is good, what is bad, what are we gonna have to do to get this on track.

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BETSY WEST:
And what were the things you were finding?

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PAT FOOTE:
Terrible problems with billeting. You take women who may have been assigned to work in a signal company all the time, but they weren't housed there. They weren't billeted there. They were living in a WAC unit. So part of my job was to go out and deactivate every Women's Army Core Unit in the field. So that we could begin getting the quarters and streaming these women to be integrated with the unit to which they were assigned.

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BETSY WEST:
What about, sort of the culture clash, that you mentioned?

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PAT FOOTE:

The cultural clash, I think in some ways, has never been totally resolved, because we went absolutely backwards in doing this, in the Army. There was so much catch up to do for so long, on men and women working together, men and women training together, and setting the appropriate standards for training for both of them,-

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-that we were years trying to undo some of the adverse effect of the initial palle-maille, helter skelter integration that went on. When I went to Fort Carson and with the 4th Division, the commanding general of 4th Infantry Division decided the first company he was going to integrate was his fourth adjutant general company. They were in temporary buildings, three stories.

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So he was going to have the women on the first floor I think, and the men on the second and third. But he was going to put in bathtubs, new showers, new furniture, all of this stuff for the women, but not for the men. And I told him, it was General Hamlin—wonderful guy, well intended—I said, "Sir, you might as well throw these women to the wolves. They're going to be eaten alive and resented terribly because you're playing favorites. You can't do that. You've got to hold off until you can make it equal for the men and the women." And we found that everywhere we went.

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BETSY WEST:

Was that your philosophy, your attitude of how to deal with integration…

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PAT FOOTE:

Absolutely, do not make the women the stars. They are… as quietly as you can integrate women into the mainstream of this unit, with no fanfare, and ensure that they meet the same standards that the men did, and granted, there are some different standards, physiological standards that impact PT Test, but not physical standards. The test you have to pass to get into the Army and stay in the Army is one thing.

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The test you take to qualify for a job is something entirely different, and a woman must meet the same standard a man meets for that job physically. So everywhere I went I found people well intended, who were doing things that were just making it so much more difficult for the women.

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BETSY WEST:

Well, you talked about people bending over backwards to give them advantages that would be resented-

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PAT FOOTE:

Yeah.

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BETSY WEST:
What about on the other hand, people doing things to perhaps undermine the women?

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PAT FOOTE:
Oh, yeah. I went to Fort Evans, Massachusetts on a staff visit and I went to a medical company that was commanded by a Neanderthal, who didn't want the first woman in the unit and he got thirty. The command climate was so malignant, so toxic, that it had affected all of his sergeants and the troops. And we had instances there of women being knocked down in rank, physically, by the men.

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Trying to drive them out. But the women also told me, “Ma’am, if you tell the general this, we'll deny it completely. You can't tell. We have got to work this out ourselves.” And we ran into situations where many of the women said, “We've got to work it out ourselves.” And that has been pretty well much of the way for a lot of years, although the hierarchy up here finally began to understand the type of things it had to do.

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BETSY WEST:

We hear now about the Iraq War, women… horrible problems, you know. Rape within the…

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PAT FOOTE:
Physical assault, rape, yeah. We think, probably the most serious problem we have right now, not just Iraq, Afghanistan, in the armed forces, is the physical assault on women, but men are being assaulted too by men. And what this tells me is, we have not changed the culture to the point where the senior leadership makes an absolute condition of employment,-

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-the fact that you will display appropriate behavior at all times, and if you don't and we catch you, you're gone. I'll bet not one out of ten women in the military who's suffered some form of serious physical abuse or assault or harassment, I'll bet not one out of ten has reported it, because they feel if we report it, then the company will turn on me for turning in a soldier.

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So they keep their mouths shut. And it's the same way in civilian life. Women in police, women in fire—if they're manhandled and assaulted, I'll bet not one out of ten reports it.

