

Allen, Doris "Lucki" Army 2014

[00:00:14.24] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Born 86 years ago, minus 9 days-- minus 7 days, El Paso, Texas. Went off to college and I taught school after college, after I graduated. I worked on my master's for a moment and taught school. And I joined the military in 1950 in October, Friday the 13th of October.

[00:00:45.55] My brother's experience in the military. And he came back shell shocked we called it at that time, which is now known as PTSD. But I kind of feel like they did something to him. Because that was my thinking, as a kid, as a youngster. And I said, I'm gonna get them for that.

[00:01:04.97] And I didn't think about it until I quit teaching school. My principal told my students, you can chew gum in class. I said, no, you can't chew gum. Yes, you can. So I resigned my job as a teacher. And I said pfft. So, you know, I went and joined the military. I said--

[00:01:23.11] I joined the military. Joined in Jackson, Mississippi, because that's where I was teaching. I went to basic training Fort Lee, Virginia. And after my basic training, my advanced training was entertainment specialist.

[00:01:38.83] And I would like to throw this part in. The reason I wanted to be an entertainment specialist, because I was a musician. And we-- four of us black women, negro women, were qualified. And so they let us have an audition.

[00:01:55.51] So we went to the audition. Everything was fine. We were playing right along.

[00:02:00.31] And some-- we thought she must have had some secret signal with the band. Because the band completely stopped. The four of us kept playing.

[00:02:12.46] And she stopped. Why'd you stop? Well, you didn't tell us to stop. Everybody else did.

[00:02:20.95] So she expected that we would stop at the same time. And we didn't. And she had to really come out then and say, tell us why. Well, sorry, we can't-- don't want-- don't have any negroes in the band.

[00:02:37.51] So the four of us got sent to be entertainment specialists. But I really wanted to be in the band. And I had never asked for anything in the military, an assignment, that I really got.

[00:02:51.82] Didn't ask to be editor of a newspaper. I didn't ask to be in journalism. I did not ask to be in military intelligence.

[00:02:58.36] I did not ask to be a counterintelligence technician. None of that. So my life flowed. I have no regrets about it having flowed that way. But that's the way it flowed.

[00:03:15.30] After basic training, Fort Lee, Virginia, I went to Presidio, San Francisco. And at that time, I was the wrong person I guess. I didn't stay there very long.

[00:03:27.48] I went to-- they sent me to Japan. So I was in Japan from '51 to '53.

[00:03:36.72] DEBBIE COX: During the Korean War.

[00:03:37.44] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: During the Korean War. I went as an entertainment specialist, but they had no one-- the editor of the newspaper, who was Master Sergeant Paul C. Westerman was leaving. They had no one else to do the newspaper.

[00:03:55.89] They looked at the records and saw that, oh, here we have a college graduate. And they had no idea who I was, but the record said college graduate. And they made me the editor of the newspaper because I was a college graduate. I was a PFC, private first class. I said, wow.

[00:04:15.24] So I became editor of the newspaper and that was it. I went into journalism then.

[00:04:25.59] This is Japan occupation, the one over here. And I also have Korean Service and United Nations Service medals.

[00:04:38.25] I went to Fort-- Camp Stoneman, California, where my sister became my commanding officer.

[00:04:46.39] DEBBIE COX: Oh, so your sister was in the military?

[00:04:47.04] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Wonderful time in my life, yes. Yes. She was my commanding officer.

[00:04:52.29] DEBBIE COX: So she was a Women's Army Corps officer.

[00:04:53.73] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Yes, she was. She became the CO, retired-- not retired, she got out as a captain. And one reason she got out, she said because there weren't many black officers at the time. But she was a woman, and a good looking woman. And she was hit on all the time.

[00:05:14.08] She said, I don't want this. This is not what I want. It's enough. It's enough. So I'll do something else. And so she left. But she was my best commanding officer. And yet she's gone on now. And I loved her very dearly.

[00:05:28.24] And I had to-- people thought, because she was my sister, that you're getting over-- and I said, no, because I salute her, just like I salute everybody else. I called her by her name, I called her by her rank.

[00:05:44.01] And I was a Soldier. And when we went to the barracks, or to her house or whatever, then hey, Sis. How you doing? You know, but-- wonderful lady.

[00:05:56.46] And after that I was sent back to Japan. No, they parted us. But I went to Oakland Army Base. And then I went back to Japan from '56 to '58. And I was still in journalism at the time. Public information, actually.

[00:06:18.61] In Japan, I was an E-4. But I was liaison officer between the Japanese and the Americans.

[00:06:33.72] DEBBIE COX: Oh, that's exciting.

[00:06:34.58] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: And I think a lot of those things happened because they looked and here was this college graduate. And then they saw my face. But they couldn't back out, because I was still the only one qualified. But that was Okay, because I think that was meant to be, or whatever. And so there was some good things that came out of that.

[00:06:54.27] And I got stationed back in the States. I went to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. College campus of the United States Army. Good assignment. And I stayed there for quite a while.

[00:07:08.00] But this is truth-telling time, I wouldn't go out with my boss. So I did not get a stripe. I stayed in grade for 12 years as an E-5.

[00:07:20.84] And he was a nice guy and I was a nice lady and all that stuff. But that was-- you know. There were blood stripes at that time. They were not just-- too many stripes, you couldn't get promoted. But it was blood stripes that I could have gotten. But he wouldn't give them to me. He wouldn't recommend me.

[00:07:36.47] So it had nothing to do with my race or color. It had to do with I wouldn't go out with him. So I was stagnating, so to speak, at Fort Monmouth.

