

**TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW WITH
CAROL MUTTER
12 NOVEMBER 2012**

QUESTION: Why did you join the Marines?

GENERAL MUTTER: Because they're the best [LAUGHS] there's no doubt about that. And the Marine recruiter showed up on campus when I was a senior. I had no intention of going into the military. It wasn't on my radar at all. I was going to be a high school math teacher because my role model when I was going through school was a female high school math teacher. So I was going to school to become a math teacher and the recruiter showed up on campus. And what she had to say sounded pretty good. The only obligation was the ten-week summer training and you actually only had to stay for five weeks of that. You had to give it a good go. Given the opportunity, everyone could go home the first night. I figured I'd go ahead and stay the whole time, keep my options open. At that point Vietnam was going on. I wanted to have an opportunity to serve my country, and it was a three-year obligation and I could always go back to teaching later.

QUESTION: Not a lot of people wanted to do that.

GENERAL MUTTER: Well, this was in '66. I went to OCS in '67. So that was still a little bit early in the war before things got real negative and before there were a lot of concerns about the prosecution of that war.

QUESTION: How did the Marines react to women joining their ranks?

GENERAL MUTTER: Well, when I joined, we were only 1% female and there were no women in the deployed forces at all. So, as long as the women were back in the rear doing the jobs that the men didn't want to do, there was not much of a problem. I was in an MOS, a military occupational specialty, of computers, very small MOS, and you make your reputation early on since we're so small. Everybody knows everybody, so you make your reputation pretty much the first place you go. After that your reputation precedes you for good or for ill. So you kind of go from there. I had one chance where a male gunnery sergeant was not real happy about having a female boss and made it known but we got that straightened out.

QUESTION: What affect did women have on the Marines corps?

GENERAL MUTTER: Well, the women that joined the Marines Corps freed up enough men to form the Sixth Marine Division to go to the Pacific and fight and were really pretty decisive in our winning the battles there and even the war, I think, because of how we were able to put another division in the field, 60,000 Marines.

QUESTION: What were women in the Marines called?

GENERAL MUTTER:

Marines. Marines were the last to accept women in the military, and when the commandant announced it he said they are going to be called Marines. There will not be a nickname. They are going to get the same training as our male Marines. They get the same training, they wear the same uniform, they are Marines.

QUESTION: What does every Marine a rifleman mean?

GENERAL MUTTER: I have to say that women, in those days, initially did not get the weapons training. When I went through even in the late '60s we got familiarization training but were not required to fire for score. So, it took some time because we weren't required to deploy into those types of units where you'd need a weapon. We weren't required to have that kind of training. Every Marine a rifleman means that in recruit training and basic officer training every Marine learns how to fire now for score. They get the badge and every Marine is expected to know how to fire a weapon because even if you're back in the rear, even if you are not out in the front lines, as we found out in Vietnam, there are no frontlines anymore. And that's certainly been true in recent conflicts and any type of counter insurgency operation. You have to set up a perimeter of defense. Everybody has to know how to fire a weapon, how to do those minimum things that you have to do in a defensive position. And then if you're out there deploying with a truck, for example, they have female drivers who drive patrols out on convoys delivering supplies and so forth, they have to be able to defend themselves because they never know what they're going to run into and they have to be able to take the fight to the enemy as well.

QUESTION: What is the statue in New Orleans?

GENERAL MUTTER: It's the first statue of a female in uniform anywhere in the U.S. It was pretty extraordinary, and we've done our best to try to maintain Molly and keep her in good shape. Because the materials she was made of, obviously, during World War II, were not the best. It does deteriorate on occasion. She's become kind of a bit iconic, and we have a Molly Marine award that we give in recruit training to the female who most exemplifies the spirit of Molly and being a Marine and that's selected by her platoon mates. The Women Marine Association sponsors that award. So there are ways that Molly has become iconic and has continued to influence what and how we do things.

QUESTION: What did the women do when you first enlisted?

GEN. MUTTER: Women in those days were in mostly administrative types of positions, flat-out admin or supply, cooks and bakers and public affairs. You know, anything that was in a support arena, supporting those who actually went into the fight. But supporting back from the higher headquarters, not supporting from the frontlines as they did eventually and now today.

QUESTION: Similar to during the Second World War?