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BETSY WEST:
Some people would say that's a reason why they shouldn't be there.

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PAT FOOTE:
Balderdash. To me what it tells me, that is- You do not cave in to improper behavior. What you do is hold the leader's feet to the fire. I don't care if you're a four star general or a second lieutenant, if you as a leader do not carry out your duties and make sure that every troupe in your command is treated with respect and dignity and has a safe working environment,-

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-then we're gonna get you. We're gonna get ya on a court martial, we're gonna get you out of the service, we're gonna get you on a bad conduct discharge and you're not gonna be a part of our army. But we haven't got the culture to that point yet. It's been a long time and the beat goes on. But we have more and more and more support from the majority of the men in the armed forces. Each service has had its moment of Armageddon.

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We had the Aberdeen Proving Ground rape of trainees by drill sergeants and commanders. I was recalled to active duty to be the Vice Chair of the Senior Review Panel that went out to investigate that. And we found out that the equal opportunity program looks great on paper, but it's a bust. The troops, men and women, do not trust it. They know they will be revictimized if they report it.

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We also found out though, that if a complaint made it up to the battalion commander and command sergeant major, it got acted upon. If it was kept down here, then it was just swept under the rug.

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BETSY WEST:
What did you recommend and how was that changed?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, I'll tell you one thing, one of the things we're doing now is command climate surveys are made periodically, frequently. As a young commander comes in to take a unit, a command climate survey is made with his troops, and that young incoming commander finds out if that's a well commanded company that had a good commander before he came. He will also or she will also find out what problems are there. But the military is a constantly revolving door.

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You train and train, and educate, and correct, and those people leave, and here's a whole new generation coming in. And you have to keep training and training and training. But in an army especially—I'm only addressing the Army, all the services have their problems—but in the Army that is being over utilized at the rate, the very small army is today, you don't have time for the niceties like that.

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And I kind of sit around, people say, ya know, “Digger O’Dell.” I say, “No. I'm just telling you right now that we're going to have a major blowup somewhere along the line, another major scandal like the Tailhook with the Navy, like the Air Force Academy scandal, like the repeated scandals that happened at the armed forces academies and the problem never seems to get solved.”

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And that's because we do not have that command climate from the top down that is intolerant of misconduct. Totally intolerant. Once it is, it's gonna cost you people. You're gonna kick 'em out. But who needs that kind of a soldier anyhow? I know one commander who was confronted with the fact that he had a first sergeant who had raped a troupe and we knew that happened.

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And then he had the gall to tell the young women who was a victim, “Do you expect me to give up my best soldier for this?” And my answer to her was, "He's his worst soldier that he, from his position, would do something like that." So, it never ends and this is why I'm staying so very much involved in working these issues in retirement. I've never given them up and I won't.

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
Pat Foote Getting Promoted
Fort Belvoir, VA, 1986

BETSY WEST:

Tell me about getting your general's star?

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PAT FOOTE:

Oh my lord… That was amazing. Ya know, here I am, I had commanded the 42nd Military Police Brigade in Germany—wonderful tour—and did not want to do anything I felt so unseemly as retire from command. I said, "I will never retire from a command position. Put me in a staff job somewhere for a year in Europe, and then I'll quietly slip away and go home and retire."

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And during that year I went to work for General Vick Hugo who was the commanding general of the Army Air Defense Command out of Darmstadt, Germany. Heck, I'm 55 years old, it's time for me to go home. And I'm there just working away with his staff trying to come up with decent quality of life solutions for men and women who are in remote sites, and I mean up on mountain top with nothing much of anything.

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And friends came- Well, the friends who came for my change of command of the 42nd, let me back up a little bit. I was away when all this happened and we were touring. We were all over England and Germany and wherever—France, we were. But when I came back home, and we were all at my apartment up in Lorsch, Germany the phone rang.