[00:07:46.13] And my job at the time, I was public information in journalism. And I also ran the education center. And what else? Whatever. But I kept trying to-- I have to leave here because I'm not gonna get promoted. I'm stagnating as an E-5.

[00:08:00.65] And I started asking for different assignments that I was qualified for. I asked to be an air traffic controller, because that was an open MOS. I asked for something else, a couple of other things. And they wouldn't give them to me. So I finally asked for language school. He says, oh, okay.

[00:08:20.09] But I wanted to take Spanish. And no lie, I speak Spanish. So I said, hey, I'm going to get this one, you know, because I already speak it. And I asked for Vietnamese.

[00:08:31.55] And the reason I asked for Vietnamese, because they weren't going to put me in that language. And there was another, whatever. Something else. You had three choices. And they didn't give me any of them.

[00:08:45.88] And so I went-- took French. And that was a good time. My father died and so I was extended a little bit. But my assignment was to be in the embassy and be able to work with Charles de Gaulle, his group and be a--

[00:09:03.79] DEBBIE COX: In Paris?

[00:09:04.56] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Yes. And the last-- I guess last two weeks I was in school, had my orders and everything. And de Gaulle put y'all out of his country. No-- he said he didn't want Americans in his country anymore. So that's when we left. And I didn't get to go to Paris.

[00:09:27.55] My assignment came out after the language school. The orders said to attend a POW course. What's a POW? I had no idea. It was a Prisoner of War Interrogation Course at Fort Holabird, Maryland. And I was the first enlisted-- no, first military woman formally trained as an interrogator of prisoners of war at Fort Holabird, military intelligence.

[00:09:57.28] So I got into military intelligence that way. I think they looked at a lot of records. And then when I turn up, then it's kinda, oh, okay. Good to have you. You know. And I did my job, obviously. And it was okay.

[00:10:16.90] Vietnam was coming up. But I spent five years at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, either in language lab when I started out, in language lab. But then I got assigned to CONTIC, which is the Continental Army Command Tactical Intelligence Center. Something like that.

[00:10:39.07] And I became as an E-- I got promoted. I was an E-6. I got a job as a Latin America desk officer. Now in that, there were officers and civilians, GS-8s and 9s and things.

[00:11:01.93] But I was a Latin America desk officer. I knew every move that, like, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara made because that was our business to know. And so that's where I was in that.

[00:11:16.39] And then the women were called to go-- we're going to send some women to Vietnam. Heeey, you know? And they picked all these women and sent them to Vietnam. And I didn't go. They didn't-- how dare you not choose me? But that was all right.

[00:11:33.76] But then I think, six months later, I got assigned to Vietnam. I was the only woman on the plane with all those guys. That wasn't bad.

[00:11:46.29] But about two months before I went to Vietnam, I stopped reading anything having to do with Vietnam. Because I wanted to say, hey I'm going to Vietnam. I'm going fresh. And I'll have no notions, and be able to do whatever it is.

[00:12:02.71] When I got on the plane, finally going to Vietnam, I was reading. And I read all these-- hey, I had the whole order of battle battle for Vietnam.

[00:12:14.61] We knew where all the American troops were, all the allied troops were. Wow. So if I know it, reading the newspapers, why wouldn't they know it? The enemy had to know. Because they read the same papers I am. Geez.

[00:12:31.99] Well, that outfit was there. That unit was there. We're going there. And it was amazing to me.

[00:12:37.11] And so when I finally got to my first assignment in Vietnam, I was assigned to an intelligence unit. But as an interrogator.

[00:12:51.09] It was not expeditious, if you will, to be an interrogator of prisoners of war. By the time they got to the headquarters, you know, everybody knew everything, all the tactical information that would count.

[00:13:06.84] So I did a couple of interrogations. But it just didn't make sense. So I'd sit there-- what am I going to ask them? But it was okay. It's not that I wasn't capable, I'm quite capable. But I decided to do something else. So I became an intelligence analyst.

[00:13:25.17] So as an intelligence analyst-- and here again, when we don't know what to do with her, let's put her in the Army Operations Center. Woman? Yeah. The first woman at Army Operations Center. I was a spec-7 at that time. And there were only 22 of us in the entire military. Period. End of report. So I was one of those which was, it was [CLICKS TONGUE], you know.

[00:13:49.83] But in the Army Operations Center, I did the intelligence. I did all the order of battle, all of the analysis, all of the whole thing. So I was the one turning out all this stuff. And that--.

[00:14:06.27] DEBBIE COX: What year was that?

[00:14:07.05] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: 1967, the end of 1967. And at that time, that's when I was reading all this stuff. And that's when I predicted-- don't say prediction. I wrote it down, we're going to be attacked by 50,000 Chinese. Somebody do something.

[00:14:29.98] I was the one that put out that. I didn't know. I didn't know a thing about Tet. You know, what's this Tet bit? I didn't know anything about any special holidays. But as I was reading all this stuff, said, ooh, put it together and I wrote a paper.

[00:14:49.42] 50,000 Chi-- we're going to be attacked-- and all these people-- . And the reason I put 50,000 Chinese, I wasn't there long enough to know that there was such a thing as, you know, big NVA, North Vietnamese Army.

[00:15:01.06] And I thought, we've killed all the Viet Cong. So how-- ? You know, where are these people coming from? So that's the only place I could-- I made up some people as far as where they were coming from.

[00:15:14.33] But as you know, Tet happened. But I called it 30 days ahead of time. I said, you better watch out, because this is going to happen. And they didn't do it. So I felt like-- excuse me.

[00:15:27.97] Maybe 20,000 people are on that Wall in Washington D.C. because they didn't listen. And the reason I think they didn't listen, I still believe it today: black, WAC, intelligence, spec-7, and enlisted.

