

Interviewer:

Could you state your name please?

Susan Schwartz:

Susan Schwartz.

Interviewer:

And could you spell your name?

Susan Schwartz:

Susan is S-U-S-A-N. Schwartz is S-C-H-W-A-R-T-Z.

Interviewer:

And your age?

Susan Schwartz:

Iâ€™m 61.

Interviewer:

And your date of birth?

Susan Schwartz:

May 20, 1953.

Interviewer:

And today is February 24, 2015.

Susan Schwartz:

Yes.

Interviewer:

First of all, thank you for sitting down with us today. Youâ€™re an instructor here at West Point. Tell me the name of the class again you teach.

Susan Schwartz:

I teach Information Technology and Computing.

Interviewer:

Okay. You also have a military background.

Susan Schwartz:

Yes, I do.

Interviewer:

Because weâ€™re going to be talking here about the role of women at West Point, and the role of women in the military, and more specifically, women in the Army, tell me a little bit about your own background in the service career. â€˜Cause youâ€™re a Naval Reserve Officer; howâ€™d you come about choosing that?

Susan Schwartz:

Well, I was actually in graduate school in the â€™70s, and I was looking into getting a job when I finished graduate school. And I was at North Carolina State at the time in Raleigh, North Carolina, and the Naval Recruiting District was looking at people getting masterâ€™s degrees in mathematics. So I said Iâ€™d look into anybody who wanted to try and hire you, and it was an opportunity to teach in the Navy Nuclear Power School in Orlando, Florida. I had always enjoyed teaching, and thought that would be a really good opportunity for me.

Interviewer:

Had you ever considered military career before that, or?

Susan Schwartz:

No, I hadnâ€™t.

Interviewer:

Do you come from a military family?

Susan Schwartz:

No, not really. My motherâ€™s two brothers both served in World War II. My grandfather, I think he served right between World War I and World War II. My father had been in the National Guard for two years. But it had never really resonated with me, and it seemed like a great opportunity to teach. I had to join the Navy in order to teach there, but once I got

past the thought of, "Oh, I'm going to be in the Navy," the opportunity to teach for four years was just really something I couldn't pass up.

Interviewer:

So when did you actually enlist; when did you actually join the Navy?

Susan Schwartz:

I actually was commissioned in 1977, and went to Officer Training for six weeks in Newport, Rhode Island. And my Officer Training - they commissioned me first, and I actually went through a six-week class that was basically, "Here's how you act as an Officer, and here, get your uniforms." I was in the group with the nurses and the engineers 'cause we were considered professionals, and that we joined the Navy to provide professional skills. And then I went to the Nuclear Power School.

Interviewer:

Could you tell me a little bit more about that course? I mean 1977 was what, 30-some-odd years ago; almost 40 years ago now.

Susan Schwartz:

Right.

Interviewer:

And the women's liberation movement and feminist movement was obviously still much more - newer.

Susan Schwartz:

Right.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little about what it was like to go through those.

Susan Schwartz:

Well, going through Officer Training to me was - I was with a lot of women, because it was the nurses, and so if you look at it, there were few male nurses with us, but it was mostly women there. And then we had male engineers and lawyers, and then of the four of us that were Nuclear Power School Instructors, I was the only woman. I was only the seventh woman that had ever been selected by the Nuclear Power Program of the Navy to ever teach at Nuclear Power School.

Interviewer:

Did you encounter much resistance, either overt or covert, or?

Susan Schwartz:

Well, not in that first six weeks of training, and when I got to the School - it was unusual, because there, when a new woman - in the previous two years, the other six women had shown up, and it was a four-year commitment to teach there. So when a new female Ensign was showing up, it was a big deal, and so everyone checked me out. I think that they wanted to check me out more because I was a new female, and who was the cute new Ensign, or you know, that kind of thing. And so everyone came to meet me. Sailors - we had classrooms of 45 sailors at a time, and this is back in the days when you could smoke in buildings. And they would come out for their breaks in the middle of the hallways and smoke, but if you walk down the hallway and you're wearing heels, the click-clack of your heels were on the - so that whole classrooms would look outside to see who the woman was that was walking down the hallway. And my husband even came to check me out. My first week there, I was proctoring an exam, and he went and stared in the door to see who this new Ensign was.

So it was a - it was not the most feministic type of atmosphere - so.