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It was my boss from US Army Europe and he said, "Where the bleep have you been?" I said, "Sir I was on vacation. You signed my papers. You let me go." He said, "How in the world could we ever catch up with you to tell you your being promoted to brigadier general?" And I was just so stunned. I said, "I cannot believe that." But what really happened I think, I was the oldest person in that promotion group, cohort.

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The youngest was 42 and I was 55. I was the only one. And when I saw the order finally, and saw the names of all the people who were on that board, I think at least half of them were three and four star generals, for, or with whom I had worked.

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And it was that coming together of people who had faith in your ability to do things, and General Hugo was on that board also. Vick Hugo. And he kept sending messages back, "Don't you dare retire." Because I was talking about retiring, putting in my papers. So, it came and I stayed on working for him at the 32nd Air Defense Command until the orders came through and I was promoted or frocked.

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They call it frocking. I was frocked into the rank of brigadier ahead of the actual promotion date because the Army was bringing me back to be the Deputy Inspector General at Headquarters Department of Army, Inspector for Inspections. So we had the stars pinned on in Darmstadt and great, great

ceremony. It was a truly amazing day and friends came from all over Germany and Europe to be there. My 42nd MP showed up in mass so I was just thrilled to death.

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ON SCREEN TEXT:
Pat Foote Speaking With Fellow WACs
1976

BETSY WEST:
So then you got to go back to Belvoir. Tell me again, what was that like to go back there, and now…

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PAT FOOTE:
Now I am back again and we have the Assumption of Command Ceremony. Belvoir had historically been an engineer training center, forever and ever and ever. The engineers in June of 1988 were moving in mass to Fort Leonard Wood. All the officer training, all the specialty training was going out to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where they already had basic training for infantry, I mean, for engineers.

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So I was going- I came after two years of being with EIG. I was moved to Belvoir to be commanding general of Fort Belvoir and concurrently, deputy

commanding general of the military district of Washington. And I had been at Belvoir 22 years before, permitted to only command women, working for a colonel who didn't necessarily want women on the post,-

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-so I came back and I—you know, you do dumb things—I said, "Top dog, they can't touch me now." And I had a great time for two years, really, there, commanding.

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BETSY WEST:
That must have been a sweet day.

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PAT FOOTE:
It was a great day and I had a parade, retirement parade, in late September of '89, that very few one star generals working in the Washington environment will ever see. Most of them retire from a platform at Fort Meyer where they're standing up there with a gaggle of 20 others, watching the 3rd Infantry walk by.

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As deputy commanding general of (deliberately unintelligible), I had all the Belvoir battalions, I had the 3rd Infantry, the US Army Band, the Drum, Fife and Bugle Corp, the Colonial Color Guard and all the ships at sea. Everything there for that parade and I have it on tape. But I said, "What a way to go."

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After the change of command, we went to my quarters, all the people who were visiting me. We all went, moved all the food out of the Officers Club and over, at my house, and I said, "The thing that will give you real humility in cases like this, they were already unscrewing my name plate off the front step where I lived." And I had to go out there and kick those guys into putting it back on. I said, "I'll be here for 18 more days and don't you forget it." So they had to screw it back on. I said, "Do not rush this."

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BETSY WEST:
Let's talk a little about the work-family challenge so many women face. What were your expectations? Were you brought up that you thought you were going to have a marriage and a traditional life?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, let's put it this way. My mother had always thought I would never go to college, that I'd get married at 18 and produce a family and all. I said, "I will not." I remember telling her, "If I ever get married, I'll probably be 45. I got things I intend to do first." Well, the seven years I worked in Washington as a civilian after college, I had no Sir Galahad or Lochinvar clock down the street to carry me away from all this.

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I was a very independent woman, and there was a lot of stuff these guys would expect me to do as a bride in the '50s, that I wasn't about to do. Like give up career, stay home, just wash my clothes, take care of the kids, cook my meals and pick up after me. That was not in my gene pool. And I said, "If I ever get married, it's gonna be a partnership."

