

Diane Madden Ferguson

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Cohen: [00:00:03] Good. I'm Leah Cohen. The oral history and reference manager at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. Today is December 7th, 2021. On this auspicious date, the 80th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, I have the honor of interviewing Petty Officer 3rd Class Diane Madden Ferguson, who is also scheduled to be an E5 Petty Officer, Second Class. Officer Madden served in the U.S. Navy from 1973 to 1978 in various capacities, mostly as an operations specialist and as a Navy recruiter. A few years ago, she published her well-received memoir called *Undertow: A Navy Veteran's Journey through Military Sexual Trauma*. So thank you for coming in today, virtually, so to speak.

Ferguson: [00:01:03] I appreciate the opportunity to contribute, especially on today's date.

Cohen: [00:01:09] Thank you. So we'll begin with your background and then move on to your service and then look a bit at your life post service and consider some reflections.

Ferguson: [00:01:21] All right.

Cohen: [00:01:22] So where and when were you born?

Ferguson: [00:01:26] I was born in West Chicago, Illinois, in the early part of 1953. And grew up here in town with three older brothers, and we were third generation West Chicagoans. And now our grandkids are fifth generation, so, well rooted.

Cohen: [00:01:46] You're still in the in West Chicago. Cool.

Ferguson: [00:01:48] We go away, but we come back.

Cohen: [00:01:54] How many brothers do you have?

Ferguson: [00:01:57] I had three older brothers and I have lost two of them, they've since passed. And my other brother, Neil, I speak of him in the book. He's closest to me in age, and he and I had brother sister duty together in the Navy. And he has since retired with a career of twenty-three years, and he lives in California.

Cohen: [00:02:18] Oh my goodness.

Ferguson: [00:02:19] Yeah, my other two brothers. The oldest was in Strategic Air Command in the Air Force. The youngest enlisted in the Air Force and was honorably discharged. And my father was an [US] Army Air Corps officer.

Cohen: [00:02:34] So a lot of relatives who served.

Ferguson: [00:02:37] Very much so, yeah.

Cohen: [00:02:39] Did your father or brothers like talk about their experiences to you?

Ferguson: [00:02:46] My father would reminisce quite a bit, but he wouldn't get into the day to day. You know, he would try to soften the blow of what he saw in World War II, and it was his job to be dropped behind enemy lines, scavenger parts off the B-26 bombers and try to meet up with his squadron. He was with the B-26 Marauders Pathfinders. My brother Jim came home from the Air Force quite different than he went in. It was a positive experience from the outset, but he was he made it through his first enlistment and that was about it. And he I don't think I ever remember him talking about any of it other than the schooling and a little bit of the travel and more what he was able to do recreationally because of the different places he was stationed. But he never talked too much about the work -- and the winters of Minot, North Dakota, he spoke of those.

Cohen: [00:03:51] Yeah. Which schools did you attend?

Ferguson: [00:03:56] Well, I grew up through District 33 schools in West Chicago, and that in itself was a gift through [00:04:04] Karyondon? Kindergarten [00:04:06] and then Lincoln School and onto middle school. Back then they called it junior high and graduated in 1971 from West Chicago Community High. And I went on to into the military a couple of years after high school. But then, it became real clear that I could take classes, I should take classes while I'm in, so I did take a few classes at Old Dominion when I was in Norfolk. But. Partially, more than partially, a big part of me going into the military was a way to get college paid for. Because it just was not in the finances of my parents or the wherewithal of my employment, it was clear to me I would have to go to college. So going into the military would be a good education and the GI Bill would then provide me the opportunity to go to college. When I got out, which I did, my husband and I both were using our GI Bill when we were newlyweds, and then I took a ten-year break after my first associate. After my second associate's, I think I was pregnant when I got my diploma on my second associate's [degree], and then I took the time off to raise the kids and started back to school. Finish my, oh, National Louis University, I finished my bachelor's. And then I went on to get my master's degree in organizational behavior from Benedictine University and graduated 2006 with honors from Benedictine in Lyle.

Cohen: [00:05:50] So you even at the end of high school, you realize that that joining the forces, armed forces would be the opportunity for further formal education.

Ferguson: [00:06:02] Yes, I think, you know, in 1971, we had a lot of classmates, you know, the upperclassmen graduate and go in Vietnam, and there just really wasn't a high paying job. And I didn't have the wherewithal to advance, you know, to to find anything lasting and so many. If you think of the times, what was going on, there just wasn't any direction and rather than floundering, I recognized that I needed structure and guidance and that that would lead it onto me getting opportunity to go to college someday. It was -- plus the education I would get in the military schools became invaluable and I think even though as operation specialist, which had been radar men and being one of the first fifty women they put into that rate, that was an education. It had been mostly a sea-going rate. And we added another year or two to men's sea duty because women weren't allowed on battleships. So learning anti-submarine warfare was did not transition to a job out here in civilian life, but it was more learning how to study and learning how to be disciplined and accountable. Even the Navy didn't know what to do with me when I got to my first, when I got to NAS Jacksonville in 1975. They weren't quite sure what to

do with this sailor person because they didn't have that many women in that rank. So the education came in that the sailors that were attached to that division had written had written the book. They all had fifteen to twenty-to-twenty years in the Navy, and they made me their training officer. Telling me the best way to learn something is to have to teach it to somebody who already knows it. So there were many opportunities to learn while I was in the Navy, and it just kind of awakened a hunger to go on and get formal education once I was out.

Cohen: [00:08:17] So jumping back a little bit. What particularly drew you to the Navy versus the other service branches?

Ferguson: [00:08:28] Well, my brother, the one that's still living, Neil, he was already in the Navy, and he explained to me how brother-sister duty worked, that if I could get into my A school, which is your comprehensive training for your job, if I could get into my A school and be in the top 10 percent of my class, then I could pick where I would go. I would have first choice. And if I were to pick Cuba, he could very easily get no cost transfer out of Glencoe, Georgia, where he was teaching Air Traffic Control School at the time. So then he could no at no cost to the Navy move down to Cuba, where we could again be together. And so that had the flavor of it, plus the Air Force. I would have had to wait almost a year because they had limited openings. The [US] Marines were just too hardcore, boot camp every day through the entire enlistment. I got nothing but respect for him. You know that once a Marine, always a Marine that carries to your grave and beyond. And. All the recruiters, including the Army recruiters, said, "No, you're far too intelligent to put on the greens and go ground pounding." So it was an opportunity, especially when they told me I would be one of the first fifty women. They were changing the rate. This is when the equal rights amendment was afoot for the first time, and they were changing the radar men billet to operations specialists because radar had become a very small less than 20 percent of the job.

Cohen: [00:10:09] So they told you this at the time that you were enlisting?

Ferguson: [00:10:14] At the recruiting station when I was basically shopping, I went directly to the Navy because my brother was already in it, and it was providing him a very good life. But they said, you know, in fairness and you don't know, a lot of people didn't get that with recruiters, and that's why I became a recruiter was, "In fairness," they said, "I'm going to have

you talk to each of the other branches. You know, you're going to get paid the same. You're going to have the same benefits." You may not have the same accommodations or duty stations because even when my brother Jim went into the Air Force in '61, it was still young, you know, and yes, their barracks were newer. And their schools were newer, and their uniforms were crisp, you know? It was all it was still relatively new in '73. And so it had, you know, they weren't fully defined, so the Air Force, as I said, really wasn't an option. It was too long of a wait, and I wanted out of town. I knew that one more summer and I went in at the end of June. I thought one more summer in town. And you know, I'm going to take a wrong turn somewhere here because there's really nothing to do but get into mischief back then. So I said, 'I best get out of here.' I was starting to maybe hang out with a rougher crowd than would have made my mom and dad happy had they known. So it was it was time to go for my own good. [Laughter]

Cohen: [00:11:52] You wrote something in *Undertow* you said, "My childhood prepared me with a strong foundation of character to withstand the damage I would sustain in the years ahead." Is that something you'd like to elaborate on?

Ferguson: [00:12:08] You know, I think the value system growing up in the '50s in a small town and there were less than 5000 people here at the time. You couldn't do something on the other side of town that your mom didn't know about via the party line by the time you got home. Or worse yet, your dad found out, you know? But listening to my dad talk about the military and the town was very strong in the VFW and the American Legion and the patriotic parades, and your word meant something to to others. And you were only as good as your word or your character. You know, cliches get to be cliches by being true. So, you know, 'judged by the company you keep' was very true back then. It was a small town that had begun because of the railroads that ran through here. There were five different railroads at the time, and it had been Turner Junction and actually the first twelve miles of Burlington Northern were laid in West Chicago. And we were out towards the stockyards west of the city. But with that, there was always one more church than there was a tavern. And we're talking double digits of both. And they were equally well attended. So, you know, if you wanted to talk to your dad or, you know, he'd had their own bar stool, you know, it was like Cheers, but it covered the whole town. So, the upside is you always had somebody to fall back on, you know. There was always somebody's parent. The downside is everybody knew your business, or everybody knew your good business, too. So I think that kind of a preparation for a child to know that character

matters, that authenticity mattered, that you need to be good to your word because you're only as good as your word. So thinking that I was well prepared and I didn't expect to have it so strongly demonstrated that people aren't always as nice as maybe you were raised or as nice as they appear. And there's a certain amount of resilience that's required when things go south and to not eat yourself up and place blame that it's a character flaw of your own. That's true. Own it if you've contributed, own it, if you've walked into it with your eyes wide open, but if you're in it and you get your eyes opened. They you don't... You know, you don't try to leave it better than you found it, you try to get out in one piece and then take care of it, which is pretty much, you know, the way my older brothers raised me as my parents got more involved with alcohol. It would be my older brothers that I would go to for parental guidance or dating, you know, if there was a-- I rarely got asked out in high school so if I did, I'd say, "Well, did you ask Charlie or did you ask Neil or did you ask Jim to see if they had my brother's permission before I committed to going out with anybody?" So just to know that you had somebody you could count on and to know when you went and who you could not count on? And so when people were a little too eager to be your friend or had motives that were foreign, that it didn't destroy my world. It kind of, you know, cut me off at the knees here and there and stumbled a little bit, but you find it within yourself to carry on and do the job that you agree to do. And don't let somebody else take whatever they've taken and take your good word and your commitment. You know, my commitment to do what I signed on to do and you just leave it at the door and you get in there and you be the ship mate that somebody can count on, especially when all eyes were on us because we were the first fifty [women] and they only did them fifty at a time, only enlisted fifty women at a time in a segment, not all the same day. I think there were seven of us, the month that I went in, because they didn't think they'd have to invest because they didn't think we could do it.

Cohen: [00:16:54] Diane, were the fifty selected like right away? Or was this after basic training? Like, how did it work?

Ferguson: [00:17:01] Oh no. I went in on a guaranteed program. By the testing that they did and the physical, I went in committed that I either get the school or if for reasons not my fault, that I had to get out of the Navy, then I wouldn't be, you know, like my commit. I would keep my commitment that they had proven on paper that I was capable of doing this job and then going through the A School [Accession training whereby US Navy personnel train for their

military occupation specialty], at Great Lakes that was fifteen weeks long. And it was every aspect of the job, week by week. And they could either hold you back and have you redo a week if you didn't do as well as needed. And there was that resentment, you know, from the other guys that knew, you know, this had been a job that took in the Navy that took you out to sea for seventeen out of twenty years. You throw a bunch of females in there that are taking your shore billets and now you're out to sea for eighteen and a half out of twenty. So initially we were not welcomed.