Interviewer:

But did you ever encounter any - anyone said, "Women don't belong in the Navy," or was there any resistance in that?

Susan Schwartz:

I didn't get that. I was there for four and a half years. I started out teaching a math course there, and then I actually applied to teach a course on our second half of our

curriculum for enlisted sailors. And it was a course in - we called it Reactor Principles, but it was a reactor physics course, and it taught sailors basic information about how a nuclear power plant works. And the way we were at Nuclear Power School, we had to - for every course we taught, we had to sit through the course, take all the exams, do oral boards on every grading period, and before you taught the course the first time, you had to teach some practice lessons like that. And then every time you taught a course, the first time you taught it you had to have two people sit in on you and give you an evaluation on how you did; and thereafter, every other time you taught the course, one person would sit in on you. My first time in teaching that course, instead of having two sit-ins, I had seven, and the last one was somebody who had been stationed there and was now no longer stationed at Nuclear Power School, was stationed somewhere else in Nuclear Power Program of the Navy.

But when he came and sat in on me, and I finally said to him, "You know, I know I'm the first woman teaching this course, but isn't seven sit-ins enough?" And he said, "I think so," and so that finally ended them. But so I had that. I think it was because there weren't women in the Nuclear Power Program, mostly, and so that was one example of where I felt like I was getting greater scrutiny as a woman. Because even the men who were not Nuclear-qualified Officers who taught the course still only had their two sit-ins, and I had seven. So that was my - I had that, but you know, I still proved myself. And I think in the time that I was in the - after I left that Command, I went into the Reserves because my husband was Active Duty and we wanted to raise our children in the same household. I think I sometimes felt like I had to be better than my male counterparts to get the same recognition as they got; and so usually I was better than them.

Interviewer:

You were talking about you had a meeting with Admiral Rickover, Hyman Rickover, at one point.

Susan Schwartz:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little about that.

Susan Schwartz:

Well, the interview process to become part of the Nuclear Power Program always required going to Naval reactors, and I believe the Program still exists like that, and you ultimately meet with the Admiral. And Admiral Rickover was - I mean he was known as the father of Nuclear Navy, and he set it up so that you always met with him. The morning - you were there for a full day in Washington, D.C. The morning was spent having interviews with his senior personnel on different topics. Since I was a math major at the time, I had all kinds of questions on math, and I was asked, you know, "Can you teach things like what is the area - what does the integral have to do -" which I was teaching that course at the time. So it was really easy to sort of do what I was doing. And then some people took a test and some people didn't, a written test on some other topics. And then after lunch, you basically waited your turn and went in to see Admiral Rickover. I came to this as a civilian, and Admiral Rickover's people came in and briefed us.

And it was, "You will go straight into the room. You won't look left or right. You will sit in the chair in front of his - you'll stand in front of the chair. When he tells you to sit down, you will sit down. You will answer the questions he asks just what he asks, not more, not less, and when he tells you you're done, you turn around and you walk out the door." And so it was - "And don't forget to say, 'Yes sir.'" So it was very, very military-like, but I had not experienced any of that before. And pretty much, that's what happened. I went in for my interview. He asked me what my father did. He asked me if I had a boyfriend, which I didn't at the time. He asked me why I wanted to come teach for him. It was a very short - it was probably only a couple minutes long. It felt a lot longer. And then when he was done, I came out, and they told me they had accepted me to teach at Nuclear Power School. I think that what had helped is when I took the exam - I

had to take a math exam and a science exam, and the math exam, I think when I took it there was a question that didn't have an answer. So I went up to him when I was done, and I told him, "Here's your exam."

"And this question doesn't have an answer," and I did all the mathematical proofs on it to show why it wasn't the answer and what the answer was. So I have a feeling that that probably helped me get hired.

Interviewer:

Tell me about teaching in the Nuclear Power Program.

Susan Schwartz:

I taught classrooms of 45 male sailors, and they were a really interesting bunch of kids. They were separated out by the area of expertise that they had in the Navy, so we had Electricians, and we had Machinist Mates who did the -

Interviewer:

These were all enlisted.