[00:15:46.57] Had I been-- truth be told, had I been a blonde cutie, maybe they woulda, mighta listened. I doubt it.

[00:15:55.00] But if I had been a man, they would have listened, I believe. Had I been an officer, maybe they would have listened. But that's-- being a woman, being black, being WAC, and those things.

[00:16:08.93] And I think that's some of the reasons that I was-- [CLICKS TONGUE]. incredible. You know, how you going to believe that? You don't know anything. You don't know a thing. You know.

[00:16:18.65] Finally, well-- because I think my G2 believed kind of, you know. But I said some things before they kind of listened to. But they didn't listen to me. But he sent me-- I asked permission to take it up to Saigon, to MACV headquarters. And he said, okay.

[00:16:36.04] So I drove up to MACV. And I showed it to one person and he says, eh, well, I'm going to take it. And they went up the chain of command showing it.

[00:16:45.73] And got up to whoever it was. And he came back out. And they passed it back down, well, we don't-- we know about this, and just-- . And Tet happened. And well, I stayed.

[00:17:02.86] DEBBIE COX: How long did you work in the Army Ops Center?

[00:17:06.58] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: First, I was at-- I stayed at USARV for a year. And then I went to 1st Log for another year and a half.

[00:17:17.90] DEBBIE COX: So you were in Vietnam two and a half years?

[00:17:19.99] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Three years. I went up to-- they weren't going to promote me, or anything. I was gonna have to retire as a E7. I said, oh, no. So I applied for warrant, and--

[00:17:29.92] I applied for warrant as an intelligence analyst. And they said, oh, no. You're an interrogator. So I became a warrant officer, interrogation. Of course, I still did intelligence analysis.

[00:17:50.94] I reported that we were going to have-- there were some 122 millimeter rockets around our perimeter. And they were going to do another Tet Offensive on us. And I told-- reported, wrote it down.

[00:18:09.91] And I got permission then to go to the II Field Force and tell them. And I was standing there in the board, at the war board at the time we called it. And I explained to them what was gonna happen, this is what's going to happen. This is what it is. Agh, pfft.

[00:18:29.78] And I said, but-- because what they do is with 122 millimeter rockets, they'd lay them-- you know, sneak 'em in. Lay 'em down. Cover 'em up.

[00:18:39.24] And then they'd come in. Maybe a workman-- whoever. But you didn't know whether they were carrying a log or whatever. So they did this.

[00:18:44.79] And they would also have-- we called them aiming sticks, which is just two pieces of wood you put together. And then when the time came you just pull the little thing, pull 'em up. Put the 122 millimeter rocket on it. And it would come into the compound. Okay.

[00:19:01.59] So I said, this is going to happen. It's going to be bad, and more details. But somebody else came up and said, well, where did you get this information? I said, I'm intelligence analyst, you know. And somebody else came up and said, agh, this is not right. Agh, we can't do anything.

[00:19:19.98] And I stood there and it hurt my feelings so badly, because I cried. And you cry-- and it hurt me to cry in front of men. But I changed-- had to change my whole thing. One reason that I cried, I had to start thinking of me. As long as I thought of me, I could stand there and keep going at it. Had I let it go, then-- and it hurt my feelings so bad.

[00:19:43.14] And the reason I cried, 'cause I said, Jesus, they gonna come-- it's going to hit me. So stick with it, Luck. Stick with it. So I stuck with it and stuck with it. And they dismissed me. I said, okay. I cried then, but they dismissed me. I went on back to my office.

[00:19:59.22] Couple of days later, they put out some duster fire and they got four secondary explosions. Two days later, they put out some more-- an attack. And they got 117 secondary explosions, up to 100 feet high.

[00:20:18.09] And all I could do-- I went out, I got up on top of one of the bunkers, and I stood up there. And I cried. And I laughed. And I was so happy. But there was nobody I could go-- I wasn't gonna-- I told them. I mean, that wasn't important. What was important is they got 'em.

[00:20:35.28] And that particular incident was-- it brought it home to me: No matter, you've got to stick with it anyway. So then I went over to the 1st Log. One incident over there. I told-- they came and said, well, what's going to happen down the road?

[00:20:55.56] I said not take this convoy up to Song Bé. Ah, they've got no troops up there. They took the convoy up to Song Bé. And I told them-- and this is not I told you so,

[00:21:06.66] but they lost five flatbeds. They lost five KIA and 17 wounded. So they came back, I guess he came back about a week and a half later. And-- oh, by the way Sarge, what you got going up that way?

[00:21:27.04] So my thing has always been, stick with it no matter what. And just-- you have to do your job. If you don't do your job, you know, a lot of stuff could happen. But if I say, Well, I'm not going to-- pfft. And so that was that incident.

[00:21:45.46] One reason I came back from Vietnam, because-- I didn't see my name at first, but somebody said, oh, they're going to get you. But I was on a hit list, captured NVA document.

[00:21:58.37] And then when I got stationed in Saigon, I became the document translations officer. So that's where all the captured documents came. And I saw my name there. And I said, I'm going home. So that's one of the reasons I came home.

[00:22:22.82] DEBBIE COX: What year did you come home?

[00:22:24.14] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: 1970, I think September. September '70. I didn't have much of an idea, mainly because the only ones I knew were my maids, you know, and people that cleaned up the--

[00:22:47.86] I never worked with Vietnamese. Even when I took over the translation branch. That's when I-- only time I did. But they were translators, so they did translations. So I talked to them all the time.

[00:22:59.99] But as far as just the Vietnamese people? They were okay. I did lots downtown, you know, and stuff. Good people. No problems.