GENERAL MUTTER: Yes. Second World War actually they did a little bit more than that. They were parachute riggers and certainly truck drivers, jeep drivers, and so on. A lot of the women you talk to from World War II, they looked good and they were very meticulous. So they ended up being drivers for the generals. They got to see a lot of the history up close from a very senior level even though they weren't senior themselves.

QUESTION: When you joined what was the general attitude towards female officers?

GENERAL MUTTER:

Well, as second lieutenant, you know, the brown bar, you always have to kind of prove yourself. But with the men the assumption is we know what kind of training you went through, you succeeded in that training, you graduated, you got your rank and so therefore we'll give you a certain level of respect just based on that. What you do and say and how you act and lead will change that. With women we started at a different level, because most people didn't really know

what kind of training we went through, whether or not we had earned the title Marine, a very coveted title. So therefore, at what level should they respect us? There was kind of a stand back and lets wait and see. Is this person really a Marine? Is this person really somebody who can lead, somebody we want to follow, somebody who knows what they're doing?

QUESTION: How did the change for women in the military in the '70s manifest itself in the Marines Corps?

GENERAL MUTTER: In the '70s when they did away with the draft they needed more women to fill in some of the holes. The recruiting arena realized that there were more women needed. So the numbers of women did increase dramatically. Where I saw it was every Friday when the base newspaper came out. You'd open it up and you'd see a new first for women. The first female in crash fire rescue, first female doing this or that. And it got to the point where you said, lets just get it over with. Lets get through all of this and not have to go through all of this anymore. But you know, those were important milestones and it's good that they're recorded. In fact, it is part of the history that is extremely important. Those women, in every case proved they could do the job, that there was no reason why they shouldn't be in those jobs.

QUESTION: Women were presumed not to be able to fly at one point.

GENERAL MUTTER: I think mostly in the Marine Corps the feeling that the women wouldn't be able to do the job centered more around the physical than mental or technical kinds of skills, because the Marine Corps is a very macho unit, very infantry heavy, as far as infantry, tanks, artillery, those kinds of jobs that require a lot of endurance, of strength, and so on. So, the concerns, as I recall, were more around physical strength than anything else.

QUESTION: How did the Persian Gulf change things for the Marines?

GENERAL MUTTER: Initially there was a lot of consideration about whether or not the women were going to deploy in the first wave of Marines who were deployed to the Gulf. At that time there were laws on the books about women not allowed in combat, so they were in combat service support units and logistics and so on and they were key. In fact, in the logistics units, even though the Marine Corps was only maybe 5% female at that time, there were 8 and 9% female because they couldn't be in the infantry and other fields. So they were disproportionate in logistics and the logistics units when they deployed had to take the women with them otherwise they couldn't do the job. So there was some discussion about that, wondering whether or not they should really deploy in the first wave or if we should wait and maybe send them later. The commanding general of the logistics unit had a rather large say in that saying. He said that I have to have them so we can do the job.

QUESTION: What sort of things do women serving in the Marine Corps do now that they couldn't do 20 years ago?

GENERAL MUTTER: It's amazing how far we've come. We just had a convention, Women Marines Association, in Philadelphia, a couple of months ago and had panel discussions where the active duty women had come in and told us about what they get to do. There's so much jealousy from those who went before. No way were we ever able to do that kind of thing. We weren't allowed, it's not that we couldn't, it's that we weren't allowed to do those things. You may have heard of the FET teams, Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq. They actually get out there and go into the villages, talk to the women and the children, in full battle

dress, they reassure them about what's going on and get information from them. They do get information that is very helpful to the combat units. Plus, since the beginning of Afghanistan, we had to have roadblocks. You never knew when somebody was going by with a vest of explosives. Men couldn't do that. Not in that society. So they had to get women out there to do that. It took awhile for us to figure out what the mission was, how to train them for the mission and so forth, so the first women who did that really did blaze some trails, you know, without a whole lot of training before they went in there except for the basic training.

QUESTION: How does flying a helicopter in a danger zone square with the rule that women are not supposed to be in combat?

GENERAL MUTTER: Well, the same thing happened in Vietnam and even in World War II we had women who were captured, who were shot down because they were on medical flights. A war zone is never a safe place to be. That's why the whole women are not allowed in combat was really a ludicrous law, because it was impossible to enforce. If you had any women in country, they were at risk. There were a number of women and men, National Guardsmen from Pennsylvania, who were killed in Desert Storm when a rocket came in on their barracks. So again, there's no frontlines, everyone's at risk, which is why we as a Nation need to make sure that we are willing to have our sons and daughters at risk before we deploy them, before we make the decision to get involved in any kind of way. This needs to be something we can explain as something that is worth risking lives over, because there's no doubt that lives will be at risk and will be lost.