Susan Schwartz:

They were all enlisted. They were out of high school. They basically had to have had a certain score on a qualifying test, and they had to have finished I think through Algebra II I think in high school. I'm not really sure; I forget, it's been a lot of years. And when we taught them, it was very - the way we had to do it, we had to put a standardized set of notes on the board, and students were expected to take notes so that they would have that. And we did all kinds of problems, and they had to keep, have a full notebook of notes, and they could come in and get help if they needed it. But it was 45 male sailors at a time, and we not only broke them out by whether they worked the Machinery area or Electrician type of thing. We also broke them out by academic average, or based on the qualifying test when they first started, so that you knew whether you were teaching a "high" section or a "low" section, so that you could change your explanations accordingly.

Interviewer:

How long did you do that for?

Susan Schwartz:

I was there for four and a half years. I taught math for the first year I was there. I taught the Reactor Physics course for about two years. What was interesting there is because I was not Nuclear-qualified - which meant that you'd gone out on submarines and actually gotten qualified like that - many times, I would train up the Nuclear Officers who came in, and then they would end up being my boss. So I did that for a couple years, and then I was the first woman - no, actually the second woman to actually go, and I moved over back to our pre-Nuclear Power School Department, and I actually ran our Math Division there for students entering Nuke School. It was a six-week course, and I did that for about a year and a half, until I got off Active Duty.

Interviewer:

So you actually sort of were there through much of the I guess '80s and '90s, right?

Susan Schwartz:

No, I was only there for four and a half years.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Susan Schwartz:

I was there from '77 to '81. During that time period, we actually had a year where we took female enlisted soldiers. I've worked at West Point too long; I'm calling them soldiers instead of sailors. We actually had a year where women came, and they were going to serve at some of the surface nuclear ships, and also at some of our prototype reactors, where students would come and get trained up on how to run a reactor. And we had them for about a year; we had to actually configure the building, because they didn't have enough female rest rooms for them. So we went through a period of figuring out where they could be; we ended up using the plumbing for the men's room,

and took over storage closets and made small women's bathrooms all over the building. But we had that period of time when they came in. It was not a really successful - at the time, it was not a successful experiment.

Interviewer:

Why not?

Susan Schwartz:

Because the women that - I think the women that they chose were not the right ones, and often they would go - the ones who made it through the School often got pregnant, and they couldn't go to sea when that happens. So I don't see that happening as much now, but back then, if a woman got pregnant, she could get out of whatever she was doing.

Today, the military says, "Okay, you have a condition, and when you're finished being pregnant, now you go back to work." And so it was a different era back then, but.

So you know, as in every time you bring women to something, if you bring the wrong women to start with you don't really get the full experience from them. And so I don't think they were screened as well as they could've been back then.

Interviewer:

Also getting though, I guess - we're getting at something I'm trying to put into words, where you have a traditionally male institution slowly evolving and grappling with how to become more inclusive, right?

Susan Schwartz:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And I'm just wondering how it looked from your perspective, watching in your case the Navy for much of this time trying to become more inclusive, and open the ranks, open more opportunities for women. How did that look from your perspective?

Susan Schwartz:

We were really fortunate at the time, 'cause my Commanding Officer was a really positive figure in our lives, and I think that he really tried the best he could to make it happen. I think that it was difficult at the time. I don't think society - in the late '70s, early '80s, I don't think society was quite as ready to be open to everything, and so I think they had growing pains. And like I said, it only lasted for about a year. The men also started complaining, because the women were taking all the shore duty, which meant the men were taking more of the sea duty kind of positions. And so they had to step back from that and say, "How are we going to do this so that we get some equity for the men, too?" So you know, it's the pendulum swings one way and it swings back the other way, and I mean, you know, in the last three or four years - I forget exactly when. I mean submarines now are having women Officers on board, and on submarines. So they've figured out the berthing now, and they've figured out how to do it, so today it's not an issue anymore.

But it was hard back then, because women couldn't go to sea, so therefore they were taking the billets the men would want after they'd gone to sea, and they wanted to come back and not be at sea. So you know, it was!

Interviewer:

So there was a little bit of sort of the wall of unintended consequences, right?

Susan Schwartz:

Exactly. Exactly. So they tried something; it didn't quite work as well as it needed to. But today, women can go aboard any ship. It's a lot easier now, I think, to make that kind of thing work.

Interviewer:

Is there a lesson to be learned? Is there a take-away from that?