Ferguson: [00:18:03] And then as we got through the school and found out as a generality, overall, women were better at navigation and plotting boards, than the men were. So now we're not there to show them up, you know, and we could have taken that posture, you know, it could have become a gender war. It was not. It was like, everybody's good at something. You know, you take each other's weaknesses and strengths and supplement each other. And that's pretty much the posture the women that I was in with were from New York and New Jersey. We had a girl from Florida, one from California. Uh, one from Texas. And. Well, I'm trying to think, now. There was. It was kind of our own little United Nations in my class, it was almost looking back now. I don't know if that was intentional, or it just worked out that way. There was a Black girl, a Hispanic, there was an Italian girl, there was me, the Irish Scottish Celtic. Yeah. It was a good mix, and it turned out to be a good balance.

Cohen: [00:19:21] Did the did the young women of this group of get along with each other? How does it work?

Ferguson: [00:19:27] I never met more than a dozen of them at a time. We were all, I don't want to say full of ourselves. We were pretty, pretty proud that somehow you think I can do this job well, you would know better than I. You know, so okay. You know I will. You will teach. I will learn. We will see. And we did, you know, and we had study groups. And I think it added because it is it was a hard rate, and it still is a hard rate. You never see daylight because you're working in a radar room, you know you're doing plotting. I can write backwards almost as fast as I can write forward because I'd be on the other side of the plotting board plotting ship's movements. And is this the feminine side of, you know, it's like, oh, you're a girl, too, you know, there was especially in the school there was an even handedness about it. You were treated as a sailor. You got nothing more, nothing less. They were consistent, firm and... I don't want to

say kind, because that would--I wasn't looking for kindness, but they were predictable, you know, and they stuck to the business of teaching and for us to come in and say, you know, "Well, a study group wouldn't hurt. There's nothing wrong with saying, 'I'm not as good as I would like to be at this' or 'I don't understand how to do something. I think we took -- for our class, anyway, in those fifteen weeks, we took a lot of that out of the equation. Where there's a hesitation to ask a question or ask for help because you're going to look dumb in front of everybody else. Who cares? You know, we all came in equally ignorant, and we can all succeed together. Or if one of us fails, we all fail. So we tried not to-- I think we didn't lose anybody for academic reasons, but it was more the physical strain and stress, and the men all knew that they were going out to sea and we knew that, you know, in the military, I don't know about the other branches, but in the Navy, if there's water between you and the continental United States, that's sea duty. So you might get stationed in Crete or Cuba and not be on a boat. You know, San Nicolas Island off the coast of California that counts as sea duty. So, but so does the [00:22:07] big green bow. [00:22:08] So that was something back then, it was not even a concern. Women did not go into combat. They did not go on a ship. So it was also a liability to us because there was equipment, radar equipment and opportunities for different operations that you simply didn't have unless you went on a ship. So it limited your access and your ability to answer some of the questions on the advancement test. You mentioned that I was up for E5 Petty Officer. You know, I had taken the test, but I wasn't going to stick around to put the stripes on. They kind of hold it as a bait. You know, if you stay in and you'll make E-5. Well, if I get out, I'll be happy.

Cohen: [00:22:55] So just to jump back a little bit before the fifteen weeks at A School, where did you do basic training and what was it like?

Ferguson: [00:23:06] At that time? It was in Orlando. It had been in Bainbridge, Maryland, not too many years prior to me going in, but with the weather and the drilling and whatever, they had more people in pneumonia stages of the hospital than they had in boot camp. So they moved it down to Orlando. And I understand now that that base is closed as a recruiting thing and they're all everybody is at Great Lakes. So my time was down at Orlando,

Cohen: [00:23:33] And it was a typical day like for you at basic training?

Ferguson: [00:23:38] Well, as I said, it was eight weeks, the first-- Progressively, as the weeks go on, you get to get up later and later in the day. But your first week you're up at 3:30 and four o'clock and it's still dark and you see beyond reason, why am I up so early? But then your time back in the barracks after the first meal is productive, learning the other tasks, and then as you become more proficient and you work your way up and as a reward, then you go to breakfast at a little more reasonable hour and get up later and later. But that's because you don't need that extra time to get all your tasks done. So it's an indoctrination. It...taught us. Actually, I came across my boot camp notebook the other day. You learn military history, you learn parts of the aircraft, parts of a ship, you learn the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the obvious of how to wear your uniform, how to maintain your uniform. You have a week of learning ranks and the difference between a rank as a pay grade and a rate as a job and the filling, it is filling a billet. In the Army, I guess it would be called an MOS.

Ferguson: [00:25:02] It's a rate, grade and billet for us, so it was learning all the jargon. And oddly enough, my master's degree is in organizational behavior and development, so it's learning the power structure. And what are the solid artifacts and the hard scape of where you are and what are the psychological contracts? And what are the actual contracts? So you kind of learn how it's done. And then I had, of course, my brother already being in, you know, he told me in A School-- He said, "Friday night you go nowhere but back to the barracks. You get all your uniforms ready for the next week, you get all your homework done. And then Sunday night, when everybody's panicked and hung over and fighting for washing machines, you just stand by and laugh." So that carried all the way through, you know, and, you know, carried through the race and kids, I said, "No fun till the homework is done", you know, let everybody worry till the last minute. You can have all the fun you want because your stuff's out of the out of the way. So, yeah, so it was learning how to behave and learning just how far you can go without crossing whatever line somebody has drawn in the sand.

Cohen: [00:26:21] What were the academics like at A School? What were the, what were the courses you were taking?

Ferguson: [00:26:29] I don't think there was an easy week from the day we got through the front door. It was learning the technical aspects and the different kinds of radar, physical equipment, truncated parabolic, mid-spring, antenna; antennas and how to position them.

Learning who it is you call when something breaks, you don't try to fix it yourself. It's learning planned maintenance. How to keep up your equipment before it breaks. Or so that you can give somebody a heads up that I got about two weeks left on this thing and it's going to go. Each week you moved on. Looking back at the fifteen weeks, I think there were five modules of three topics, and you would be learning the hard [00:27:20] scape, [00:27:21] you know, the shipboard part of each... Each time you do a job of a radar man or operation specialist, your surroundings can be entirely different. You know what I did in Cuba, I got there in the morning when it was dark. I worked in a dark room, and by the time I got off work, it was dark. So it's learning to function, and that's not the way we work as creatures. We're day light creatures. There was...The actual... Towards the end of those last two weeks, were simulations as you go into a room, and it feels like you're on a ship. You have to control the aircraft around and the operations scheduled on and off the ship.

Ferguson: [00:28:11] They simulate the delivery of oncoming mail. I crashed the mail plane right into the deck of the flight carrier, simulated. He says [imitates an authoritative tone] "Well, there'll be no mail today. Thank you, Petty Officer Madden." So those last few weeks was wrapping up everything you'd learned to in between, which is the actual how to vector and control a plane. Be a radar because you don't see them. And then to get that job, like I had mentioned when they assigned me to Jacksonville, Florida, they didn't know what to do with me. And for the first part of it, I was doing the same work that people that well outranked me that had decades longer in the military than I did. But I was still able to control the aircraft, you know, and there therein was the brother, sister duty. My brother and I were together in Cuba. Then I got up to Jacksonville and got us a house on the St. John's River to rent, and he was in the air traffic control radar room down the hall from me. So he would help them take off and land and hand them off to me while they were up in the air. And then he'd get on the radio and tell me, "I need my birds back in the nest. Get them down here."

Ferguson: [00:29:38] You know, "You're into my time. Let's get this done." And he outranked me by two pay grades and, you know, many, many years in the military. And his was all in air traffic controlling which radarmen do as air intercept controls when they practice bombing runs on coming up behind people basically like a dogfight and, you know, functioning your radar. Airborne radar is different, but this is -- what we learned is control-- I had the airspace in Jacksonville, Florida. From Buford all the way down and then the five bombing ranges across

Florida. So wherever they were taking off at any given time, I might have twenty-five planes in the air from different squadrons, different, well and the Marines, different branches. So there were those kind of classes, but they give you the basic stuff so that when you get out to the fleet and somebody tells you, "I need you to do this or that", they don't expect you to be well experienced at it, you know. They might send you on a fool's errand and tell you, "Oh yeah, we're going to send you to First Lieutenant". First Lieutenant is the--what do I want to say-- the nickname euphemism, for the cafeteria, the slush fund you're going to work in. "First Lieutenant, we're going to put you in first position, First Lieutenant, and then I had to do the dishes all day and do the cafeteria crap".

Ferguson: [00:31:16] You know, I went over there already, you know, but they the other thing too is not with them not knowing exactly what to do with the females when it got a little too intense. I got farmed out to the parachute riggers, so I learned how to rig parachutes for a week. And then your last day they throw one at you and say, "Okay, I hope you were paying attention because this is the one, you're jumping with." They don't make you do it, but they had me shaking in my boots. They told me that the first day," You better pack every one of them good because you might be the one jumping, using it." I'm not going to jump out of a perfectly good airplane. I don't want to be a paratrooper. Yeah. So I mean, they had incrementally throughout the weeks they built on what they first taught you and when you chain that learning until you can get out to the field and find out that you don't know anything. You just sort of know what they're talking about, and they'll teach you what you need to know. And it's obviously it's different at every location, depending on the work that's expected. You know, what we were doing in Cuba is different than what we were doing in Jacksonville, Florida.

Cohen: [00:32:19] So that's it. I think chronologically wise, we're at the point where your your first assignment at Guantanamo Bay and you want to talk about that now?

Ferguson: [00:32:28] Yeah. I mean, after A School, the fifteen weeks, my grades were what they needed to be and everybody about fell over. When Phyllis and I, she was my study buddy, when we said we're going to Cuba. They said, "Do you realize how hot it is there and how they're prettier bases?" "No, no, no. I want to go." Well, I didn't mention anything about my brother. So I went to Cuba and was there for a time and then briefly was up in Norfolk for less than happy reasons. We can talk about that. But... The basic training that we had -- I didn't have any

firearms training in boot camp. You know, any and the obstacle course, anything the guys went over, the women went under and there was no fraternizing between the two. And it's my understanding at some point they were coed dorms for boot camp. I don't know if that's a myth or not. I'm decades out of that, that I believe anything they told me now. So when I got to Cuba, there was firearms training, of course. There was what they called grunt training, where you had to spend a week in a foxhole in case things did jump off down in Cuba.

Cohen: [00:33:47] Wow.

Ferguson: [00:33:49] You had to have Marine training for a week and-- Days and nights in a foxhole for days on end. And I never felt safer. Not one of those gentlemen gave me a sideward glance, I was just and they didn't demean me, you know, "We have to put up with this female." They did me the kindness of burrowing off to the side, so I could at least have some privacy to relieve myself. But there was never any fear of closing my eyes and knowing that I was safe. They were 100 percent quality Marines. So after being there and then up to Norfolk, I was given, "Where do you want to be stationed next?" Well, by then I knew my brother could get to Jacksonville from Cuba. He'd be down there

Cohen: [00:34:41] Was he in Guantanamo Bay as well. Or no?

Ferguson: [00:34:43] Yes, he was. He was at Guantanamo Bay. I was on the leeward side, and he was on the windward side or vice versa. He was on the air traffic control side and slept on that side, and I had to take the ferry boat over across the bay. I lived on in Goldhill Barracks... And then there was a seventeen-minute ferry ride over to the other side where the airstrip was. So I ended up in Jacksonville, Florida, and then shortly thereafter, a couple of times before he could transfer, he'd get the military [00:35:23] ??? that [00:35:23] was coming up for supplies or bringing people up to the commissary to shop. He'd take the hop for the day, and we could have lunch together. Or I'd have a bunch of Big Macs and McDonald's stuff or a bunch of my roommates waiting for him, and he'd have transportation around town and very-- You know, just a break in the routine until he was able to move up and be by us, so. And then we shared the house and a vehicle. You know, our watch I was on first watch, so my commander picked me up in the morning. My brother brought my car in when he went to watch at three o'clock and I took it home and then he got a ride home from somebody. So, you know, it's all about

scheduling and juggling, you know, much like single moms have to do today, you know, single parent.