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And quite frankly, I never found a guy who wanted to have a partnership. In that time frame. I think we see a lot of partnerships today. So I was, I was marriageable but not taken by anyone when I came into the Army, and there were many women who were in the same boat as I was, who came into the Army in the later years, rather than as, right out of college.

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BETSY WEST:
So it wasn't an opportunity for an independent woman?

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PAT FOOTE:
The opportunities were not there in great numbers, unless the woman was going to be an entrepreneur, unless she was going to set up her own business and go from there. Because we know how many or how few women in the '50s and the '60s, '70s, even today are CEOs or COOs in the Fortune 500 Companies. They're still not there but they're going up.

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They're constantly going up. And with the shifting demographics in America, by the end of this century I would be amazed if we don't have half of The Fortune 500, or whatever replaces it, led by women.

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BETSY WEST:
Talk to me a little about the issue of mothers in the military.

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PAT FOOTE:
Tough road to hoe. And what is really tough… when we first approved or when the armed forces DoD first approved a waiver for a woman to remain on active duty, be pregnant, have her child and continue to serve, was contingent upon her having a very solid childcare plan in case she was deployed,-

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-and also basically, upon the fact that she would certify that she could be a soldier and a mother with equal facility. Now if the woman who became pregnant was a woman who had been in for four or five years, and had some years of experience behind her, she was more likely than to kid, to make this work very well. But the 18 year old bride who really didn't have her traction in her career yet, tough.

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And she had better have a very supportive husband and a very supportive unit. There were a few occasions when I literally had to go to the troupe and have to interview, tell them they had a decision that they had to make. They could not keep their child and be a soldier because they're failing at both. They needed to separate and go take care of the kid. And that was young men too.

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I had an, I had a male Leaf 4 show up for what you call telephone watch at lunch one day, and he had his baby daughter with him and a bag of diapers and the formula, and he brought them to the office because his wife had left him and gone back to the States. And there he is, a young military policeman with a baby barely over twelve months old. And the childcare plan had failed that day. So it's tough, but I've seen 'em do it very well.

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I had a couple of young captains working for me at the 42nd Military Police, and in the course of their careers, they both retired as colonels, they produced three children, but with their combined incomes, they had a governess that traveled with them and stayed with them and was surrogate parent. Because both of them deployed at the same time to Panama, to Iraq, to Desert Storm, to Afghanistan.

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BETSY WEST:
Do you think you could you have done what you've done with children?

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PAT FOOTE:

Well, I would like to think that I could have done it, because if I had gotten married and children, I would've been an older woman, much better organized than most young people, quite well-disciplined, and I think I would've gotten the extra help you need, like you either had a governess or an au pair or someone to fill in for you when you could not be there. But I think I would always have that nagging feeling in the back of my mind-

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-am I short changing my kids? I have a very good friend who retired as a colonel, mother of three, very much in the running for promotion to general, who came off active duty at twenty four years, she said, "My kids have let me do this for twenty four years. It's time I start paying them back. They want more of my time." So she came off and gave that up.

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But I would like to think I could have because I would've been an older woman. I know it has been overwhelming for a number of very young men and women who aren't making a lot of money anyhow. Frequently we have to live on the economy with one of the other of them deployed all the time to make it really work. It's hard.

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BETSY WEST:

You've been a mentor to a lot of women. Tell me about that.

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, I feel that every advantage I have had, every door that opened, was opened by someone who came before me. And I have told many women along the way that every woman who wears the uniform picks up the flag and advances it about ten yards or a hundred yards or whatever in her performance of duties and then passes it on to someone else.

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So in the time that you're in the service, if you have positively influenced the system or individuals to modify policies and open more doors for women, you've done a wonderful thing. I don't think there's a woman serving today in a senior rank, enlisted or officer, who got there on her own. There were a lot of people that helped them along the way.

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Very, very courageous people too, and the ones who proclaim that, "I got it on my own and no one helped me," don't know what they're talking about.