Susan Schwartz:

I don't know. I mean I'm not sure I've thought about it like that. I think it's with everything else - good planning is - to me, the take-away is that you have to kind of plan for things, and then you have to figure out when your plan doesn't quite work out

the way you intended it to, whatâ€™s the next step? Iâ€™m not sure that backing away from having the women go through Nuclear Power School was necessarily the right reason, but I was pretty junior back then. I think I was a Lieutenant Junior Grade, and so you know I wasnâ€™t in on all the decision-making. I was helping figure out where the bathrooms went, but I didnâ€™t get to figure out whether women should come there.

Interviewer:

How did you get from the Navy to West Point?

Susan Schwartz:

Well, letâ€™s see. I left the Nuclear Power School in 1981, the end of the year, and then I was a full-time mom and wife to my Active Duty Naval Officer husband and we moved around the country. The short version of that is that we lived in lots of duty stations, went one coast and the other, and we ultimately moved to New York in 19 - no, in 2000. We moved here in 2000. And my husband was - I was still a Reservist. I was finishing up my last year as a Reservist. My husband had already retired from the Navy. He had gone to one civilian job up in Chicago. After five years, we got lured to come down here to New York by a former Commanding Officer that we had both worked for; in fact, it was the same one from Nuclear Power School that I was talking about earlier, and he got hired down here. And he was talking to somebody who said he had graduated from West Point. And I had had a friend who had graduated from the Naval Academy, and had just gone back on Active Duty the year before to go teach at the Naval Academy for five years. He had been a Reservist with me, and I also knew him at Nuclear Power School, so a lot of these things, people come back in your lives. And I had mentioned to my husband on the way moving here that â€œI know West Point is somewhere near where weâ€™re going to live. Wouldnâ€™t it be cool to teach there?â€ And so when he met somebody from West Point, the conversation kind of went, â€œOh, my wife thinks it would be great to teach at West Point.â€ â€œWhat does she teach?â€ â€œWell, she has a degree in Computer Science.â€ â€œOh, I have a friend whoâ€™s a classmate who teaches Computer Science there. Why donâ€™t you give me the information about her?â€ And West Point had had Naval Officers teaching here for many years in many departments, and the Department of Electrical Engineering-Computer Science, where I work, had had a Naval Officer who was leaving, and the Navy wasnâ€™t replacing her. So our Deputy Department Head was really interested in replacing her by another Naval Officer - you know, just the diversity of experience that it brings to the Department.

And so when they got the e-mail about me, he called me up and I came in, and we were trying to see if I could come back on Active Duty. I was Commanding Officer of my last Reserve unit at the time, and spoke to my Admiral, who checked to see, and she said the ability for me to go on Active Duty at the time was going to be really hard. And Iâ€™m guessing because the number of Active Duty O6s is controlled by Congress; this is my guess. I have no idea, but Iâ€™m guessing that there just wasnâ€™t room for them to just bring on an O6, which meant that it might impact promotions of other people. So she just told me that it wasnâ€™t going to work out. So I got back to them and I said, â€œI canâ€™t do this as a Naval Officer.â€ But they had two faculty members, civilians, who were going on sabbatical over the next two years, and they said, â€œWell, why donâ€™t you come and teach in place of the first one? And if youâ€™re happy and weâ€™re happy, you can do the second year.â€

Interviewer:

So when did you start teaching here?

Susan Schwartz:

I started teaching in the fall of 2001.

Interviewer:

So you were here for 9/11.

Susan Schwartz:

I was, and that was a very interesting time.

Interviewer:

Will you tell me about what you were doing that day?

Susan Schwartz:

Oh, absolutely. My course sometimes has - the course was this Information Technology Intro course, and as a new instructor, I was teaching four sections of students. And sometimes we have a double-block course, so instead of teaching one hour, weâ€™re teaching two hours. And that day happened to be a double block, so I was going to teach four hours straight in the morning. West Point prior to that time had been an open campus, which meant anyone who lived in the community could drive through, stop, picnic, whatever. When I had come that summer, we were giving a tour - we were being given a tour of an area we call Trophy Point, which is kind of like the park, and it has all kinds of cannons and other kinds of Army paraphernalia that are there. And I remember wanting to take a picture of the cannons, and it was this group of tourists, with the little kids climbing all over them, and I had remarked to a friend, you know, â€œI canâ€™t take a picture of the cannons â€˜cause thereâ€™s too many kids on them.â€ On the day of 9/11, I had gone to class, and at the - letâ€™s see.