[00:23:13.92] I kind of came upon-- the ladies were-- the maids were flying kites at noon. We didn't know why. And we found out that's one of the ways they were signaling intelligence-- they were getting intelligence out. They'd fly the kite. It was up to how high they flew them, and color of the kites.

[00:23:29.95] And they gave out a lot of information with this kite flying. We finally made them stop flying kites.

[00:23:40.72] We worked from six to six, 12 hours a day. And sometimes, when the-- hit the fan (gosh, I'm getting good.) I've worked 22 hours, gone home and laid down at my bunk and got a couple hours sleep, and gone back. So I did that four or five times. So that was no big thing, you know. You're just doing it.

[00:24:08.08] And you never thought about: I'm tired, or-- because it was just we're all together just doing it. Like I think most Soldiers do that. Also let me include Marines and all those other folks who don't think they're Soldiers. But when it's time to come, we come. Period.

[00:24:30.90] I must admit, I ate very well. And I'll tell you why. Because I knew lots of people.

[00:24:38.89] And so when the steaks came in, go to the officer's club or whatever. Other cans, big cans of big shrimp, you know, big things. I kind of got some. So I ate-- I ate okay.

[00:24:58.42] But many days, I ate hot water and a bottle of ketchup from the dining room, from mess hall, and made some hot soup. We had C-rations. And we'd trade C-rations. So the food was just food. It was okay, because that's what we had.

[00:25:24.41] I'm an opportunist. If you have a bad place, you make it good. I took the opportunity to make it good. So my roommate and I, we had a room together. But we had a

partition in our room, which we got. We had carpets. We had-- pretty good, you know. So we were pretty good.

[00:25:55.08] I still have them. They're wonderful. Some are here right now. It's just absolutely great. I stated somewhere, I had written that there were prejudices and all that, but I would not trade my time in Vietnam.

[00:26:14.46] I wouldn't give it for a million-- trade my friends for a million dollars. If somebody said, here, take the money. Take five million, ten million, that'd have nothing to do with these friends that you've made. And like I said, I still have them.

[00:26:34.70] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Drank. There was a nice fellow who brought me, every day, a fifth of Crown Royal. And I think I consumed most of it. I thank God every day, even now, 40 years later, I thank God that when I got back here, I was not an alcoholic. I drank every day.

[00:26:57.74] The point is, I drank after work, until about 10 or 11. And I had fun. Never got drunk, not drunk. And then you'd take a shower and go to bed.

[00:27:10.45] Or you'd take a shower in the morning and go to work and do what you had to do. If I had to work 14 hours, 20 hours, it didn't make any difference. When you got home, you'd go drink

[00:27:20.00] A lot of my friends, I hate to say it, but they did. A lot of 'em smoked pot. I don't know if anybody used any other drugs, but they did that. And I drank, yes.

[00:27:32.65] But I had one clean day a week. I never drank on Wednesdays because that was my clean-up-- I called that my clean-up day.

[00:27:40.93] And it was good. It never was-- they'd come to me, you're not going to smoke? No. I'm not going to drink. And I smoked a lot, too. Because I had-- Benson & Hedges would send-- every month, on the right day, I would send them a check for six dollars and they'd send me five cartons of Benson & Hedges cigarettes. Never out of cigarettes.

[00:28:10.24] And another thing about Vietnam, I got called go to the bunker-- well, several times, but-- incoming, incoming. And I was so tired, I stayed in bed. And my commanding officer had to come in and get me out of the bunk.

[00:28:25.78] And when she got me and I got up, and I took my-- I took my flak-- my flak jacket. I don't know if I had my helmet. Yeah, I had my helmet and my flak jacket, but I didn't forget my bottle of Crown Royal. No, it didn't take my-- I didn't take my flak jacket. But I didn't forget my bottle of Crown Royal and my cigarettes. Are you crazy? No, I just--.

[00:28:58.84] It was a good time. When you feel like you-- you know, you did it. And I'm doing something. And even-- even when they didn't believe me, I believed me. And you can either--

like I said, you can either give up or you can do what you got to do. I absolutely enjoyed-- I enjoyed doing what I was doing.

[00:29:28.33] And I still believe-- I still believe even then I was a conscientious objector, though. I think war is-- war is terrible. But my thing is, when I was in Vietnam, and I've thought of this even before and after the years, what I was doing to myself, for myself, I was saving lives. I was not contributing to somebody getting killed.

[00:29:56.24] So you save-- 'cause I don't kill them, because all people are dead anyway. But the point is, I figured my job is to keep us safe. And the way we can keep us safe is to give them good intelligence. So--.

[00:30:14.21] The whole damn thing, not being funny. It's one-- it's all. It's not a good piece, a bad piece, it's all. And it's all right there. And I don't want to forget Vietnam ever. And it's not good, but I don't want to forget it. It's in my heart. It's in my mind. It's a big part of my life. And I don't think I did any better work than anybody else. I don't think I did anything real special.

[00:30:50.99] Well, but everybody that same special job of being-- we did what we were supposed to do. As women, they didn't want us there in the first place. And a lot of people say, well, how did you stay there so long? I stayed there so long because number one-- number one, I didn't lie to anybody. I didn't-- I just didn't lie to anybody.

[00:31:08.15] Number two, I read-- I knew regulations-- and that was in my whole career though. I knew all the regulations of all these people up here, all these people down here, and all around me. You read the regulations, you read the SOP and you got it all. And you read that. And you don't lie to anybody.

[00:31:22.37] And I have to say, in my words, I didn't take no shit. And what I mean by that is I wasn't going to be usurped. I was going to usurp anybody. We're in this together and let's do that. And don't get upset because somebody doesn't like you. Even when they didn't believe me, and it hurt, but the kick is, so?