Cohen: [00:36:12] And yeah, so just your tour in Cuba was, I believe, for like six months from January to July 1974. So what were your main duties at the time?

Ferguson: [00:36:24] Well, any time you're the new kid and you transfer in, you get up to ninety days of what they call Dirty Duty. Somebody's got to clean the toilets and clean the mess hall and stuff like that. At first, I was assigned to the mess hall. As and I think to a great extent, that is a function of how they decide who's a slacker and who's really going to work and who's eager and ready to get there and do the technical job by the time you've wiped off enough tables and cleaned enough trays. You might have forgotten everything you learned in a school, but it gives them a chance to see what your work ethic is if you're going to try and slide by, or if you're chomping at the bit to learn anything new and to advance yourself. At the time, it didn't feel like that, but-- So the first, I don't know, about two months and then we moved up. So as soon as somebody else left or they were ready to train the next females, then I went back over, stayed on my side of the bay. And there again, to a very small extent, you know, I could hear my brother on the radio controlling airplanes and watch listening to the senior--well, the chiefs and the lieutenants take over the air control of them as we did the in the Command Information Center, working in the dark, in the radar room, you know, keeping track of what you might imagine in Cuba. And that that lasted until I left and shipped out to Norfolk.

Cohen: [00:38:05] So do you want to talk about why you were, went to the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth for a few days before going to the Naval Station in Norfolk?

Ferguson: [00:38:15] Yeah, I thought it was for a few days and it was actually much longer than that. I met a gentleman. I use that term. I shouldn't. That's insulting to gentlemen. I met a guy that only had a couple more years in the Navy, so he was significantly older than me and more wise to the ways of the military than I was. So I was away from home for the first time and thought I was all full of myself. And prior to my brother joining me there in March, I got there in January. My brother got there in March, fell in love for the first time in my life and everybody watched it happen. And everybody that knew this guy who was he was ironically part of the police force, and I ended up being a police officer in civilian life. I fell head over heels, and he

took me to the Navy Exchange and bought me an engagement ring and everything was great. And many people commented. His coworkers commented extensively about what a great couple we were and what a happy life and and it was an active life and... there, you know, on the base, there's a couple of thousand sailors and only about eighty-three females. So I mean, even the first day, the six of us got there, seventeen people met us. All the men took us to dinner and that should have been my first clue. But I was naive and, you know, thought I was very worldly, and I had a good, strong upbringing and now I found the man of my dreams on a tropical island

Ferguson: [00:39:47] Yeah. All the people that watch what was going on failed to tell me that he was married, his wife had left just two weeks before I got there. So knowing we were getting married, I thought we were getting married. He knew full well, we wouldn't be, I ended up pregnant and there were sadly a couple of the wives that had come to Cuba. It was isolated duty, but if you signed on for two years, the second year, your family could come and live with you. And some of those women had had x-rays on the base and were pregnant and there was a fault in the x-ray machine. So, they were going to have to have a surgical removal of the baby. Because they were going to be malformed or who knows what. So one of the corpsmen, bless his heart, was able to throw me in with that group, and I was sent up to Portsmouth. And I wasn't 100 percent sure, but okay, you're getting me out of here and it's a bad situation, and I had found out about the wife and here I am pregnant, and I can't really go home, so I'm not going to ruin my career over something he did. You suck it up. And this is 1974. Abortions were not legal in the Navy. They were doing them like they were handing out suckers, or they had an inner inner Navy adoption system that if you know, some other Navy guy and his wife couldn't have a kid if a wave got pregnant, she could carry the baby and the baby would be quietly adopted through the military and she could go on with her career.

Ferguson: [00:41:35] And I thought initially when I left, that's probably what I'd do. But then one thing and another. I got to Portsmouth. And then I got I was there one or two days, and I got sent to the barracks for three or four weeks to be brought back. And when I was brought back, I was told. Well, while I was there, they said, "We want you to try to spontaneously abort." So when I was in the barracks. That's the Navy grapevine. You never have to worry about communications because your business will get where you're going before you do. I was treated um like a pariah. I was ostracized as a marriage wrecker, home wrecker, a slut for being

pregnant and having sex before, and then a murderer for having an abortion. But I was treated in ways subjected to running a floor buffer, trying to cause the child to abort, and I wasn't holding it close enough to my gut, so one of the senior females came up and showed me and jammed that thing right into me. They thought it would be better if I tried to abort myself, then for them to have to give me an abortion. So, I went back to the hospital and was told that I would be in a medical trial for-- back then they didn't know about what's commonly Pitocin now that induces labor.

Ferguson: [00:43:09] They didn't know about prostaglandins and how advancing those would bring labor on. And so this is back in '74 that they were testing it on the military females to see, force you into labor. And so they tried to. Oh, they induce labor basically rather than a forcible extraction. But they tested this drug on me and made me part of the daily rounds and subjected me to, you know, multiple exams with quite a large audience of new doctors, all male. I thought it was odd that I had two nurses. One was the nurse for the drug company. One was the Navy nurse. So the Navy nurse kind of put a bug in my ear about what was going on. But then I found out that they were cooking the books. They had two sets of books. The real naval record and the one the drug company wanted and. So this was tested on me and a couple of the other moms because they were going to abort the child anyway. Um, so I had to go through full full labor while they kept notes on how it progressed and whatnot and the Navy nurse. What a blessing to have had her by my side. But she gratefully did not tell me the sex of the baby. She just said, "It's just as well. It was malformed. It never had a chance, and it just would have progressed worse." Now if that happened from the way I was treated and the chemicals that were, you know, the cleaning chemicals that the one woman told, you know, went to dust the floor with this orange powder and made sure it hit me in the face first, so I inhaled it.

Ferguson: [00:45:02] And you know, the episode with the buffer, and then I had to sleep in a part of the barracks. Nobody, you know, I heard somebody come in. There was nobody - there was a hundred empty beds and me. I heard somebody come in and I said, "Hello, is somebody there?". And all I got back was, "Shut up, Whore". Or if I'd walk into a room, "You're not welcome here. You're not a real sailor. You're a home wrecker." So it was. The worst time, you know, to be alone and then to find out that I was going to have to pull up every bit of moxie and resilience I was raised with to get through it, so I spent the time in the barracks saying goodbye to a baby that shouldn't have been so, but too late, we get too smart, you know?

Cohen: [00:45:54] Yeah.

Ferguson: [00:45:55] So everything that I went through and then the doctor that I, the doctors were just I wasn't when they told me what they were going to do, why I had been delayed because they needed a first-time pregnant female under twenty-five, preferably unmarried. So they didn't have the entanglements of the husband's permission. But in the first trimester. So they kept me in the barracks till I was just about, you know.

Ferguson: [00:46:32] But I fit that that window of criteria that they needed for their variables in the testing. So when they told me what was about, I said, "You know, you don't know, you know, maybe I'll just know the officers." "You're still in the Navy, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." "And you want to be in the Navy?" "Yes, Sir, I do." Well, do you not recognize the direct order? You will sign this. Or you will be in the military. You'll just be one more Navy whore that went home pregnant." "Oh. Okay." So, you know, at that point when choices removed your options, you know, become very clear. So yes, I wanted to stay in the Navy. You know, what would I ever tell that child? So and then I'd go home in disgrace to my brothers, my family and the town to go, "Well, we didn't expect it anything more." You know, and it's one door opens, one door, closed the sliding doors just taking a left off an elevator can change your life. This past Veterans Day, the city of West Chicago hung banners from the light posts, and I was the only female banner. Let's see. See if I can find the picture. So all the all the males that were up there [pause]. Well, I'll try to find it and show you the picture which said the City of West Chicago thanks, honors my service. And, you know, it meant a lot. It did mean a lot to me. Here we go, I don't know, can you see that?

Speaker1: [00:48:48] Yes, yes, yes, maybe send me an email.

Ferguson: [00:48:51] Here we go. West--

Cohen: [00:48:52] --Wow, yeah, I know, I see the picture of you in the profile--

Ferguson: [00:48:55] Chicago honors Diane Madden Ferguson, the United States Navy Petty Officer Third Class '73-'78. Thank you for your service. Oh yeah. And I didn't know they were

going to do that and then to have my kids, yeah, my kids say, "Mom, have you seen the lamp post by the community center?" So next year we hope to fill every lamp post and I said, "I'll help you find everybody." Are we recording video?

Cohen: [00:49:24] Yeah. Yes, we are.

Ferguson: [00:49:26] Okay, my wig is starting to itch. So anyway, in leaving, you know, they sent me home towards the end of my hospital stay. I spent a lot of time with the chaplain. They were marginally afraid that I was suicidal. I said, "I wouldn't give you the satisfaction, you know, of taking this to my grave with me someday." Someday I will let people know what happened. But to what end? You know, it would have killed my parents, so I didn't write my book until after. But my brothers still weren't very happy that-- the one brother, Neil, that's still alive, was even living with me in Jacksonville when some of the things happened. "Why didn't you tell me?" "Look how mad you are now. You would have killed somebody back then and I'd have ruined your career", so. But the chaplains, whatever he was able to do, he let me. He. He didn't let me. He navigated making it happen that I would get to pick my duty station. And they said, "Jacksonville, Florida?" I said, Yeah, I know I went to Cuba too on purpose", but he's, "No, you can go [to naval station] Barbers Point Hawaii, you can go wherever you want."

Ferguson: [00:50:49] I said Jacksonville, Florida.

Cohen: [00:50:52] Would appeal to you of Jacksonville, Florida?

Ferguson: [00:50:54] My brother, Neil could get no cost orders from Cuba and join me there. Maybe, you know, having a sense of family established and I could draw on that strength. And he was getting divorced, and he needed, you know, roots, foundation, somebody to take care of him and I needed somebody to take care of. So I took Jacksonville, Florida, and when I got there, they weren't quite sure what to do with me. By then once you once you've done your A school and you get to your first place, that's when they hit you with that big clean up. But once you get to your first duty station, you know you get assimilated into the job, you were trained to do, and so. It was kind of a fortunate thing that I got to be with so many men that had written the book on how to do this. So and I kept their training records and I got to do things that another E-4 would not have gotten to do.

Cohen: [00:51:56] So did you continue with the radar underground and the plotting of ships as you had in Cuba? Or were you doing-- Or did the responsibilities vary more, as you're saying, or at a higher rate?

Ferguson: [00:52:10] Well, the the duty assignment in Jacksonville, Florida, was meant. They call it a twilight tour. It's when you've done all your grunt work, you've done all the worst assignments. This is going to be probably your last tour of duty. And here it was my first, you know, I didn't earn that, so they made sure that I earned it by, you know, "You're going to get in here and you're going to--" There were things obviously I could not do. Air intercept control. You know, having that, I can keep them all floating in the air and keep them from running into each other. But I couldn't do that kind of finesse with especially the [HMS] Ark Royal (R09) the British ship was in, and there air jockeys and jet jockeys were doing maneuvers. So, you know, when I had the opportunity, I got to do the traffic control, the actual air control and hand them off, back and forth to my brother. But then when I had the opportunity to move into the office and and schedule all these bombing runs and the practice and the training runs for all these different air squadrons and not just talk to them when they're up in the air doing their training, then I actually got to see who lacked proficiency in this, this area or that area?

Ferguson: [00:53:30] And we had an entire board that was probably six feet by twenty foot long, and we'd schedule, it was one giant training schedule for all the different air squadrons and then the five bombing ranges in Florida and one in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Then they'd fly into that, and I'd keep track with the bombing, the range master as to accuracy and whatnot, and then I would compile graphs and charts. And that was how they trained for the proficiency of who's going to do the last bombing run into Vietnam. So it was to have an E-4 compiling that kind of information and having it passed on to the people that are deciding the mission into to a war zone, it was like, "You better bring all seriousness about it, you know?" You know, just brush your teeth, pull your hair back, do your job. You're not there to be, you know, a vixen to distract, you know--

Cohen: [00:54:39] --your focus.