So I taught for two hours, and as the second class was ending, one of the students came in and said, â€œMaâ€™am, did you hear? A plane had flown into the World Trade Center.â€ I happened to have had a friend who worked at the World Trade Center, who was one of the people who had to climb down out of it on the previous attack, so my first thought was â€œI wonder how she is doing.â€ She was okay; she ended up she had gone to work late that day and never got to work, so she was fine. But I didnâ€™t know that at the time. And then one of my colleagues said that he had heard that the military was shooting planes out of the sky. Rumors fly everywhere in this kind of thing. And so the students came in, and I said, â€œWe got to work. Letâ€™s go to class.â€ So we taught. At the break between the two hours and the second one, there was more rumors going on.

Interviewer:

And of course this is before the internet was quite as prevalent. I mean people got their information differently -

Susan Schwartz:

Right.

Interviewer:

In 2001.

Susan Schwartz:

Well, as a computer scientist, we were using the internet, but the rest of the world probably wasnâ€™t as -

Interviewer:

Right.

Susan Schwartz:

Comfortable using it. And so we finished class, we tried to finish class, the fourth hourâ€™s teaching, and we actually turned the TV on, and we saw the burning buildings. And I think one of them had collapsed by then, but it was just sort of surreal, and I think everybody in the Department, when I came downstairs - â€˜cause during all the news thing, I didnâ€™t really see it because I was teaching. I came downstairs and we were all just glued to the monitors just to watch what was going on, and like everybody else, youâ€™re just in shock. And the fact that youâ€™re only 50 miles away from New York City, it just - it hits home. Itâ€™s military. Itâ€™s close. Probably the biggest impact was the next day, because we went from this open campus to total lockdown, especially because of the Cadets. The whole thing was about the safety of the Cadets, because you didnâ€™t know what was going on, and you knew the plane had gone down the Hudson River. That meant it went right past West Point when it flew down the Hudson. And I taught at 7:30 in the morning.

And there was only going to be one gate open at West Point, and I knew that there was going to be a problem, â€˜cause they were checking everybodyâ€™s car. It didnâ€™t

matter that we had base stickers on our car and that we had IDs. They had the dogs. They had the mirrors underneath the car. And I knew it was going to be bad. I got to the gate at 6:00 in the morning, and it took - and there were only nine cars in front of me - and it took one hour for me to get into the gate.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Susan Schwartz:

But there were people who actually turned around and went home 'cause they didn't get in there. And they finally figured it out, but it just took a few days before, you know, who can get on base? You can't get on base. Where can you park? And so it was a interesting time to be here.

Interviewer:

How do you think what have been the changes you've seen in sort of the Cadet population? Obviously, I assume there are more women Cadets in each succeeding class, because there's been a increase in

Susan Schwartz:

Right.

Interviewer:

The proportion. What have you seen as sort of the changes, or what to you perceive to be the changes in the Cadets for the role of women in the Cadet Corps?

Susan Schwartz:

I think -

Interviewer:

I'm not sure that's very articulate; forgive me.

Susan Schwartz:

Well, you know, it's interesting, because when I first got here, most of the, you know, the First Captain, who's the head Cadet - the First Captain, and the Regimental Commanding Officers, they were all men. They were all Seniors, but they were all guys, and if a girl got one of those - I remember the first time when there was a woman who was the First Captain. It was a really, big deal. Nowadays, when - there's a Cadet who I've known since she was a Plebe. She's one of the Regimental Commanders. She's just one of the Regimental Commanders. It's not like, "Oh my gosh, we have a woman who's a Regimental Commander." So it's become not a big deal when they're assigned to a leadership position. It was a big deal when I first got here, I think because they were - also, when I first got here, my first year, the students that were here, they came here not in a time of war.

So it was later years, those who were coming, who actually came and knew the country was at war, and knew they were going to go to war, that I think there was also a remarkable interest in people saying, "Well, gee, you came here and you know you're going to war." Whereas the group I first taught, they stayed despite the fact that now we were going to be going to war. So I think that was a difference, and I think they all know that - that's what they knew. They knew that they were going to be serving overseas in a war capacity. And I think that's men and women, both.