[00:31:51.09] And again, this is not to be facetious, all of them were good days. I was still-- I'm still alive. I'll tell you one scary day.

[00:32:03.26] DEBBIE COX: Okay.

[00:32:03.57] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Scary day, incident. I got to Vietnam, Tan Son Nhut, in October of 1967. I stood there in the airport a long time because they didn't know where to assign me. Only woman there. And I even went to the-- I stood up against the wall, turned my face to the wall so the enemy wouldn't take a picture of me. I was paranoid.

[00:32:28.08] But anyway, when I got to the 90th Repo Depot (replacement depot), they gave me a white towel and a white washcloth. And I'd been in the country about seven or eight hours by then. And I got to-- I went to take a shower. And I'm standing there. And I'm washing myself and I say-- I'm by myself and I say-- oh, my god, I'm turning white.

[00:32:58.32] It was the clay, the red clay. And I was-- it was-- that's my vivid-- my vivid moment of-- uuugh. And I said, oh, okay. And when I found out, it was okay. It was really-- I don't care how long you stayed there-- two hours and you're going to get my color. You know, kids you saw said, oh look, I got some sun, look, I got some sun. I'm brown. I'm brown as you are. I said, no baby, because I'm getting sun too. Come on, let's get back to this.

[00:33:38.80] Quite a bit, especially at the clubs. I think I had-- I had quite a bit-- especially the Australians. I had to kind of work with them quite a bit. But everybody I worked with were fine. I worked with some French. None through work.

[00:33:58.32] DEBBIE COX: Oh, okay.

[00:33:59.56] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Well, yes, some through work, but what they did was come in and watch me give them a briefing or something. But we didn't--. I'll tell you one of the things that happened as the only woman in the operations center at the 1st Log. General Ryan, the PAC-- CINCPAC, came. And the colonel came and he said, I want you to brief the general. I said, okay.

[00:34:30.94] And I found out later, the guys were upset with me because why'd they pick you instead of me? sort of thing. Not right out, but grapevine and all, you knew that's what happened. But when I finished briefing General Ryan, he asked, he said, by the way, what's that on your sleeve? And I said, oh, that's my triple canopy jungle. Because as a spec-7, they looked like this. That's a spec-7.

[00:35:06.49] DEBBIE COX: Oh.

[00:35:08.86] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: So that was a biggie-- biggie thing right there.

[00:35:13.81] DEBBIE COX: Yes, ma'am.

[00:35:14.17] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: And all he could see because my sleeves were rolled up, so all he could see was this the top part. Right? So I said, it's my triple canopy jungle. I said, yes, I'm a spec-7. And he said, oh, wow.

[00:35:31.33] He said, well, I want to tell you something. He said, you know, I have been briefed all over, everywhere. I've been briefed at CINCPAC, I've been briefed at this place. He said, I want to tell you something. You are the only person that has come in here and told me the whole truth, with no bull, just you told the whole story.

[00:35:52.18] And I've found out more that you've told me than anybody else this whole time. And he said that in front of people. So I said, oh, wow. Thank you, sir. And I think one of those things is when you're doing what you're doing, you're just doing what you're doing. And if it works, it works. If it doesn't, it wasn't your fault. And I never wanted to go home saying, well, they did such and such, or I didn't, blah, blah, blah. I was: you turn your mourning into dancing.

[00:36:26.70] From Vietnam, got three bronze stars from Vietnam. I have this one that's saying I was in Vietnam. I had ten campaigns in Vietnam. And this says I was in Vietnam. But then there's another one I don't have on right now. I have the Vietnamese-- the Vietnam Gallantry Cross.

[00:36:55.03] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: As often as possible. That's been my-- that's my stuff. I came home-- I came home a couple times on leave. And I live up from the Coliseum in Oakland, California. And the A's were playing. And every time they got a home run, the cannon would go off.

[00:37:16.57] Well, I was at home this day and the cannon went off. And I started running. I was running through the house. Thank God my sister had been my commanding officer, had been, you know-- and she was able to-- and my mother grabbed me. Because I was out the door into the bunker somewhere.

[00:37:32.74] But I was gone. That's the way it hit me. And they held me and they calmed me down. But my family knew me. I knew my family, and my extended family, and the whole bit. So I've never been away from family.

[00:37:55.79] That was their problem, not mine. And the thing was they were doing that before I left Not as heavily, but like: why are we going to war? And like I said, I came home a couple of times between. And I was a very avid fan of the news. I wanted to know what was happening.

[00:38:19.79] But a lot of things I missed. But I think I missed-- when I say missed-- like a lot of music came out at that time that-- a lot of things happened that I didn't know about. That's okay, but-- I was not in any way separated from home.

[00:38:41.41] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: 1970, in September, for my house it was wonderful. All my friends met me. I was never-- I was never harassed. I was never denied-- say, oh, you're home, let's party. Okay. But I didn't feel the-- I knew it was there. I'm from California. My best friend came back. And she took off her-- like, they treat her like just a piece of dung.

[00:39:19.94] She was so happy to be home. And I'm here, and I got on my uniform and stuff. And she threw it away. And she said, take the damn thing. And she threw away her medals. She said afterwards that she was sorry she did that. But no, they didn't want her back here.

[00:39:35.80] And they've asked-- I have been asked, well, who'd you kill over there? And I just say, stop it, I didn't kill nobody. And I think it's-- and I've seen so many of my friends just really have, really, really hard times. And I think my family helped me through a lot of stuff. Like when I acted crazy, they were able to calm me down. But I've had-- PTSD didn't hit me until the Gulf War, which was a while after the Vietnam War, that it really hit me, that, oh--.