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BETSY WEST:
What was it like during the 80s, when the attitude about women in the military was not so great?

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PAT FOOTE:

Oh, we had a lot of wars during those years. I will have to tie it to President Reagan coming into office. With that, the Army chief of staff then ended integrated basic training, which had been working very well, but he was uncomfortable with it. Then we had another study on the assignment and utilization of women, it must have been study number 418, because there is no more studied body in the military than women.

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So we had that. We had the backlash of people not only wanting to separate basic training, reduce the number of women serving, and every time we put out one fire, another one would be flaming up over here.

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BETSY WEST:

Must have been frustrating for you.

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PAT FOOTE:

Very frustrating, very frustrating. Because some of the people who were making some- Well, some of the people who were making these suggestions that the military was listening to, had absolutely no credential to be making such suggestion.

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BETSY WEST:
Like what?

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PAT FOOTE:
Like Elaine Donnelly and The Center for Military Readiness.

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BETSY WEST:
And her suggestions were… What was she saying?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, first of all she wanted to do away with the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the service. The only objective, non-military advisory group to the Secretary of Defense on the appropriate assignment and utilization of Women. She wanted that to end.

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BETSY WEST:
Was her overall point just to get the women out of the military and reduce their… What was her overall point?

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PAT FOOTE:

Greatly reduce their role in the military, do not open operational jobs to them, combat flying, serving on ships other than hospital ships, and especially do not train men and women together. That was a biggy. But I really don't want to go into… I've been debating her now for over 20 years and she has made a very- pretty good living off of denigrating the value of the service of women in the military,-

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-which I deeply resent. So that is- We had a number of very ultra conservative groups that would like to minimize the role of women again, if not, "Why don't we go back and have the Women's Army Corps again?" No. We are passed that. It was a wonderful start for women in the Army, other than the medicals, but to go back to that again is just sheer retrograde.

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BETSY WEST:

Did you feel a part of the women's movement at the time? What did you think of it, and did you feel…

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PAT FOOTE:

Oh, I've always been a part of the women's movement. I don't think the women's movement has necessarily always, and some of it's leadership,

supported women in the military though. I think those who have peace as their great goal do not quite realize that no one wants peace more than those that have to fight our country's wars. So, I have been a very strong advocate of women serving-

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-and reaching senior positions where they can begin to influence the policy too, of who we go to war against and why we go to war.

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BETSY WEST:
Do you consider yourself a feminist?

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PAT FOOTE:
Yeah.

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BETSY WEST:
What do you think- Give me a definition, what is it?

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PAT FOOTE:
As a feminist, I simply believe that every man and woman alive should have the level playing field shot, at any job, in any profession, for which they feel

qualified. I do not believe we have any positions left, except motherhood, where gender should be a constraint or should be an influence in making a decision this person or that person can be taken.

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You know, women are 52% of that I think. The majority population in this country and when we do not maximize the use of every man and woman in a valid role in our society, whether it's homemaker or whether it's CEO of some huge corporation, then we are being so dumb. So the more we can get rid of constraints, the better.

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And I'm a great champion of women having their shot at the jobs, at the career opportunities, at leading, and we've got one woman at four star now. Great gal, Ann Dunwoody, and she did it the hard way, the old fashioned way. She earned it and she's highly respected for her skills as Commanding General of the Army Materiel Command.

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BETSY WEST:
Why do you think that young American women consider the word 'feminist' a dirty word?

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PAT FOOTE:

You know, there are young women in the military, if I may back up a minute, among that group who never want to affiliate with a group that has the word women in it, like women's support group, Army Women's Professionals Association, Women's Research in Education, because as soldiers, they want to be measured as soldiers and without gender entered into it. They don't understand the value of networking or support groups-

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-and I think many young women in civilian life don't realize that they're not at the goal line yet. They've got a long way to go before they will have true equality of opportunity in the work place. A long way. And how we fell off with this population, I don't know. And young women today serving in the military have very little grasp of what their roots are,-

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-and that's why we tell them, we refer them- I continue mentoring, I refer them to a number of wonderful books, Major General Gene Holmes, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*. That book is a wonderful anthology of what women went through to even have any role in the military.