Ferguson: [00:54:43] Yeah, tremendously focused and seeing how that all worked and keeping those stats and knowing how would... That those -- that was going to be a meeting of the higher ups and as it was told to me, and then I was called over to the main building where all the brass was. They said...Well, the way I chose to represent it in bar graphs instead of words on a page and a bunch of statistic numbers typed, I guess it was a big hit with them and I got called. They said, "Who put this together?", you know, and "I want to meet that sailor." And I walk. He said, "Not what I expected." And I said, "No". I said, "I have a lot of good teachers, look at, look at the sailors I'm working with. I'm only as good as they've helped me become." So, you know, it wasn't all bad, you know, it was. It was a different world. And like I said when I wanted to make., to be in recruiting, you had to be at least a petty officer, and I wasn't yet. And one of the pieces of equipment that you need to know inside and out for that E-4 test is only on a ship.

Ferguson: [00:56:04] And women can't go on ships. So they saw that as a big opportunity to either stop me in my path. Or as some of the senior people looked at me, "Who's the one that schedules that ship to go out to sea?" I said, "I do". He said, "Don't you think they need some practice on that machine?" I said, "Absolutely, they do." So I snuck myself onto the ship with a little bit of help from some higher ups, except we got caught. We got off the coast of Mayport, Florida, and I forgot to take the nails off. And I reached across the plotting board and I got grabbed by the wrist, by the commanding officer who told me to go sit in the corner until we get back to shore. So it was bad. [Laughter] We obviously I don't feel bad about it, but you know, and women do that job all the time now. But in the radar room, in the dark, with my hair up under my head and down my chest, I just forgot to cut my nails that day.

Cohen: [00:57:05] One forgets how slow a process it is, you know...I interviewed a woman who from the first Naval Academy graduates and I think by the time she graduates, this maybe would even be 1980 because she's one of the again one of the few women that are allowed on ships, but not on destroyer ships, you know, in a tender, and that was a huge coup. But you just forget how slow the process is, right?

Ferguson: [00:57:36] And you hear operation specialists and people say. "Oh, you were a nurse in the operating room?" No, you don't want me near your operating room, we don't do good with blood. It's, you know, and I got that to some extent, too when I got into law enforcement. You know, I look like a PTA mom. What do you do? I said, I work for the county.

Cohen: [00:58:01] Right. Just keep it simple.

Ferguson: [00:58:02] Well, "What do you do?" "I'm a sheriff's deputy". "No, you're not." So you better tell them because I have a handcuff and guns and I arrest people and they pay me. So my dad and my dad used to tell me when I was fighting the glass ceiling or whatever it was back in the sixties and seventies. He said if your smile gets you in the door kid, they better watch out when they find out you're smarter than them. He said, "So, you know, if they're dumb enough to let you in on a smile and just, you know. Yes. And my mom would just say, "Just let them know you were there. Make sure they know you were there and just,"-- you know -- "You give it your all, [and then] fall short of the mark, you got nothing to hang your head about."

Cohen: [00:58:46] Were your parents worried at all or were you worried at all that you might be shipped out to Vietnam?

Ferguson: [00:58:56] Not at all. No. The only females at that time would have been nurses. Yeah. It was an unsure time, you know, all I did was very much like World War II, you know, the women freed up the men to go do what they needed to do by taking the land jobs. We took the jobs on land so that the proficient, well-trained, experienced sailors could get out there and do what they needed to do. But having the support on the home front and knowing just as. You know, they found out when men wanted their jobs back after World War II that women were doing the work of two and a half men when one guy had done it, you know, or two and a half men than the one girl can come in and she just does it *because*. You're not just running to keep up, you're running as fast as you can, doing everything you can to show that you're worthy, not well, not just proficient but worthy of being in that club. So.

Cohen: [01:00:01] True.

Ferguson: [01:00:04] But I was I lived in West Chicago when I enlisted and I enlisted through the Wheaton office and I had delayed entry, I enlisted in May. For my parents' wedding anniversary, I gave them my enlistment papers, and they both cried. I think my dad was well aware of what I was in for. And my mom was worried, you know, her baby girl was leaving home. And, you know, we will always march in formation, and like I said, whatever the obstacle

course guys went over, we went under. But we had like the gas chamber, and we had fire training and hazardous duty training. Our uniforms. In the summer, it was like a blue seersucker, crisp baby blue skirt and jacket. And then, of course, in the winter was the blue wool serge. [pause] There were, based on where you were stationed, you know, the uniform of the day varied. And again, what you are assigned to do, you know, whether it was a dungarees type thing where blue jeans and a work shirt, or if you were in the front office with the brass, it just depended. Like I said, obviously with the heat of Cuba, the uniform was different than being stationed in Maine. So yeah.

Cohen: [01:01:47] Do you want to talk about the bad stuff at Jacksonville or--?

Ferguson: [01:01:51] Well, I think the bad stuff, you know, it started in Cuba with me being duped. And I was pretty much licking my wounds and thought. I'm. You know, that was then, you know, you moved on, you did probably the hardest thing you ever did in Portsmouth and now you're at Jacksonville and you get a fresh start, and nobody knows what you don't tell them, huh? You know it well, preceded my arrival, but they they were very tasteful or very respectful in. Well, in fact, my commanding officer, on one of my evaluations wrote despite personal tragedy, Petty Officer Madden is able to leave... her personal, her tragic situation at the door and come in and be professional and skilled. I thought, 'He knows, he knows', and he's known for six months and never said a thing. So do I get outraged that he knows? Or do I feel blessed that a lesser man would have thrown it in my face? You know, and not just as a female, but younger sailors look for a sea-daddy, which is a mentor. Okay. It can be. It's not like a sugar daddy. It's not meant to be. It sometimes goes that way. But a sea-daddy or giving the appearance that you're seeing an older person being an officer in the fraternization issue comes in. I mean, that works two ways.

Ferguson: [01:03:34] I talk about it, I wrote a book about it, but I talk about in the book. I talk about Commander Alvin Marsh, and I just talked to him last week. He's ninety-three years old. He still flies. He's the oldest flying pilot of a twin-engine plane, he went up for his 90th birthday and took the controls again. But he's ninety-three years old. God love him. And he was on his way to Jacksonville for Thanksgiving dinner.

Cohen: [01:04:01] Oh my gosh.

Ferguson: [01:04:03] Yeah. He lives back in Jacksonville, Illinois, but I met him in the air terminal one morning because at least senior person, you have to open up the office and start the day and everybody else gets to sleep in. And I was upstairs in the tower picking up the weather report, and I had bundled up and it was chilly for Florida. And this real deep voice was. "Well, you're not used to the Sunday mornings of Florida?" And I said, "No, I'm you're not from the great state of Florida?" I said, "I'm from the great state of Illinois." And his voice changed right away. "So am I, where are you from?" And he was from Jacksonville, Illinois. And we just struck up a friendship. Well, I didn't know who he was, you know, he was just up there, and I knew he was an officer.

Ferguson: [01:04:51] He had [01:04:52] tan? clothes [01:04:52] on, didn't pay any attention to it. Well, he was second in command of the whole air terminal. And we ended up being buddies, you know, he let me go fly with him and he watch out for me, you know, and he was a sea-daddy. He was a true sea-daddy. But being an officer and being not hard to look at, a lot of the young girls wanted to, you know, pull him into a bad relationship or get taken care of or be, you know, whatever you want to call it, his side dish. And I didn't want to get entangled with anybody. I said, "You know, we're kind of good for each other because everybody stays away from you because they think I've got you, that you're taking and I'm good for your image and everybody stays away from me because they're scared to you." So this is working out really well. So that was above board but running around with one of the senior enlisted in my division, I was still keeping it professional, but I was just keeping company with him. And babysitting his kids and enjoying his wife's company and waiting for my brother to come to town. And that's something else my brother taught me. "You're single. There's other people that have family. You, you go stand watch for them Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve. You know, you don't have a family here, you make sure Thanksgiving, you take the duty for them." And so I did all those things so that this E-7, you know, someone could be home with his feet, and I'd babysit his kids. So I just thought it was like hanging out with my older brother and until he showed up drunk one time at my house and he just thought he was entitled to all kinds of good luck and favors. And by then I'd been there over a year. And in a drunken rage as he tried to throw me across the room, he screamed, "Why won't you fool around with this married man, you fooled around with the married man and then killed his baby in Cuba?" [Cohen gasps] It's like, wow, he knew that. You know, talk about holding, you know? Holdin' it. And I thought, 'Is

that is that who you think I am? Is that what you think I'm about? You don't even know.' Yeah, so I don't know. It's a sad bad memory--.

Cohen: [01:07:17] Yeah.

Ferguson: [01:07:18] --Because he was not the person, I thought he was. And. Apparently, I was not the person...he didn't see me the way I thought he perceived me. He was just waiting to pick his moment.

Cohen: [01:07:33] So this person is not, not the sea-daddy, right? This is somebody else?

Ferguson: [01:07:38] Was, he was in my division. I reported to him.

Cohen: [01:07:42] I see. I got it.

Ferguson: [01:07:43] I think so he he thought he had license, I mean, it's an old story. It happens through the military all the time, the military sexual trauma. Who am I going to tell? Who's going to do anything? Well, you know, I thought just chalk it up to my misjudging him. I mean, it was it was a pretty good row. He he came after me and I fought him off. I took a swing at him and didn't hit hard enough, and he threw me, and I had this real, boxy, mid-century modern couch that had wooden armrests and my tailbone hit that, we both heard it crack and I fell to the floor, and I knew that my brother was going to be home from watch in about three hours. And I'm laying there on the floor, trying to heal and thinking, 'You better get out of here and I better pull it together.' So I didn't tell my brother when he got home. I didn't tell anybody until I had to go to sick, call a couple of days later, and I said, "I fell down the stairs". He says, "It doesn't." I said, "I fell down the stairs like this morning and I hurt myself". He said, "You don't get that kind of a bruise in less than twenty-four hours." And I said, "Oh, maybe it was yesterday." I felt, I don't know. I didn't tell anybody. And then my evaluation would be my last evaluation before I went to recruiting duty.

Ferguson: [01:09:13] And so it's critical and we get in there, and. He has just torpedoed me professionally and, actually, I knew I was in trouble when they had the lieutenant commander...was going to sit in on my review and they had a tape recorder. So that I was I was

told I needed to explain my dismal performance, my military bearing and knowledge and why I should be held up as an example of to be sent to recruiting duty and he went through every item on me, my evaluation, and every one of them was average or below, and they had all been one short of the highest mark prior. So they said, you know, "What is going on that all of a sudden you have this attitude and don't care?" And I listened. I don't know if it's ever happened to you, but when things are very stressful, and your ears start to ring and you get tunnel vision. And I thought and I actually was listening with my hand pressed to my mouth because I didn't want to let out a whimper. And I just took it all in. And the lieutenant commander had said something to the effect of, "What do you have to say for yourself?" I said, "Could we turn that off for one second?" And he said, "No, I'd like to keep the tape-recording running", I said, "No, please, could we have a no rank's conversation here for a second off the record?" And he asked the chief, "Do you mind?" He's, "No, I don't mind."