[00:40:20.71] I was warrant officer my last six months, I think about six months in Vietnam. That's when I took over the-- I was in charge of the translation branch, document exploitation center. And that was good. And then as a warrant officer. Having been enlisted, you kind of look at them just like we're coworkers because-- of course, you're the boss.

[00:40:47.80] But you know how to work with these people, so you get along well and all that-- good thing. But I went to officers-- to warrant officers school. They actually have a warrant officers school. And when I got there, that was okay. And I'm the only woman in the class. But they started this stuff.

[00:41:07.46] The first thing when you walk in class, the first thing they do is tell dirty jokes. Tell a dirty joke. And I got up and I just walked out. And they asked me where-- they were much upset with me. Where are you going? And I said, I came to class-- I'm in class. I didn't come here to listen to dirty jokes. But you can't--. And I said, well--. And so they didn't tell dirty jokes.

[00:41:31.96] And at the end of the class, when it was time to stop, I'd get up and I'm going. Because I came here-- I'm not here to listen to jokes. I'm here to learn something or whatever. But then one class, they really got upset with me because the class was about protocol, when you take your wife-- when you and your wife get on base-- you take your wife over to present her to the general.

[00:41:59.71] And I got up and walked out. I was on my way out. Where you going? I said, I'm sorry, this does not pertain to me at all. I don't have a wife. And of course, everybody cracked up. And I kept walking out the door. But I heard a lot of talk, a lot of hagggle for that. But that was a serious thing to do.

[00:42:17.95] But as a warrant officer, I had only one really incident. I got to 7th Infantry Division, military intelligence attachment. And I was the CI, the counter-intelligence officer. So there were two of us-- three of us assigned at the same time. And they said, well, we're going to make him the-- he's going to be the commander of the--. And I said, just a moment, please.

[00:42:46.90] He said, yes? I said, I was sent here for that job. So, well, yeah, but now we're going to make him--. I said, wait a minute. How much time-- how much time does he have in grade? What's your date of rank? He said what it was. I said, well, if that's the case, I'm the commander. And if that's not the case, then I'm not going to-- I'm not going to work for him.

[00:43:15.59] Of course, that was-- like how dare you? sort of thing. But they couldn't do anything about it. And that's why I always taught our women, you must be-- don't be-- you can be aggressive, but be aggressively assertive. And don't let people just walk over you. And you say it. And that's it. You don't be nasty. You do what you're supposed to do.

[00:43:35.32] Do your job. But know your job. If you know what you're supposed to, then you do it. Then you salute and say, yes, sir, or yes, ma'am, or whatever. And that's the way I handled that. So I became the intelligence officer for the-- the counter-intelligence officer. And we had a big, big, big exercise at Fort Irwin, California.

[00:44:03.52] And that's where we go out and you make things really crazy for the troops so they'll learn how to do these things. And it was so crazy. And they didn't know how to do them. And I kind of chuckled. But I was commended. Now the person, whoever the counterintelligence officer was, was commended. And it was me. So, oh, well. Okay.

[00:44:26.50] DEBBIE COX: That's excellent.

[00:44:27.85] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: And I was supposed to get the Legion of Merit, by the way, for it. One other thing. I wrote in the WIU, the Weekly Intelligence Update, I wrote there was a chemical round being used. And I called in the guy that-- well, I called them in and had it drawn up.

[00:44:51.19] And I put it out in the WIU, distributed it. It would have probably never gotten anywhere, but it was in the WIU. The commander of the 3rd MEF, 3rd Marine-- the force up at the Thua Thien, he read this thing on a Wednesday saying that there was a chemical round now out, blah, blah, blah. And it was all written out there, how it worked and the whole bit.

[00:45:13.93] And so he got it on-- I think on a Wednesday, he said. On a Friday, they got some mortar rounds in. He said, no don't touch them. They might be duds, but to hold off. And after a while, they exploded. And he sent down a memorandum that whoever wrote that however that got to him, was supposed to get a Legion of Merit. And like I say, I have three Bronze Stars.

[00:45:47.09] DEBBIE COX: Well, your intelligence was spot on.

[00:45:49.03] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Spot on. And like I say, I don't say that for-- I say that because those things happen. And we can either live with them or we can-- I'm retired. I'm happy.

[00:46:12.33] I had no problems, like I said. I did get a-- I don't think of it as a problem I think of it as real cute. They assigned-- they didn't know what to do with me, poor babies. Because like I said, be honest, this is who I am. But they didn't know what to do with me.

[00:46:33.13] They assigned a black major to handle me. And he wanted to be my boss and tell me what to do. And I said, come on. He had not-- he'd been to Vietnam, that's true. He was a helicopter pilot. He was a major, but just a helicopter-- not a helicopter-- light observation-- the little observation planes.

[00:47:07.67] What are you going to tell me about intelligence that--? And I was willing to listen, but he didn't-- what he wanted to do is have somebody he can-- and they got this black guy in there because they could say, sit on this black woman, blah, blah, blah.

[00:47:21.17] And my stuff was, like the colonel called me in once-- asked a question, and I went in, and I answered the question. oh, that can't be. That's not that. And I said, but it is. Oh, nah. And I went and got the book. I brought him the regulation. I showed him the regulation. He said, agh. Oh, no, that's not right.

[00:47:43.28] And I said, you know what, talking to you, colonel, it's just like talking to that hole in the wall. We had a little crack, hole behind. It's just like talking to that hole in the wall. And I turned around and walked out. And I think he got very upset. But that's when that started happening of-- so they assigned me to this guy.