Interviewer:

And how do you think that changed the type of Cadets that came to the Point, or how does that change sort of life at West Point?

Susan Schwartz:

Life at West Point changed more because I think the changes in curriculum; how they were doing Military Science courses, how they were doing Summer Training. Some of the courses maybe had more of an emphasis on what the Army needs. We stood up a second course in IT that is taught to the Juniors here at West Point, and it's about military systems, and so there's much more of what kind of IT should we be teaching that really enhances their ability to do their job as Officers? So there was much more of that going on



here. I think theyâ€™re still kids; I think theyâ€™re still the same students who go to college, they were still in that group. But I think the fact that they came and they were willing to serve at that level - I think there was more of that kind of thought process to the people coming here. But I donâ€™t think that it was a male-female thing.

Interviewer:

Whereas for the kids afterward, the possibility was real; it was a real -

Susan Schwartz:

Right. And I think more interaction with their parents about this. And I was the Faculty Advisor for one of the choirs here, and I traveled with them for eight and a half years and got to meet many parents. And I think the anxiety of parents who, when their son or daughter was first thinking about going to the military, it became - their anxiety was much more so, because now the reality to them was that their child could be put in harmâ€™s way. And so I remember spending more time with some of the parents who I got to know, saying, you know, â€œTheyâ€™re going to learn what they need to learn to keep themselves safe. I canâ€™t guarantee it, but the percentages are on your side.â€ And fortunately, all those parents that I had to say that to, their children all did come back safe, so Iâ€™m happy that I didnâ€™t have to lie to them.

Interviewer:

How do you think life - what other ways has life at West Point changed over the past 14 years that youâ€™ve been here?

Susan Schwartz:

Well, this year, the class of 2018 that just entered, for example, the number of women is up to 20% now. And it used to be anywhere I think from 14 to 16%. Iâ€™ve noticed that in our classes, weâ€™ve always had it - I went to a conference back in 2002, I think, and just started finding out about the research theyâ€™ve done with women in classrooms. And what they found out is that you need to have sort of a critical mass of women in a group to have no woman feel like sheâ€™s the person speaking for all womanhood. So we took that seriously, and so weâ€™ve always tried to make sure that every section of our course either had at least three or four women in it, or no women, just to make it more comfortable for them. And that has worked really well, because unless the woman has a great sense of self, itâ€™s hard for them to be in a classroom with 17 guys.

Interviewer:

Do you think West Point as an institution has grown to be comfortable with women?

Susan Schwartz:

I think theyâ€™re more comfortable. I think if you talk to female Cadets, itâ€™s still not exactly where it needs to be. I still think that sometimes women still are judged by how they look, much more so than how men are judged like that. I think itâ€™s way better. I think that women can achieve. I think that there are women in the Tactical Officer community now, who are the senior positions back in the barracks, so I think thereâ€™s more women there, and I think thereâ€™s more of an ease. But I still think that if you talk to some of the Cadets, thereâ€™s still the - there are still people who donâ€™t think women should be here. And I think that, you know, it goes back to where people come from, you know? You know, if they come from homes that they think that only men should serve, then thatâ€™s going to be what they bring to the Academy. And what I hope is that as theyâ€™re here for four years, they learn to get past that.

And since I only work predominately with Freshmen these days, itâ€™s hard to say exactly whether it does get to where it needs to be, but I think itâ€™s getting better. I still think thereâ€™s a way to go, but I think society in general still is not there. I mean why else would they still be talking about equal pay for equal work, you know? We represent - I donâ€™t think weâ€™re a total microcosm of the entire population that come here, because these are people who obviously are willing to serve in the military, and I think weâ€™re at 1% of the country serves. But I think that we still represent society values and society thoughts and processes, and sometimes we have to teach them how to get along with each other in a professional manner, and not make it a male-female thing, but make it,

you know -

Interviewer:

Well, thereâ€™s an interesting question, too - whether the military in some cases leads society; was it whether it reflects society or in some cases leads society.

Susan Schwartz:

Thatâ€™s true, you know. I mean the military -

Interviewer:

And Iâ€™m thinking back to 1948 and integration -

Susan Schwartz:

Right.