Ferguson: [01:11:08] So soon, as they turned it off, I said, "I'm going to tell you what happened and why this chief gave me that evaluation," And I unloaded, and it looked like it hit him in the face with a brick. And this lieutenant commander wanted to be anywhere else in the world then. He didn't know what to do. And he reached, I said, you don't have to turn that back on if you don't want to. Because I think we need to take care of business appropriately, with the least amount of damage. I said I was raised in a family where you keep your dirty laundry to yourself. And I said, and I think we are thoroughly soiled. So. I said my piece and watched their reactions and lieutenant commander looked at the chief and said, "How much of what she said is true?" And I don't know if he just I don't know where he pulled it up from. He just said every bit of it. He didn't try to deny a thing. And though, the lieutenant commander kind of looked at me. He said, "What? How do you see us resolving this?" And as I tell in my book? Said I didn't want anything. I said, first and foremost, he's a hero to his wife and kids. I don't want them to find out about this. I don't want him busted in rank. Yeah, and I don't want anything, you know, I don't even know what ya'll are going to say to him, but I shouldn't be in the room to hear it.

Cohen: [01:12:59] Mm hmm.

Ferguson: [01:13:00] But. I don't want him to transfer, I don't want to be transferred. The only requirement I have is that I never report to him again. But both of us stay in this division because we're doing good work. [Cohen: Wow]. But I don't want his children to find out, and I

don't want his family harmed financially or his career, such as it is. I don't imagine that I'm the first one. He's tried this. Listen, but here and now, let's all just be grown-ups and do the job we were sent here to do and keep it professional. And the lieutenant commander has. kind of look, I said, "Please don't say anything to him about the outcome. I want his bosses to know. I want everybody to know. That needs to know, and it doesn't need to be even put outside this division until some day it will be." You know, I don't even know if he's still alive. I don't know what became of him. Doesn't matter, but. And then I said that I didn't ever want to report to him again. And so, I got moved to where I became the statistician and where I started being the record keeper, not the schedule and scheduler and not ot actually controlling any more airplanes, so I became straight Monday through Friday and doing the stats, and I just buried my nose in my little corner with my colored pencils and nothing was computerized. So just me and my papers and my calculator, you know.

Ferguson: [01:14:46] That's all they heard out of me every day was that chunky chunk calculator back then. And the commanding officer of our division rewrote my evaluation, and then I got called down to the air wing where my sea-daddy, his boss wrote my evaluation. And was very complimentary about my level of skill in the field and that kind of honored me in the way that I had handled it when I had the chance to destroy a man and his family and a division, and it would have reflected all the way up the chain his failure to command. So it wasn't worth it. You know, it's. You just file it under. Life lesson learned, you know and--

Cohen: [01:15:53] You handled that with a lot of honor, with a lot of honor and dignity.

Ferguson: [01:15:58] People would have decided whatever they decided with what little facts were shared with them. You know, and they weren't in that living room and they weren't in that fight, they really had no skin in the game. So. To what end? What good would come of it? And I thought about that later when I wrote my book. Um. Why, you know what good, what good would have come of it? If my parents were alive, it would have broken their heart. You know, my mom was quite a good writer, and she was the assistant editor of the Glen Oaks News at nineteen years old in Glen Ellen, where she was raised. She was a very good writer and then she wrote for the West Chicago Press and came up with the boots and bonnets, the baby column and. she was very clever and very well written and dead ringer for Lauren Bacall. Same voice. Could dance and sing, and she was in the community theater stuff, but she was always

there for us until she wasn't so. Um. I think she would have been pleased, you know, it's like. Try to try to do good. You know and stop and think three moves ahead as to what's really your endgame.

Ferguson: [01:17:23] What's going to come with this and who's going to really pay the price for what you do so? Live and learn, you know, and there again, when my brother learned that he was living with me at the time and this took place and this guy continued to be a threat, I didn't tell anybody. I didn't tell anybody any of it, not Cuba, not Jacksonville. Not anything until was long out of the Navy, forty years married. I hadn't told my husband and so many people when they read the book, I mean, they all knew I was different when I came back to the area. They just thought I'd grown up. Um. But so many of them, after reading the book, went, "Wow. Well, that explains that. Well, that's why she did this or that, and that's why she is the way she is". Or it just made more sense. And so many people, it's much good has come from the book because it's brought other, as I dedicated it to bring others out of the darkness. Yes. And, it has. So, not for nothing, right?

Cohen: [01:18:34] [It] fulfilled its purpose, I think that was what General Wilma Vaught had written, as well.

Ferguson: [01:18:41] Yes. And what an honor that was. I asked her and I referred to *A WAVES Journey*. And she's said, "I was a WAVE during the World War II. You know, that was not meant to be, you know, the title of the women, your women sailors." Or yeah, yeah. You know, she said, "I would probably put..." You know. And then she just cut right to, she said, "I don't even know if you're a good writer." So she apparently decided that it would pass and she put her name to it. But she strongly suggested that I change the subtitle, which I did. [Cohen laughs] She's as a wise woman and you know, she has seen plenty and her contribution to the documentary, *The Invisible War*, I imagine you've already seen that. It's a wonderful [film]. It won the independent documentary at Sundance Film Festival in 2007. And it documents military sexual behavior in the military all the way back. And Wilma's in that... So. What else can I answer for you?

Cohen: [01:19:52] Yes, so when you were in the Navy, did you have any impression that the admirals or the people on the higher level of the Navy were concerned about those who were,

you know, violent or predatory or unruly? Was there a kind of higher up concern how to grapple with this problem as far as you could tell?

Ferguson: [01:20:15] If there was one, I wouldn't have been privy to it. Yeah, yeah. There wasn't anything that I could see. There was no recourse. You know, the pat answer was "emotional" "unable to adjust emotionally, emotionally instable". That's actually on my, somewhere in my medical records that I left the military with a lot of women were put out on it because of emotional behavior. Because men didn't understand that no means no. And like I said, my book reached out to so many people that also had no recourse. It very well might be the person whose command you're under. So who do you go to? Well, now that's changed, you know, and sadly, Soldier Young, Vanessa Young, out of Fort Hood. That's a big part of it and Kirsten Gillibrand, the senator. It's not going to let it rest on the Senate Arms Commission, where she ripped into the commandant of the Marine Corps. You know, and for him to sit there and tell Congress, "You know, we're working on it." Well, some of those Congress women have been there a long time and you've been working on it their entire time they've been on the bench, so if they're aware of it, they're there for the business. The business at hand to run the military and these housekeeping matters are inconvenient and brushed aside and much of what's in that *Invisible War* documentary speaks to-- It's not about sex, it's about power, and it's not just women that get raped, it's men as well. Um. It's. Not in the daily course of; it's a distraction from the mission. And so. You know, I have seen since the book has come out or since showing *The Invisible War* that the people that don't want to hear about it or the men that won't come in it. One of the guys in my husband's VA '65 reunion group read my book and came and apologized to me. He said I was a pilot. I was one of those guys. He said, "I'm ashamed of it". He said, "I had no idea." Well, you know, back then, free love didn't stop at the door. You know, Tailhook was real. Yeah. You know, my brother, Neil educated me, he said, Tailhook's real simple. You don't want to play, don't get off the elevator. Yeah, okay. You're giving consent when you step off that elevator. So. There's a million ways to rationalize away how it happened. It shouldn't have happened and more so we, my generation and somewhat my mom's generation raised stronger willed women. We're not going to tolerate it. You know, my book came out two days before the "Me Too" hit the fan.

Cohen: [01:23:40] Yeah.

Ferguson: [01:23:41] So it's just to say that they're not aware of the higher ups. How can you not know? You know, you didn't start as a commandant. How can you not know? Because you don't want to know. Because there's nothing you can do about it. You know, the damage is done. And you know, I'm long removed from the military and from recruiting that I don't know what's going on, but you know, one of my favorite places to go was this place here in town, *The Bunker* that's run by a husband and wife, Marine, and it's a refuge for veterans of all eras, and it can get pretty rough in there. But oddly enough, I feel quite safe in there. So who knows?

Cohen: [01:24:28] No, going back to your own service, I was a little bit curious as to why you were interested and wrote the enlisted naval recruiter orientation, like did you wish to do something with more with people rather than, I don't put it, like statistics or technology?

Ferguson: [01:24:49] Well, I think by the time I got to Jacksonville, and I had seen enough of the caliber or the lack thereof of enlistees, and I had heard time and again, "Well, my recruiter lied to me." I was going to go out there and be a recruiter that didn't lie. Okay. And with what I had been through, and it wasn't a conscious move on my part, but when I got to Chicago recruiting, I was at Milwaukee and Lawrence. And the-- all the branches would try to get me to be there closer if they had a female that was on the fence about going in. Because you got extra points for recruiting a female when they were on the on the quota for the month, that they were running out of female whatever branch. But it was towards the end of my time in recruiting, they said, "You know, we send the females for you to be the closer and not one of the girls you ever talked to end up going in the Navy?" "Yeah, what do you think? Funny, huh?" So I think on some level, even though it was not a conscious effort on my part, because if it's breathing and intelligent and healthy, we'd enlist it, you know, it was just a body count some months or something that you had worked on for weeks and weeks and months and months, and they just wouldn't sign could all happen all at once, you know, and one month you can't get two kids in the Navy, and two months later, you got twelve in one month and you try to sandbag them for the next month a little bit.

Ferguson: [01:26:27] But as it turned out, the women after talking to me and I never told them, I just told them, "You need to be strong willed and you need to expect that not everybody's there with, you know, your best interest at heart. Nobody's going to hold your hand and you're not going to get your cry your way out of it." I started in the western suburbs; you know? Well, I

was in a neighborhood where Daddy could buy them their own Navy. They didn't need to go in my Navy, or I'd get into the city and I'd be talking to them and then I'd see, you know, they've got me talking to some boys that are selfish. You know, they're not going to. Not a clue what it means to be a shipmate and to take care of those around you. And I remember one particular time I had four guys in there and the other recruiters came in and wanted to see how I was doing. None of them were going to be my recruit. But they said, "Well, we'll give you the female perspective, talk to the female recruiter". "Oh, she only recruits females?" "No, she's female and she's a recruiter first." And I'm talking to them in the one kids. I said, So you got, you know, I don't even remember what the scenario was, but the choice would not be in his favor. But it was his choice to make. And he took the position of, of course, I'm going to do, you know, what's best for me? And I was up off the table and coming at him.

Ferguson: [01:27:52] I said, "Get out of my office. You're not getting in my Navy. Go go." You know, the other recruiters are going, "Hold her back. You know, you got her Irish up now and the Scottish conjugating verbs is going on." I was I was going for his throat; I couldn't believe it. I thought, this is the kind of crap you just want to come in and have a free ride and have it on your resume when you go out. Mommy and Daddy help you get a job. So I think towards the end of it, I found a I made peace with what I'd been through, but the recruiting part of it was to make sure that they know fully what they were getting into. And some kids, you know, the stories they told their recruiters did lie to them. But the benefit, even now, I could say the benefit of going in the military and defending this country and the way that I was raised was you give back for the goodness that you've been afforded. You give back and I guess they call it paying ahead now. But there's a debt to be paid and when I see some, it's still the best thing that you can do, not just for your own character, but it's a thank you to the the fact that you get to be in this country at all and that you are the protectors of the others.

Cohen: [01:29:24] Yeah. I think many of us take for granted, and it's just you're just the exact opposite.

Ferguson: [01:29:31] Yeah. Sadly, yes.

Cohen: [01:29:36] You. Well, you mentioned, though, that in some ways, the stress and the trauma it did for a short term have the effect of leading to a growing dependance on alcohol.

Cohen: [01:29:51] Was this--.