[00:47:59.54] And this major left me an assignment to do. I said, okay. He went off for the weekend. He wanted it by Tuesday. No way in the world I could have gotten it because he had everything locked up. Programmed to fail, right? So when he got back, first thing he asked on Tuesday morning, he called me. He says, where is that project I put you on? I said, oh, here it is, right here. And he almost died.

[00:48:26.75] But that's what happened to me a lot of times. It didn't happen just to me. It happened to many women. And you're given-- and you're programmed to fail. And you don't fail. And they don't know what to do about it. And you say, it's okay, sir. That's fine. So they got very upset with me.

[00:48:41.63] But I got a proficiency report. Of course, they changed it. But I got a proficiency report. I think it was-- one-- two areas-- two or three areas were like a two or a three. Because they didn't-- and then they had to change it. But that's what actually my-- that was-- who was it? Somebody, by the time we got up a couple of steps, they said, that-- pfft.

[00:49:08.54] But when they got upset with you, they were upset. And you say, okay, whatever. But you do your job. And that was my whole-- I think my whole Army career, was-- and when we first-- you do the job, And you ask questions later.

[00:49:32.30] I must put it like this: 20 years prior, a young man called me on the phone and said, we'd like to come up and talk to you about maybe giving you some recognition in the Hall of Fame. And he came up and he inter-- not interrogate-- he interviewed me, a short interview. And this was preliminary to something. But that was 20 years before. And then I never heard anything else about it. Period.

[00:50:02.31] So in 2009-- 2008, late 2008, 2009, I got this call. No, I got this letter saying that we're considering you for Hall of Fame. So when I got down to Fort Huachuca that same man-- he was a full colonel, bird colonel. But James Campbell was his name-- James Campbell, whatever.

[00:50:33.93] But at any rate, he was the same guy that had interviewed me. And he told me, well, they sent me-- I got transferred out. So nobody else did anything else about it. The ironic-- the irony of it, the person that chose me was-- he had just become commander. And he was looking through some of the records and stuff.

[00:50:55.04] So he saw my name. and he saw the information on this, whoever this lady was. He looks and says, oh, she's going to the Hall of Fame. And he happened to be General Custer. He's the commander. I says, wow, you know. And so I became the-- they nominated me and I-- they put me in the Hall of Fame.

[00:51:15.11] And there are two black women in the Hall of Fame. One was named the greatest spy during the Civil War. Her name was Mary Bowser. And she was working for Jeff Davis. And she'd listen in on the conversations and read these-- because they thought she was dumb.

[00:51:34.29] They thought she couldn't read. And they-- you know, she's just a dumb nigger maid. And she was taking all that man's stuff and passing it on to General Grant. And she is recognized officially as the person who was the greatest spy in the war as far as that's concerned, because she turned her information over. And that's how the Yankees won basically.

[00:52:00.98] Now, I was very young. And I had heard nothing about this lady. I didn't know-- who is this lady? I didn't know who she was. And her name, like I say, is Mary Bowser. And I've read about her now. And she had a book on her.

[00:52:11.51] But then here they chose me. So I'm the only black American military woman in the Intelligence Hall of Fame. So that was an honor for me. But then when they write out, well, what did she do? And all they could do is give you the assignments. They can't-- go on. They're not allowed. That's all they're supposed to do.

[00:52:33.83] DEBBIE COX: Some of the things are still classified.

[00:52:34.79] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Yeah.

[00:52:40.57] I didn't know it affected my life like it did until, like I said, until the Gulf War. When Bush told his troops-- they were on the ground-- Saddam Hussein, I think it was, whoever, was going to put some gas out so I want you to dig foxholes, get your gas mask, dig some foxholes and put shelter half over your head.

[00:53:08.11] DEBBIE COX: So 1991, the first Gulf War.

[00:53:11.74] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Thank you for knowing. And I said, right then, you know, wow. You can't fight back. And it came to me, that's the same thing that was happening in Vietnam. We were kind of helpless in the sense of there were only certain things you could do. And that's all you can do.

[00:53:32.56] And you can't-- but they sat there in their ivory tower and sent people to war. And that's why I mentioned a while ago, I must be have been a conscientious objector, because I hate war. But the kicks is-- I went for a reason, but all of that, all that, the helplessness, going through the same things, ended it up, it hit me all at once in a sense.

[00:54:02.32] And I don't know that I was in denial. But I think I might have been in denial. Say, oh, that was, you know--. But it's really hit. And it's still here. I have dreams. I never know who my enemy is half the time. I shoot people and they shoot me back. They don't die. I don't die.

[00:54:24.73] And all the things that will-- will I ever get rid of these dreams? And I think I will when I die perhaps. But all of that is still, still here. Like the startle effect is terrible with me. So Vietnam is with me every day.

[00:54:44.44] DEBBIE COX: Your career spanned 30 years.

[00:54:46.24] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Yes.

[00:54:46.96] DEBBIE COX: And when did you retire?

[00:54:49.03] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: 1980.

[00:54:56.18] I saw that, not only for women, for blacks in the military. Negro to black, to colored, to whatever, Afro-American, whatever. But I've seen the whole thing. But yes, for women. People ask me, say, well, do you think women should go-- should be able to go to war? I say, what are you talking about? Women have been in wars since way back. Women have been doing it.

[00:55:26.60] In Korea, they had nurses. You know, we've always been there. We're still there. We couldn't pull a lanyard in Vietnam, but the kick is they're doing it now. They're doing it honorably. And I just-- I commend the women who are volunteers. Well, I was a volunteer also. But who are volunteers and they're doing this. And they're taking a lot of crap, same crap now that we did then.