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BETSY WEST:
You've worked with so many men and women over your career. Do you think there's a difference in the way women lead, versus men?

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PAT FOOTE:

Yeah. I think most of the time I have always felt women are… are far less worried about making a mistake in critical areas. I will take risks. I will not take foolish risks, but if there's a decision that has to be made involving the troops that your commanding, or whatever your doing and you don't have all the pieces of the puzzle in line as to what is the absolute correct thing to do, you go with your gut and you make a risk.

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If you're wrong, then you go back and correct it. And the other thing about women, they will take the risky jobs, whether it's command- Command is a very risky job, you can get relieved really quick for a lot of different reasons today. But I think the real key with women in leadership roles is they are far more willing to admit that they can make mistakes-

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-and they are far more willing to seek the advice and participation of their subordinates in making decisions. Doesn't mean they give up decision-making authority. They don't. But they take input and they take suggestions. And many of them they run with.

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BETSY WEST:

Talk to me a little bit about women in combat. Should they be there? Why or why not?

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PAT FOOTE:
I think women should be in any role in which they can fulfill every aspect of that job appropriately and having said that, I would say so far as putting women in a ground combat unit, like an infantry company, that's fine if they're fully qualified to do everything that unit has to do and provided there is a critical mass of women in that unit.

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You're not gonna put three women in a 200 man unit. They'll be eaten alive. The way the gal at Citadel was when they put her in that first class at Citadel and she was the only woman there. She… No way in the world she could succeed. The thing is we have women who are performing combat roles on ships, combat roles in the air, they're attack helicopter pilots, they're fighter pilots, they're doing these jobs and in Vietnam-

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-I mean not Vietnam, I mean in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have women going out on patrol with the men, as part of the foreign engagement training group of women who are dealing with any females that they meet in the villages or anything. But those women have to go out in those roles as soldiers first, not women, but they do relate very well to the Afghani or Iraqi women when they're out there.

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So they're already in combat. We've had two women who've been awarded the Silver Star in Iraq. We have many others who have the Bronze Star of

Valor. We have Air medals for valor. Women are performing combat duties because there is no front, there is no rear, the combat zone is all around you.

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BETSY WEST:
I've heard that some women are being asked not to wear helmets, to wear headscarves?

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PAT FOOTE:
Absolutely wrong. We have- A couple of units I work with, we have written a very strong letter to Secretary of Defense Gates asking him to take a firm position on not permitting this. When these women are going out on patrol with the men, some of them, not all, but some of them are putting the scarf on under the helmet and then when they see the women, they take the helmet off.

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That helmet is an absolute indispensable part of their uniform, and it will save their lives if an IED explodes around them and shrapnel is flying like crazy. So we're asking Secretary Gates to be as strong in his opposition to this, the wear of the hijab in lieu of the kevlar as Colonel Martha McSally was in getting rid of the burqa.

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She was forced as an Air Force colonel, a fighter pilot, to wear the black burqa by the Air Force, and she challenged them and she won.

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BETSY WEST:
Do you remember when you joined the Army, how many women were there? What percentage and what differences that's made?

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PAT FOOTE:
Two percent of the regular army strength- No more than two percent could be women when I came in. Now about 15% of the active duty force is female, and a higher percentage probably. 18 to 20% are reserved component or National Guard. And the women today are in virtually every type of unit except Marine combat units. Or Army combat units.

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BETSY WEST:
And what difference has that made? The military…

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PAT FOOTE:

A heck of a lot more men have gotten very used to the fact that some of their best and brightest, that they can rely on, are the women of their units and they'll be quick to tell you.

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BETSY WEST:
You've worked with a lot of girls and a lot of women over the years. What do you think that young women now think about their bodies? And how they, they treat sort of they physical aspects of their lives, either the way they dress or the way they just kind of feel about themselves?