Ferguson: [01:29:52] I think, being raised, you know, being an adult child of an alcoholic? The easiest thing is to just numb yourself for a while you think you're going to figure it out, but the answer is never down the neck of a bottle, is it? So I reached a point where I wasn't, you know, wasn't falling down drunk, wasn't, you know, all the all the rationalizations an alcoholic makes. I was never not able to do my job. I never missed a day's work. Blah blah, blah. No, those are just excuses. When I started to address in myself and talked to this, I considered this little girl in my head. You know, we'll get we'll get back to her one day and we'll get, you know, you'll. You'll address this once and finally and put it to rest. But in the meantime, you've got to get about the business of living, you know, and then to come back across Michael, a dear childhood friend and then, you know, be married to him for so long. And he just doesn't drink. It's just a waste of time and money and makes you foggy and you know. Worst thing in the world is I could have lost him if I turned into a lush. It just when there's nobody there to sympathize with you and get drunk. And then it doesn't change a damn thing. You still got the same problems, but now you've added a hangover. Yeah, it's just. There was no no upside to doing it. So I was amazed at how much money I actually could put in the bank when I didn't drink.

Cohen: [01:31:33] Hmm. So when was when did you begin to -- I don't know what thee word is like -- wean yourself away from alcohol? Were you still in the Navy itself or--?

Ferguson: [01:31:45] Well, especially in Navy recruiting. I mean, it was in a recruiting office, at least in Chicago. I don't know if they're all like this. Back then, if there were three of you assigned there every third day, it was your turn to buy the fifth, you know, and it would never be particularly good stuff. I mean, it was *Four Roses* or-- You know, it was just drinking for the sake of drinking. And, you know, vino and water with lime. Yeah, they get real drunk, real fast and real stupid, so. Um. It was towards the time the end of the military and then I got out in March of '78. But that previous New Year's Eve, I had my last drink of champagne. And I said, "That's it." You know, I never believed in New Year's resolutions, they're just setting yourself up for failure, but I had started seeing Michael in the fall of '77, and he didn't drink, so it just wasn't part of the daily life like it had been growing up. You know, so we just didn't. And I didn't miss it because there was plenty of good sober life to take part in, so. And now I'll, you know,

I'll have a glass of wine on my kids' birthdays. You know, and that's it, when I toast, you know, because I was there too, doing the work so. But no, it's not. You know, especially now battling ovarian cancer, you know, the drugs that they gave me numb you enough and the painkillers or the medical marijuana that they want you to take this go round since I came out of remission in June. I'm not doing any painkillers.

Cohen: [01:33:53] No.

Ferguson: [01:33:54] Taking it as it comes.

Cohen: [01:33:57] When did you decide to check into the Great Lakes Medical Center?

Ferguson: [01:34:02] I was in recruiting and was having tremendous stomach aches. I had no idea what the deal was. I thought, 'Well, you're not drinking anymore. You're not carousing. You really don't eat well or right'. But I just—stabbing, stabbing pains. And I— enough had happened. And there was an incident in recruiting where the Marine recruiter showed up at my door and I felt he was too drunk to let him go home. In the Navy, in the Marine Corps recruiting vehicle. Hmm. And. No good deed goes unpunished. And I was raped in my own bed for that kindness that I showed him by not letting him ruin his career. And, I thought, 'That's it.' You know, he set me up, he followed me all the way from Milwaukee and Lawrence to go through this. And there was intent and there was forethought and this highly decorated career Marine. Just was not, not what he appeared to be. No, no, so. Now, when I think back to my older brothers, they said it's not to be too crass, but it is crass, "It's just a piece of ass. It's not worth dying over. Live through it and then do something about it when you're out of danger." And usually, you know, any boy silly enough to make a pass at me in high school, answered to my brothers the next day. [Laughter] So and I never had a second date or another date with them, but they couldn't, you know, they couldn't fight my battles for me.

Ferguson: [01:36:11] And this happened in my apartment three blocks away from my middle brother's house. And he was horrified that he wasn't there. And I was a block away from the police department. So you don't know. You don't know. People are not as they appear. Everybody's got skeletons. So I just had had enough of that and the duplicity of my life, but I just wanted something real and Mike. Michael was a very real factor in my life. And when I got

sick and I went up to Great Lakes, I was given the chance to get out of Operation Specials [not sure of word]. And change just something that would be less stressful and leave recruiting, and I thought, no, I came in as one of the first fifty females to change history in the Navy, and I'm not going to change careers in the Navy just because it got a little difficult. You know, just because it was a little too hard now to uphold my end of the bargain. So I said, "You know what? No, I'll just take a medical discharge", which I did so. And, you know, even picking up my last check and signing my last bit of paperwork, the guys in legal made one last pass at helping me spend my severance pay.

Ferguson: [01:37:42] You know, when somebody doesn't have something, you want, they lose their leverage over you. I didn't want the Navy anymore. I wasn't willing to put up with all the noise around me anymore to get where I needed to go. I held up my part of the bargain. I was on my second enlistment, so I made good, and they gave me the paperwork that said, You know, you can contact the VA. Uh, for disability benefits. I wanted nothing more to do with any more military or anything else. And the first time I applied, I got 50 percent. Now back in the seventies, they never would have believed any of this, you know. The time that I chose to share this with those who might care or be able to do something about it, the powers that be were more enlightened and ready to hear it. Now, yeah, I look at 1978, even if I'd gotten as they said in the paperwork, 10 percent without question, that would have been a lot of money for forty years. But what it would have been to me is a constant reminder that on some level, I gave up on what was going to be a twenty-year military career. I didn't give up. I chose not to engage.

Cohen: [01:39:04] Right, right. I mean, that's it's very deliberate.

Ferguson: [01:39:07] You don't have something I want anymore, so I don't need you. Yeah, because the price of staying in the Navy, there's a picture of me in my book re-enlisting and people thought I looked like I had such military bearing and such a serious look on my face at the time I was computing. 'Well, okay, I've been in three and a half years, so I've been raped more than once and the baby... And so if I stay in twenty exponentially, how how does that figure out how many more times am I going to be attacked or raped in a twenty year career?' And I still signed, and I, you know, I don't for one minute regret it. And for all that happened, I don't regret it because I did good, I did, so it made it, it made a difference that I showed up. And I kept my word and did my part--

Cohen: [01:40:01] And did your part.... So what did Michael--First of all, What did Michael think about all this? Like, did he know about it?

Ferguson: [01:40:11] He was stunned. Yeah. It explained a few of the emotional outbursts that I had had situationally triggered by something else. He had no idea that this went on in the Navy because he's not that person. It's beyond his comprehension and character.

Cohen: [01:40:30] Right, right.

Ferguson: [01:40:31] And you know, when he when he saw the *Invisible War* with me, he was horrified. He said, "I'd have killed anybody". I said, "There you go". You know, it's a whole subculture that he was not nowhere near part of. So, I think to a great extent, you know, he's always been loving and supporting. He was heartbroken that I had to go through that, and he's been very caring and supportive, you know, as things come up or if he sees things trigger me or he knows how to read me. We've been together forty-four years now, so he knows when there's a blip in the radar that something is amiss, so. He's a good guy. And, you know, he's just he's got a good, strong character, you know. He's seen me through ovarian cancer in the depths of it and now, here we go, you know, now that I've fallen out of remission, it's, it's a struggle, it's a, it's a step back. Quite a bit so. Time will tell. Lots of big tests on the 20th of December and that'll see how we proceed in the new year for how long?

Cohen: [01:41:49] Well, wishing you, wishing you health and blessings...

Ferguson: [01:41:51] I know. Well, if I have to go, I have to go, but at least some will know I was here.

Cohen: [01:41:59] Yeah. Yeah.

Ferguson: [01:42:03] Don't be sad. My favorite Winnie the Pooh cartoon is Pooh is sitting on the edge of a pier with Piglet and Piglet looks up at him and says, "Pooh, are we going to die?" He said, "Yes, Piglet, but not today". So I go with that. Not today. That's right. I'm already, they said [that] I wouldn't say sixty-four and I'm about to turn sixty-nine, so--

Cohen: [01:42:26] So there you go. You're already--

Ferguson: [01:42:29] Yep. I'm not done yet, apparently.

Cohen: [01:42:32] No, that's it. So do you have any children?

Ferguson: [01:42:37] Oh, I have incredible children. My first born, Owen...See, that's my daughter's first born. Evan, my firstborn Evan, is thirty about to turn forty here in August, and our daughter, Heather, has our two grandchildren, Owen and Julia, and they've moved back here from Liverpool, England and are living here. They got here just before COVID... And her husband being British, has to wait for his shots and what have you and has not been able to come so. Thank heavens for FaceTime. Yeah, so they they are incredible. Our daughter works at the school district with kids that have roadblocks to learning. And she's been through a lot because our grandson had ALL acute lymphoblastic leukemia and 154 days of treatment, it was diagnosed when he was just short of three years old. So he's a little warrior and he's about to turn eight years old in January and he kicked cancer's, butt is what he will tell you. So he was my battle buddy. I got diagnosed in April of 2017 and he got diagnosed. Fourth of July of 2017, which over there is just another day, but it was a horrible day. So now he thinks fireworks are pretty cool, that everybody celebrates the fact that he's still alive. [Cohen laughs]

Cohen: [01:44:18] How how did you and your husband convey the importance of service to your children?

Ferguson: [01:44:27] But I don't know that it was service in the sense of the military. Our son is very much his own person and being a person, he's somewhat... How others. They don't really impact his life, he has his own world and his own perspective, and he does good and he's kind-hearted and his service is in that everybody's life is richer for having him pass through it in whatever capacity. Our daughter feels not like she has a debt to pay, not like she's trying to buy her way into heaven, which I've been accused of doing. But you, you help those that don't have what you have. And if it benefits you along the way, all the better, fine like her military time. But she. She's very caring. Her masters is in sociology and living in Liverpool at that socioeconomic level, if she ever chooses to write a book, she'll have quite a lot to say and their

school system being so different than ours. And their health system, but our grandson got excellent care at Alder Hey Hospital. You just. You hope that they see what their mom and dad are doing, how kind and honest and the integrity of their father and I was in the military and then I was on the school board, a trustee of the library. I wasn't on the school board. It was a grant position called Excellence in Education to grant things to the different school teachers. But seeing me on the library board and then seeing me as a police officer that you want it. You should go through life and know that it mattered you showed up, that you did good while you were here. And I think it's not so much sitting them down to hardcore start finish middle instruction, as it is by example,

Cohen: [01:47:11] Would you like to talk about your work as a police officer for the DuPage Sheriff County?

Ferguson: [01:47:18] Yeah, the county of DuPage, the Office of the Sheriff...I had the honor of being hired by Dick Doria. He was the sheriff when I took the job, and then I worked for under John Zaruba. And was not able to hang on long enough to get to Jim Mendrik, which-- the man's a godsend. He's amazing. He has reactivated and really taken off with the program that I worked on for six years. Sheriff Zaruba found out what my degree was going to be in at Benedictine [University] and-- I was very interested in reducing recidivism of the inmates and training them while they're in. If you can hold on just a minute, my dog is needing to leave the room...Horsey girl... Go upstairs now... My little Boston, you might have heard her snoring, her morning nap is over, it's time to go out.

Cohen: [01:48:35] [unclear] Now hear you. I missed her snoring.

Ferguson: [01:48:39] Oh yeah, that little, short snout. She's quite noisy. But, well, Sheriff Zaruba was in place. Yeah, he called me in and he's told me what he wanted to do. He says I'm not exactly sure how to go about it. Oh, I'm sorry. "No, this is what I'm wanting to do in school and I could do this and I could", you know? "Yeah, I know. That's why you're here. This is what you're going to do." So for the better part of six years, I worked out and a path to reduce recidivism and we made a big dent and we got College of DuPage in there to help people get their high school diplomas. And we had deputies teaching the classes at night and helping and we had...Rather, okay... So just of DuPage, which is a Christian backed organization, they teach

within the system. They would have different teachers come in to teach anger management and life skills and math and family planning and such. You had to move the inmates all over the jail. So instead, I said, what if we put those that are seriously interested in bettering themselves and coming out of this? Put them all together in one pod? Multigenerational. That they could be an artificial community, they could learn and support each other where, well, the common thinking was, "You don't want to put the old guys in there."