[00:55:51.80] Yes, we have more generals. Yes, we have more people pulling lanyards. And yes, we have more people, you know-- and fighting. The question they ask me, well, do you think women should? I said, do they want to be? If she wants to go, pfft. What's that got to do with you? She can shoot the gun as well as you can.

[00:56:13.73] Well, would you? No. I don't want to go shoot a gun. I don't want to participate that way. But if somebody-- if they can do the job let them do it. And I feel that way.

[00:56:32.47] It's sort of forgotten. And every time somebody says to me-- somebody said, today or yesterday, said to us at the table, she didn't say, thank you for your service. She said, thank you for-- and she put a little stuff, good stuff behind it. And I was so impressed. Because people say, thank you for your service, out there in the air somewhere.

[00:57:00.54] I think a lot of people have forgotten that there was a Vietnam. And only people who haven't really forgotten are those people in the choir. You know, we preach to-- We tell ourselves. And then some people they want to say, oh, thank you so much for your service. I wrote a thing. And the bottom of it says, you don't really mean it, America, when you say, welcome home. And I still believe that.

[00:57:38.44] I think the Vietnam-- and I'm not including me in the sense-- in one sense, because I'm 50 times blessed. I haven't been treated like a lot of Vietnam veterans have been treated. So it was thankless then. And it's still thankless now. I think we are an afterthought. Even the people out there fighting these wars now, they are an afterthought in one sense. They are treated much better than we were. When I say afterthought, all the people sit up here and they send us to fight their wars.

[00:58:22.29] Say you're fighting for your country. No, I'm fighting because I need pay. I can't get a job. But yeah, I'm fighting for my country. You ask this person over here, I'm not going to war. Pffffh. Go in the military? No, I'm not going to do that. Well, would you fight for your country? Well, yeah, but now I'm--. So we are an afterthought.

[00:58:53.80] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: I wish I could answer that question and really know. Because they've-- you pick out certain people that you think did a good job, and wow, that's my hero. Or you pick out-- you never pick out the cook, but without the cook you couldn't eat, dummy. So every piece of us is important to me. And if other people don't want to love us, I don't care.

[00:59:26.32] Because I think all of us did what we were called to do. I think we did our job well. There are a lot of people out of here still homeless. There are people who have no family, who have nobody. Like people, a lot of people would love to come to reunions like this. They have no money to do that. So they sit there, and they said, geez, I sure wish I could go. But we'll never know who they are.

[00:59:54.89] When you walk in, the first thing the doctor says, well, what hurts you today? What can I do for you today? But if you're never asked the question, how would they know, or how could I get it to you? So the only voice we have is within ourselves. Programs like this project-- because somewhere, someone's going to look at it and say, I didn't know that.

[01:00:21.87] So the more we can say-- because when we get together, we're a force. But that's us. But let's quit impressing us. Let's impress somebody else. Like one of the things they have, well, we're going to have a Veterans Day. Okay, one day. We'll have a Veterans Day. Where did the rest of the 360-some go?

[01:00:55.16] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Be truthful to yourself. Best I can say, don't--. Be free. Be free to be who you are.

[01:01:11.81] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: The Wall? I was there when it was dedicated. The Korean War, I was there when it was dedicated. The Women's Memorial, I was there. And I go to the Women's Memorial. I was sitting there. And they put a-- close-- I got there early. And I was sitting there. And they brought up a big wall, one of those barriers, and put them there in front of me.

[01:01:50.02] And then a whole lot of people came up and stood in front. And I was sitting there in my chair. And I said, wait a minute. Wait a minute, this is not right. So what they did is they cut me off. And so I told somebody about it. And somebody else told somebody about it.

[01:02:11.86] Said, here are the veterans sitting right here, the women veterans, and you've put up barriers. And here come all these other folks. So they eventually took all the-- took some of the people and moved them back. But I said, that's no problem. And I went back the next day and I had a ball, just being there and just being so--. It bothered me, but, so?

[01:02:42.21] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Yes, I've heard about it. Everything, if you notice, takes place in Washington, D.C. And some of us don't have Washington, D.C. money, especially if we live in New Mexico and California. And everything takes place and a lot of people don't have money to go. So I think somehow you should kind of spread it.

[01:03:08.31] Oh, we do spread it around. We have our blobbers. Come on. What they need to know is that, like a lot of shots you get now, a lot of-- you get a heart transplant, you get new legs, new knees, and stuff, all that came from the military having done it and done all the work. And now we give it to you.

[01:03:37.20] So I don't want you-- you don't have to love me and like me, but you have to realize that this country, without me, is nothing. Without that private, it's nothing. And even the general. But the point being, that somebody's out there fighting for your butt. And so, we already know it. The people that need convincing are those other people sit over there who make money because we go to war.

[01:04:09.55] Whoo, let me stop there. You'll have to cut some of that out because that sounds, not subversive, but it's--. It's true stuff. And I truly believe that you love everybody. But the point is those people who sit there and make money and are not accountable-- I wish every senator and every congressperson should have to go to some part of the military and get some of this-- and know what we know.

[01:04:39.82] DEBBIE COX: Chief Warrant Officer Allen, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today. On behalf of the Vietnam 50th Commemorative Commission Oral History Project, I thank you for sharing your insights, your career experiences, and your contributions. You are a trailblazer to those of us women that have served and continue to serve.

[01:05:03.07] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: My pleasure to be here, to be able to do this.

[01:05:07.60] DEBBIE COX: And on behalf of a grateful nation--

[01:05:09.25] DORIS "LUCKI" ALLEN: Thank you.

[01:05:09.64] DEBBIE COX: --we do thank you for your service.

[01:05:10.93] Oh, there it goes again, thank you for your service.