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PAT FOOTE:
Well, yeah, I think that's a mixed bag right now. There are a lot of more women now who are probably more physically fit than they would have ever been. Title IX has opened the door for thousands and thousands of women to be competitive in a variety of athletic endeavors and to really take care of and develop their bodies and they're doing it. But fashion still courts the young women through some of the most ridiculous clothing I have ever seen-

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-and when I look at the shoes that they're offering women to wear right now- Somebody's got to be in their wrong mind to put those things on. Ever! Horrible. But 'cause fashion is still using women as a sexual object, and I

think that is dead wrong, and I wish the women would vote them out of it by not buying a thing they sell.

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BETSY WEST:
Women say they empower themselves by being sexy.

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PAT FOOTE:
How about Botox at the age of eight? Or something like that? No. They are not empowering themselves, they are demeaning themselves. If they feel that the only way they can have power is by using their sexual allure, that's the last thing they should use.

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BETSY WEST:
Tell me, first of all, what's the best piece of advice that you've ever received?

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PAT FOOTE:
The best piece of advice I ever received, and I didn't realize it at the time, was from a senior woman officer whose opinions I respected very much. And we were talking about mentoring and helping the young coming up and all. And I told her I was trying to develop how I would talk to the young women about

it. She said, “Remember one thing. If you are proposing to young people that they get mentors,-

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-tell them their first requirement is to be very careful who they select to be their mentor, because that individual may have the wrong philosophy, psychology or attitude, that the young woman does not need in tailoring her own career.” So the first thing that she told me was, “Be careful of from whom you seek advice.”

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BETSY WEST:
Were you very careful?

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PAT FOOTE:
Yeah. I picked good people. Men and women, to be my advisors.

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BETSY WEST:
What’s the advice you would give to a young woman about career, or work-life balance, or raising children, or pursuing your dreams, relationship- What do you want to say to young women?

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PAT FOOTE:

I'd say to young women today, the sky's the limit in so many different directions. If you have the will, the desire, the passion, to pursue a particular career, then you should go for it with all guns blazing. You should accept, number one the fact, is that you must be beautifully prepared for that job.

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You must study. You must work. You must be willing to start at the bottom and work your way up and you must do this consistently. And then you've got so many opportunities there. I think it's wonderful, the opportunities that are out there that were nowhere, anywhere around us when I came up, and don't take them for granted. Do not take them for granted.

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BETSY WEST:

We know what you wound up doing. I'm wondering what did you want to be when you grew up when you were a kid?

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PAT FOOTE:

When I was a kid growing up, I didn't want to be a nurse, I wanted to be a doctor. And I had the strongest desire- And to this day, I still love these programs, these gory medical programs where they're performing surgery right in front of you, I still watch this stuff. But I said in all honesty, I obviously didn't want to be a doctor enough to go through all the training and all the

years of hard work, so I vicariously enjoyed that. I did not want to be a nurse. I wanted to be a doctor.

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BETSY WEST:
What's the accomplishment you're most proud of?

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PAT FOOTE:
Having been permitted and privileged to command at the company, the battalion, the brigade at the major installation level. To spend a big part of my time, in working with our soldiers.

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BETSY WEST:
What was your very first paying job?

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PAT FOOTE:
My very first paying job was as a sales clerk at G. C. Murphy Co. 5 & 10 cent Store, on 14th Street in downtown- Well,, 14th and, around 14th and Irving Street when I was first in Washington. I only lasted three weeks and got fired. I was too sociable. I waited-

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I had linens, nothing more boring than trying to sell linens, so I went over and sold dishes or anything else. I went to all the various places, and my brother had a job there too, being a general gopher and scraping chewing gum off the floors, so he used my firing as his reason for leaving. So we spent the rest of the summer sight-seeing. That was my first job.

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BETSY WEST:
What three adjectives best describe you?