Ferguson: [01:50:18] I said, "No, the old guys are the best ones because they can say, 'Look, what happens if you don't do something now, you're going to end up like me?'" And that ended up being the way that we went. It was a wide range of ages and there were three pods. And there's sixteen, sixteen and sixteen so we had two of the pods where all the teachers would come to them, so they didn't get moved around the jail. So that was 120 less opportunities, fewer opportunities for fights to break out or for there to be an issue or a problem. And when they went back to their pod or to their cell, they had like-minded inmates who were there to try to better themselves, and once she got to be here anyway. And so those newer deputies starting now think those recovery pods. Well, we can't call it rehabilitation and recovery, because it's not run by social workers, and it's not accredited. It just works, okay. And now I did what I could do with it on limited funding and whatnot. We made great strides. But then when Sheriff [01:51:29] Mender [Meldrick?] Came [01:51:30] in. He has launched, taken that and just run with every dream I had for making it better.

And he has made it-- like he got a semi-tractor trailer and inside the trailer is eight, uh, workstations where people can leave with a welding degree or the janitorial service that cleans up the jail has taught the guys and a couple of females, actually one of the first classes of the welding class had a female in it. You leave with a certificate. The janitorial service, you know how to repair the machines and run the business and you leave with a certificate. Now they're talking about a cooking class so that you can leave with culinary certificates and the educators are DuPage County Sheriff Meldrick is just making magic at pulling all the right people into the room and finding that North Star that takes it to the next level and let the people run. He's just-- and it only makes it better for the people of DuPage County, and I had a very small piece of that, you know, at the outset where we did the recovery pods and I was actually sitting in Denny's and this grandma lady started walking up to me. She was, "I don't want to bother you when you're with your family, but are you Deputy Ferguson?" I said, "I am."

Ferguson: [01:52:57] I thought, "Oh no, what am I doing?" She says, "I have to tell you." She said, "We almost exhausted our savings, sending our grandson to rehab facilities and whatever you did work after the work he did in the jail on your program. He's fine", she said, "In the seven failed attempts that we had and all the little 'Send them away for twenty-eight days'. They said sometimes the best thing that can happen is they get arrested. Well, now they get arrested and go to the jail. You'd better know that there's every reason for you to come out as a better person. Then you come in back into my neighborhood. You come back into DuPage County. You're a productive citizen, you know, and it just makes your family better and your kids better." You know, just so my time there, you know, and people can say what they want about cops being fast and loose. I never got disrespected or sexually accosted or harassed by my coworker. Never, you know, they recognize, you know, and they would say, you know, you got your husband, your work husband, your work wife, whatever... I just I never saw that. I just -- we were all there doing a difficult job and there to support each other. Good people.

Cohen: [01:54:19] Sounds great. You know, after the interview, on another occasion, I wouldn't mind asking you a little bit more about that for personal reasons. So but thank you for--

Ferguson: [01:54:26] --Sure--.

Cohen: [01:54:27] Sharing that. Yeah, I'm trying to think... So we put General Vaught was one of the moving forces behind the monument that women in military service for America memorial. But now I understand they try to provide a forum to collect women's stories of service. In general, do you find there's more openness and willingness both to share and listen to women's stories in the military?

Ferguson: [01:55:04] Well, I think, you know, a long time back when General Vaught was first enlisted, you just came in and kept your head down and tried to be invisible. I think now. She's pretty much seen it all, she's she's a living historian, you know. Yeah, it was forward thinking of somebody to think we should start getting oral histories, as well because it's so much more impactful to hear the woman's voice. I think women finally feel like they have a voice. There's a willing ear out there. Before it was like, Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, women only go in the military for one reason blah blah blah. You know, all the way back to World War II when women

in the Army were accused of prostitution when in fact, the private vendor that was making the uniforms was selling it to prostitutes and they would hang outside the gate. And it gave military women, you know, and then there was actually under Eisenhower men that wanted to the actual senators and congressmen that started that rumor that women were prostituting themselves and then they found a whole scheme of kickbacks and the rumor mill, and it was Eisenhower that said, "Knock it off. Now!" And that's because the willing ear he had on the pillow next to him was a woman in the military. So his you know. Before you had to work the system, the best you could. But 80 percent of the incidents just went unreported, because what's the point? You're going to pay the price; you've already paid the price knowing what happened to you? There's already self-doubt or self-recrimination.

Ferguson: [01:57:02] Now, I think because of the education of the inquirer, those inquiring about it. Because there's-- This many people can't be making up the same story. I know that when I went into counseling, when I finally the book came out and I thought, "Yeah, I'm going to need some professional help to wade through this." I had a psychoanalyst that I said, "I don't know if I should waste time talking to you. Were you ever in the military?" She said, "No". I said, "How long you've you been talking to women vets?" She said, "Twenty-five years." So, okay, "You might know something", but when I talked to her, she got it. She understood, and I thought, wouldn't it be amazing? Well, she after I'd been working with her for about six months, she said, "We've gotten far enough that I want you to see this documentary now because had you seen it sooner, I'd think you were parroting what is the incidents. You need to now see and know this didn't just happen to you." And so many of us, you know, internalize what has happened. And that's what I found with my book that people are coming to me, people that I went to high school with, people that women that didn't go in the military but had been harassed or assaulted by people in their churches.

Ferguson: [01:58:33] Authority figures and people that were date raped, that the people that have come to me and said, "Where did you find your voice?" I said, "Way at the bottom." And it was buried in there. And, you know, for so long, we self-talk and we can self-talk ourselves into good things and bad things. But I had talked to that little girl in my head for so long saying, "Just, you know, hang in there. They can't hurt you. You're going to get your chance. I'm going to I'm going to fix this." And it got to the point when I was at the sheriff's office, by then, I was over in the courthouse and I start. I called it seepage, for a minute here or there, I'd lose focus

because somebody would have said something or acted in a way that made me kind of internalize it. And I thought, 'No, you can't do this work anymore. If you're not going to be 100 percent and somebody needs you in that instant when your mind is not focused, it's time to call it a day'. So. I had bought my military time towards seniority, so I was able to leave with twenty years of service. But it got to the point where the seepage was, you know? I realized I needed to address it because it was going to overtake -- the little girl is done waiting that I needed to get this put to bed.

Cohen: [02:00:02] That's what you had said that you're that your retirement in 2013 or 2014 allowed you the freedom to help the little girl that was seeping out more.

Ferguson: [02:00:13] By then we were empty nesters and it had been on my bucket list to someday see if I could write a book. And, you know, as I thought about it and my coworkers found out I was writing a book, there were a few people in the sheriff's office that were worried that it was about them. Or I said, "Don't flatter yourself". There's nothing here that was noteworthy that I would spill my guts on. And many of the people that I write about, I mean, I try to not identify them or seek them out or-- My brother and Commander Marsh, knew that I was going to write and write about, you know, mention them. And they were okay with it, but I only mentioned by name the ones that had a positive impact and not somebody that is low enough to do that kind of a thing to a woman or to a man would probably enjoy being singled out and have a "Yeah, what about it?" kind of attitude because it was okay. And it's so not okay. And you know, back to your question, I think women are finding that there is a more willing ear. People are more open to hearing about things and taking it seriously and it doesn't have to be a litigious solution, it just needs to be acknowledged that this happened, and I did the best I could without your, you know, y'all's help. But I just need-- It was it was a big deal for me to wait and hear, hear them say, "Yup, that happened, and boy, are we sorry." You know? And nobody ever said, "Wish you would have told us sooner. You know, I never got a sense that there had been a better time than the time that it happened. You know, all things in their own time, you know? Yeah. So."

Cohen: [02:02:28] Did anybody ever apologize to you after the book was published, such as the I forget his rank, but the one who kind of 'fessed up? The one who--

Ferguson: [02:02:38] I have no idea what happened to him. No. Oddly enough, the only people that have apologized to me are either other people that had happened to, that they were sorry that I had to experience it or somebody that I was never stationed with, that I know in a different context or somebody that was stationed with my husband. I've had three men, two that I had yet to meet, I've only talked to on the phone, but one that I grew up with. They came back and had all been raped in the military and apologize that I went through, through it and at the same time, thanked me that I helped them find their voice. So the book was never designed to make a second living or be hugely successful or any of that. I mean, it had been my hope that it would take off enough that, you know, if I started a Go Fund Me page tomorrow and here, I go back to what's your end game, Diane? What, how would you like to see this turn out? Ideally, you know, I'd like to get in a position where I can offer -- there's plenty of homeless veterans, shelters for men and counseling places.

Ferguson: [02:03:58] I would like to get in a position where I could just buy like a three-bedroom house, and it could just be for women that are trying to find their way back from this situation. You know, and I'm not looking for like a big staff or all that stuff, just a safe harbor, you know where women can just catch their breath for a minute and realize what happened. Deal with it a little bit sooner rather than later and not let it define their life. You know, and that's just a matter of finding the willing ear and finding the right time, and there's a fairly accomplished writer producer that wants to turn the book into a Netflix movie. It would have to be a movie. It's not done well in episodes, it wouldn't--.

Cohen: [02:04:51] No.

Ferguson: [02:04:52] But. You know, that too takes money to pay the screenwriter. No, no actor is going to make a movie off a book. They want to see the screenplay. I don't know if I have that energy. I think I've run my course. I, you know, cancer is kicking my butt. And I don't know if I have enough time to see it happen. It will, if it's meant to.

Cohen: [02:05:15] Yeah, and also there's a lot of credit to starting something like like the recidivism, you know, program of the--

Ferguson: [02:05:23] Oh, I love it as a legacy, you know? You know, the newer deputies think that that's always been there.

Cohen: [02:05:28] But yeah and carry and carry out your work in the same with a book. Your book is out there and hopefully you or somebody else will take it to other media.

Ferguson: [02:05:39] Yeah, I know my husband worked with a girl who had been in the Air Force and. She went off the deep end and I said, "Oh my God, she was raped." And my husband said, "No, she wasn't." I said, "Yeah, I'll betcha." I got a hold of her and and I --she had lost everything. She had a beautiful home. She had a great job in Elmhurst. She even ended up working for Argon. She was a brainiac. And she lost her home and her credibility and her professional life, and she ended up going home to Texas and is a biker chick now. And I sent her a copy of the book and she's living in a trailer on her parents Back Forty and I get a call from her, I didn't hear a thing. I get a call from her, and she starts swearing at me right away, "So well, nice to hear from you too." She says, "I got your book." I says, "Did ya.?" And she said, "I had my day planned. I had all my pills lined up on the table, Diane. And I was just going to-- I saved them for a month, I was going to take them all and be done with it. And I look and there's your book and thought, 'What the hell? I better read her book. She'll haunt me forever. You know, I'll die a terrible death. She'll come back to haunt me because I didn't read your damn book'. I read your damn book, I said, "And?" It's just, why I'm f-ing calling you now, aren't I? She says, "You screwed up my whole day. I'm not going to kill myself. I'm going to fight." I said, "Well, there you go." You know, and I've had other people tell me that they were ready to kill themselves. And then they said, "Hey, wait a minute." You don't give somebody else the last word on this, no, no. You stick around and you. You know, you're not fighting for anybody but yourself, you know?

Ferguson: [02:07:26] Just another question is, is faith, is Christianity important to you? You mentioned speaking to the chaplain when you were in Portsmouth, that belief in God is that is that part of your life or had it been part of your life?