Interviewer:

Of -

Susan Schwartz:

They integrated. They brought women in. Now weâ€™ve gotten rid of Donâ€™t Ask, Donâ€™t Tell, so that sexual preference is also not an issue. And whatâ€™s interesting is that I think that the military plans for those kind of things because they can. They can write - they can tell us how they expect things to be. They can train us on it, and then they just do it. Where society you canâ€™t get everybody together in a room and say, â€œOkay, this is what weâ€™re going to be doing. This is whatâ€™s expected of you, and thereâ€™s no ifs, ands, or buts.â€ You canâ€™t do that with society, but you can do that in the military, and so I think weâ€™ve handled it well.

Interviewer:

And certainly when you look at it in a broad perspective, you know, itâ€™s a story about - itâ€™s a narrative of barriers continually coming down, which brings us to the whole rule against combat exclusion for women.

Susan Schwartz:

Right.

Interviewer:

Iâ€™m just wondering, what do you hear from - do you hear anything from the Cadets regarding the revocation of the combat exclusion rule?

Susan Schwartz:

You know, I thinkâ€ I think itâ€™s on an individual basis. There are women who do not want to go into combat, and theyâ€™re going to choose Branches in the Army where they can possibly do Personnel or things; areas that have less likelihood of getting into a combat situation. But even there, you know, somebody who goes into Transportation - Transportation has not been a safe place for soldiers who do Transportation â€˜cause theyâ€™re out there in the fields with IEDs. So I think that many of the women are just glad that they can choose to do what they want to do, and I donâ€™t think we get women who come here who arenâ€™t willing to go ahead and do that. When I first joined the Navy, I didnâ€™t even - because I was going to teach, and I thought I was only going to be in for four years, I didnâ€™t even consider going to sea, because women did not go to sea when I joined the Navy.

It was over - and by the time women were going to sea and getting qualified to wear the Surface Warfare pin, I was already a Lieutenant, or an O3, and I had two small children at home. And when my Admiral was telling all the women, â€œYou should go get qualified at sea,â€ well, there were hardly enough hours in the day for the people who were actually aboard those ships for the women to actually get qualified to drive ships, so it wasnâ€™t going to happen. And I didnâ€™t even consider the possibility of going to sea, and it took me many years to realize that thatâ€™s really what I signed up for. If the Navy had said, â€œYouâ€™re going to go to sea, and youâ€™re going to deploy, and youâ€™re going to do,â€ I wouldâ€™ve done. But I didnâ€™t - because it wasnâ€™t something that was available to me when I joined the Navy, it was not something that I actually really thought about. But I think the women who come into the Navy today, they know all those things are

out there, and they know that they're going to have those opportunities. So I think it's just a difference of expectations, and then they choose between them. You know, I have friends who are pilots. They would never have not wanted to be a pilot. They had such a great time flying helicopters, and that's a battle billet. You're going to go out, and you're going to - and the possibility of having to eject or be captured, it's out there. So my friends, that's what they do, and they don't question it.

Interviewer:

Any last thoughts you'd like to leave us with? I mean we've covered a fair amount of ground. Anything?

Susan Schwartz:

I think the world still needs to look at how they treat women in terms of equality. I think that the military is trying; I don't think they're there. I mean here at the Academy, they still, the three Generals are men, and the likelihood of one of them being a woman in the Army I think is years away, whereas Air Force, and Coast Guard, and Navy have all had an Admiral or a General in one of those three top positions so far. So I think the Army is farther away from it.

Interviewer:

Why do you think that is? Why do you think it's more tradition-bound?

Susan Schwartz:

I just don't - I just guess they haven't had a woman yet who they're ready to put in that position, you know. It takes time, and I just think that the way that the Army works is different than the way the other services work. And I don't know enough about the Army to actually tell you why it's so; I just know that I've seen it. But I think below those ranks, I think that there are a lot of women here teaching, there are a lot of women as students, there are a lot of women as Tactical Officers now. So I think as that continues to represent society in general, I think you're going to see more opportunities for women as they go forward. And I think that's a good thing. I think that they have come a long way since I first joined the Navy, and it's been kind of fun to be there and to help. I currently work with an organization here on campus that promotes women's leadership called the Corbin Forum, so that's where I do my volunteer time now. And so providing opportunities for them to learn more about being leaders and what makes an effective leader. So that's a good thing, too. I've had a good run, though.

Interviewer:

Right. Well, thank you very much for your time today.

Susan Schwartz:

Thank you for having me.