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PAT FOOTE:
I am a risk taker, for good reason, for the right reasons, I think. I am very dedicated about every project that I undertake. And the third one is, I am overwhelmingly grateful for the opportunities I have had to serve in so many different directions, before retirement and after retirement.

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BETSY WEST:
Doesn't sound like you're really retired but…

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PAT FOOTE:
I'm not. I have flunked it.

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BETSY WEST:
Like you're retired? Really?

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PAT FOOTE:
I flunked Retirement 101, 202 and 303.

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BETSY WEST:
You brought up, " I did this, I went here, I went there…" Okay.

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PAT FOOTE:
I'm getting ready to go to Europe. I'm going to France, the 1st through the 8th, because President Obama reappointed me to the American Battle Monuments Commission. This will be my second time with the Commission so we're going over.

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BETSY WEST:
Last one here of these questions, what person you've never met has had the most influence on you?

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PAT FOOTE:

As a child even, it was Eleanor Roosevelt. When she wrote a column called *My Day*. And I think she has had a profound impression on me with what she has accomplished in her life, so I put her right up there.

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BETSY WEST:

Your career has gone up, and up, and up. On the other hand, you've faced adversity in your career, and a lot of challenges from men who didn't necessarily want you to be doing what you were obviously capable of doing and other things. Where did you get the strength to keep going? Where did that come from?

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PAT FOOTE:

I'll tell you, strength is one part of it, but if you're in this business and you don't have a good sense of humor, you're dead in the water. I've laughed my way through half of it, and the hang ups that some of the men have about serving with women, usually I can jolly it out of them if they're willing to talk. I had one officer when I was a student at the Army War College. There was an officer that absolutely resented my being in the class.

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And I marched right up to him at a social one day, and I said, “Why don't you want me here? What have I done to offend you?” “Well, you’re a woman and we need to have more combat so and so and so and so here.” I've said, “We've got chaplains here. We've got doctors here. We've got nurses here. I just happen to be a woman Army officer who's a military police officer like you are. So why do you have against my being here?"

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Well, the long shot of it is, during the course of the rest of the year, he began like a puppy following me around, and we had lots of good long talks about attitudes. I said, “You just can't take that attitude into a command because as an MP commander,” I said, “A third of your troops are women and you had better have the right face for all of them.”

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BETSY WEST:
You weren’t afraid to confront this guy-

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PAT FOOTE:
No! Good Lord, no. That's the quickest way to defuse it. Quickest way to defuse it. Do not let it simmer. It just gets worse, and if it simmers, and you don't challenge it, they'll keep picking at you. And I do not like to be picked at, for very long. I have laughed my way through this crap. I wish I could just sit

down and write a war storybook of the things you get involved in just being in the military.

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I was a guest speaker at a luncheon this past Saturday out at the Army Navy Country Club in Fairfax, and there were about 100 women there, with experience in service and the military back to WWII, a woman who enlisted in August 1942, right up to women serving today.

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And to look at the breadth of experience that these gals have, and to have- you know, I said, “If we could just take from each one of you, a strand of experience and weave it into a true tapestry, to let people know the contributions of women to the military over time, it would be fabulous.” But I also thought, after it was over, I said, "We need to have another luncheon. Maybe in December,”—

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—we have one scheduled in December—“where every woman in there who has served,"—and it will be most of them—“will stand up and either tell a funny story or a historic first from her career." And you'd be amazed at the things that they've done. Really. I'll tell you, if you don't laugh you cry, and I'd rather laugh than cry. It's like basic training. It's like Goldie Hawn. “Do you ever die from basic training?”

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And there's some who think they will. It is not for everyone. If you, if you want your roots in one place, forget it. I moved 24 times in my army career.

And you're gonna pick up and move, and if you don't like the job you got right now, just wait a moment, you'll get another one. And go off and do it. And no one really trains you for anything that you're doing. You learn on the job.

END TC: 01:40:11:00