Ferguson: [02:07:43] It's, you know, I never missed a Sunday all the way up through Eighth Grade, you know, forced Presbyterian upbringing, but in our--We joke about it by saying we are the witches they could not burn--And it goes all the way back to the 1500s in Scotland, and I've

got my mother's grandmother's herbal healing book. She was a healer. They came from Edinburgh in 1830s. But that side of...My father's side of the family were part of the original Covenanters that Bloody Mackenzie had to take out, because they didn't put the king first all the way back in Scotland. So it's in my blood to believe. I don't, I don't follow, and I don't go to church, and my pastor now thinks, you know, my good works are trying to buy my way into heaven. It's not. Religion is really personal to me and really, really -- not religion, [rather] having faith. Um, I talked to God every day and think him or ask him, what is it, I'm supposed to be doing that I don't get it, that I keep having to do these things. But I have a mistrust for organized religion. You know, and uh, the Boston Catholic Church and the shuffle and move around the priests and. I just--They're just men. You know, it's a human failing, you can make all kinds of dismissive statements about it. I just. My faith is strong and otherwise how could I have made it through what I went through be it in an upbringing in an alcoholic household to the military, to what I experienced in the military, and everything that's come since? To have to carry that weight around. Once I wrote the book, it was very freeing, once I decided that I'm not the one in charge of whether I live or die, that I can't orchestrate the outcome. And then to fall out of remission again and I thought, 'Oh my God, here we go again'. And I really mean, 'Oh my God.' He might be your God, too, but I still maintain a belief. I mean, how do you explain all this, if not for Him, you know...

Cohen: [02:10:25] Greater purpose.

Ferguson: [02:10:25] Yeah!

Cohen: [02:10:26] And is that greater being and that greater spirit, that greater power go back to the days of the Covenant Wars in Scotland? I don't know. You know, my gift for writing. Henry Madden wrote *The history of Scotland* back in the 15, 1600s. So I get it from my dad's side, I get it from my mom's side. You know, and the books that came over with them on the boat are like the 1881 one copy of Robert Burns poetry in a cloth covered binding, saying, "Don't forget your motherland or mother tongue or where you came from". Something went before. You can't explain all this if not for a greater being. You know, and the opportunities to I don't want to say the challenges, but the moments where it could have gone the other way. And I didn't prevail, or it could have done better, the things that Ginny Narsete that was

organizing HerStory and the flight to D.C, I was going to be in the third seat next to her, but for cancer returning. And I planned the whole week around it.

Ferguson: [02:11:57] We were coming up for Brigadier General Vaughn's 90th birthday and COVID hit. And then in June, I come out of remission and it's like, what? You know, why? Why another challenge? Why another milestone or roadblock depends on how you look at it? Ginny worked really hard. I met her a couple of years ago when -- I think it's the city of Lisle, puts on a lunch or Naperville puts it on at the Lisle's [02:12:35] Al Gore's, [02:12:36] it was, I think, a luncheon for veterans. It's just a Veterans Appreciation Day. And that's where I met Ginny, like a week before she retired from the state of Illinois and then Ginny kept in touch, and then I saw the HerStory thing posted at the VA clinic in Aurora and I thought, 'Why do I know that name Narsete'? It's the only Narsete I know, I wonder if it's that little fireball. You know, she's just a little bit of nothing, and she's just exhausting. She's just so full of energy, and she still pulled this off while her husband was dying of brain cancer.

Cohen: [02:13:13] Her mother passed away, too.

Ferguson: [02:13:15] And yeah, she keeps going because there's no other option. You know, and she has a very strong faith and just, you know, I don't get to spend time with her as much as I'd like to, but every minute I spend with her is a treasure. And you know, knowing General Vaught and knowing that one of the first things she said is, "Are you coming to the [Honor Flight]", you know. And when Marilla Cushman called. Oh, I called her because I hadn't heard anything from General Vaught in a long time, this was prior to her birthday." [02:13:48] Sheila?, [02:13:48] you saved me a phone call because General Vaught wants to make sure you're here for her 90th birthday." I said, "I plan to be", so I was hoping there was going to be a birthday and then we couldn't because of COVID. So. It. Your faith is... My faith, anybody's faith is what they make of it and the weight that they give it. There's no bargain to be made. It's not a Chinese menu. I'll do this one for me and one for me. I just do the best I can and know that, you know how I-- I'm not orchestrating the outcome. I'm bringing the talents and the skills that have been bestowed upon me. But. Um. How things turn out is not my call. I can do the best I can and if I have done the best that I can do, then whatever you know-- was the British saying, "It'll all be all right in the end", "If it's not all right yet, it's not the end", you know, very simple. Okay. You know, and now having our grandson and granddaughter here, she's witty beyond belief,

but she's only ever known her brother to be ill, you know? And now he's starting to feel his oats a little bit and as always, reconfirming, you know, "Well, we kick cancers butt together, Grandma, you'll do it again. You just, you must have missed something." You know, it's just...He said, "It'll be all right in the end. You know that, right?" Yes, I do. Oh, so sometimes the children lead us still.

Cohen: [02:15:29] Yes. Yeah. So the Pritzker Military Museum & Library has a mission to collect and preserve the stories of the citizen, Citizen Soldier. What does the term Citizen Soldier mean to you?

Ferguson: [02:15:50] I don't think it's that far removed from what my parents taught me. You know, as citizens, you can't be the fair-weather friend. It's in in the darkness and in the hard times where the citizens step up. Um. That the soldiering may not always be at war. It might be on the back lines. It might be in the day-to-day life and the way that we live, the Citizen Soldier, we went off and we did what we needed to do. My dad came home from the service and rarely ever talked about it and had PTSD before there was a name for it. But you come back. And as he spoke, and as Commander Marsh, he went right back to the farm in Jacksonville. My dad's closest, closest dearest friend in the Army went right back to Center Smith, Kansas. Right back to the farm, he was raised on-- Smith Center, not Center Smith, the Smith Center. It's almost the exact geographic center of the United States near Lebanon. And then you go back to the business of being a good citizen and you carry with you your remembrances and your time and service, and you don't whine about it. You just carry on -- it was for the betterment of all the citizens. And everybody on some level, may have endured the war or yeah-- So to me, it means, you know, you might have been a private citizen, but the citizen soldier, when you add that to it, you come back with a new appreciation for being a citizen and contributions already made and sacrifices already made.

Ferguson: [02:17:49] You come back, and you put it to good use, you know, kind of a where do we go from here? Approach to life and be a good citizen because you know the cost. And you've probably lost people along the way, I think, to some extent, well, to a great extent, the girl that went into the Navy is not the girl that came out. So what are you going to do with what you got? So. I think it's a tremendous thing that they're doing this and including the women in it ... and getting this the oral histories down. Uh, especially if you can get the guys to talk about it.

It's probably, I would imagine, a great relief for them. The women, probably -- I do have some female friends that never had a moment that they got harassed. And they were certainly attractive and successful. It's just who's ever thrown in the mix, so just having the opportunity, oh, I'm very grateful for it. And I feel it'll make a difference.

Cohen: [02:19:12] I appreciate your willing[ness] to talk and to make the difference, and before concluding, is there something that you would like to add that we did not talk about?

Ferguson: [02:19:27] You covered so much. And, you know, I'm sure with a deft hand, you'll edit out what and make it a stronger piece, even more so, but I think it's important what you're doing. It's -- oral histories need to be preserved. Um, you know, some people can say it's reminiscing or somebody else. Some anybody can say it's not factual, it's; "It was my experience, and this is how I remember it." And it's not with any malice for anybody that wandered through my life, did good or did damage. It's irrelevant now. I don't want any young person or anyone considering going in the military to hear any of these stories and be deterred, if anything, be inspired. You know, many, many of us will tell the story that's got a lot of travel or tragedy in it. But look for the hope and the resilience in it as well and think that's what happened to them. And don't think, well, that's never going to happen to me because I'll guarantee you'll be the first victim if that's the attitude you have. But don't let it deter you from going in. I've got one of my oncology nurses, her son is thinking of getting out because he's a little different. He doesn't kind of buy into the thing, and he's a Marine. He doesn't buy it into too much of what he's saying.

Ferguson: [02:20:58] I said he's the very man that women need to have stay in. He needs to hold the line and and so don't think that it's so pervasive that you can't go in and make a difference. You know, this is a great country, and it deserves the citizen soldier to come and contribute from wherever they are in their personal lives out here. So I would just I would just say that anybody listening to this, "Don't go overboard and be inspired because of this and enlist because of this, but if you're listening and you're thinking of. Not doing this because of something you heard. Flip it over",

Cohen: [02:21:43] Flip it over. Yeah.

Ferguson: [02:21:44] You know, and if you think it wouldn't happen to you, then go be the person to make sure it doesn't happen to somebody. Go in there and contribute and make a difference and change the system. That's what I tell people in my book. It's don't sit around and be sad. You know, don't give in. Don't give up. Just give it all you got. And get the job done. So that's about it, I just want to thank you and the Pritzker family for taking the time and the dedication to to put this in the record.

Cohen: [02:22:20] And we thank you. And on behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, we will mail you a challenge coin in the mail.

Ferguson: [02:22:27] Oh, thank you so much. I'll treasure that it will go in the lockbox. And I did send my release. It's in the mailbox now waiting for the postman. [Laughs] So do what you will, and I trust that it will be the quality work that the museum is known for. I'm honored to have been asked and humbled.

Cohen: [02:22:47] And we're very happy and it will be on record. We're dealing with our own manpower challenges, so we do, we do have a commitment at this point in time to post the transcript of the interview, which you'll have a chance to review, photos if you wish to send, a write up of your service, and I would like to add a link to your memoir. We're not sure we can get the production yet.

Ferguson: [02:23:16] Do what you can do,

Cohen: [02:23:17] And I'm certainly happy to send you a copy of the of this for you and your family.

Ferguson: [02:23:23] You know, I would, I would like that very much. Thank you.

Cohen: [02:23:25] Yes, I'm happy to be. I'll take care of that.

Ferguson: [02:23:31] Well, thank you for the big shoulders you hold up. Well, I'm sure I'm not the only one with a sob story, but you've held up well. You've had a few moments where you

grimaced, but it's not. It's not... You're easy to talk to and you've got big shoulders. I appreciate the work that you've taken on. I do.

Cohen: [02:23:50] No, no, no. And I thank you. And I'm and and you know, like I was saying was reading your book at the time last winter, you know, it was like you went through. You went through a lot. I don't know how to say it eloquently. And yet you have the determination to I don't know to--

Ferguson: [02:24:11] Giving up, not an option, you know, I mean, how bad can it be? I don't know if you can see over my shoulder. I still got the recruiting posters that hung in my office, but I just I wish I was a man and I want you for the Navy. I was fortunate enough that I met both of those models and had them sign the posters.

Cohen: [02:24:31] Oh oh, oh, cool.

Ferguson: [02:24:33] So, you know, our basements done like a Navy flight lounge, like memorabilia.

Cohen: [02:24:37] So it did have that feeling about it, yeah.

Ferguson: [02:24:40] Yeah, it's it wasn't all bad, you know?

Cohen: [02:24:46] No.

Ferguson: [02:24:47] And it brought me to a place where I'm able to help other people because of it. Some goods got to come out of it, you know?

Cohen: [02:24:56] And I think like you, like many others like it, seem to have really taught a lot about like structure and discipline and focus. And you know, some of us have to learn in a more ... circuitous way like myself.

Ferguson: [02:25:09] Well, you take care -- and I'll look forward to. Are you going to mail a hard copy of it?

Cohen: [02:25:16] Okay, so do you want me to if I send it to you, the MP3 or MP4 by email, would you be able to access it...?

Ferguson: [02:25:26] I don't even know what that is, so probably not. I am not very technological at all. So we'll we'll find a way. Let's stay in touch. And when you've got it, Okay? All right. You take care. All the best to you.

Cohen: [02:25:39] All the best. Thank you.

Ferguson: [02:25:40] Have a good holiday season. A good new year.

Cohen: [02:25:43] You too.

Ferguson: [02:25:44] Thank you so much. Bye bye, then. Bye.