QUESTION: For the first time women veterans are starting to come home with injuries.

GENERAL MUTTER: I've always said that I don't think the mothers and fathers of America are any more anxious to have their sons come home in body bags than they are their daughters. I think a child is a child. The mothers and fathers of America are very concerned about it regardless, whether it's male or female. We as a Nation need to be concerned about that as well.

QUESTION: Every woman who's served in the U.S. military has volunteered.

GENERAL MUTTER: We have always been an all-voluntary force. We did it because we wanted to serve, maybe because of the G.I. Bill, maybe for a number of reasons, maybe to get away from a small town, from an environment that was not what they were wanting to do for the rest of their lives; so they wanted to get out and do something different, to have an opportunity, to prove themselves. You hear some of those comments as well, I wanted to get out of my comfort zone, I needed to prove myself, I need to prove that I can do more, and the military certainly will do that.

QUESTION: With more women serving than ever before in ways never before possible, they're also facing the same kinds of dangers that they never faced before. How do you deal with that in training?

GENERAL MUTTER: Well, you prepare people for success. You prepare them to be able to go deploy, fight, win, and come home alive. Certainly there are, in the back of everybody's minds, maybe that won't happen, maybe I could come back an amputee, double amputee, whatever, you know, we're all invincible, especially when we're young. So the focus is on success, to go out there and succeed. To know how to handle a situation when it goes bad, to know how to take care of your comrades if they are wounded, if there's a problem. So there's that kind of

preparation and training and how to take care of each other. Because of that I think there's a very big sense of comfort. You're not going to be left on the battlefield, people are going to come after you, that they're going to help you, and so there's a lot of comfort that breeds, I think, a lot of additional bravery and willingness to go out on the battlefield. Nobody wants to die for their country, but, a lot of people are willing to die for their buddy right next door and so that's what counts.

QUESTION: Does that camaraderie naturally occur in those situations?

GENERAL MUTTER: Well, yeah. The esprit de corps, as we call it in the Marine Corps, comes from working together in very difficult circumstances. And that's certainly what we put young men and women through in recruit training. They work together and it's not an individual success only, we also focus on team success in basic training, that idea of you are a part of a team, an important part of a team, and the rest of the team's relying on you, just like you're able to rely on the rest of the team. That starts in very very basic training, on day one.

QUESTION: Is basic training the same for men and women?

GENERAL MUTTER: Men and women in the Marine Corps do undergo the same types of training. It has been more different in the past than it is now. Women are in recruit training for the enlisted. It's a little bit different from officer training. With recruit training, women are in a separate unit, separate organization, so the training is separate, but very much the same. You see both of them on the obstacle course, rappelling down the tower, firing on the range, and so forth. So there's no doubt that the training they get is the same. For officers they're actually, men and women, integrated in their training, the training is the same.

QUESTION: Did I read somewhere that the Marine Corps is now putting women in combat training?

GENERAL MUTTER: Right, that's the officers now going into the infantry officer course. There's a big push to say women ought to be in some of these fields they're not in, infantry, tanks, artillery. They asked for some volunteers and two volunteered and went into the latest infantry officer course to Quantico. They both have since dropped out for various reasons. They didn't make it. I've long felt that no job specialties should be limited by gender. It should be limited by capabilities, physical, mental, dexterity, whatever the job requires that ought to be defined. Whoever meets those qualifications can have that job. I think we'll get there eventually, but we're not there yet.

QUESTION: Do you know the circumstances of the first female Soldier to die in 2002, a Marine?

GENERAL MUTTER: Sergeant Jeanette Winters; and from Indiana in fact, where I live now. Yes, I am very much aware of her circumstances. You want me to describe it?

QUESTION: Tell us the story.

GENERAL MUTTER: Sergeant Winters deployed with an air wing, she was part of the communications team facilitating their ability to communicate early on when more aviation units were deployed, as well as some ground units. She was the best in her unit at what she did, satellite communications, so they picked her to deploy. It was an aircraft of Marines who were

going from one place to another in Afghanistan to provide that communications. The aircraft flew into the side of a mountain and killed all on board. She was one of those.

QUESTION: We were also talking about the first black serviceman to die.

GENERAL MUTTER: She was also black.

QUESTION: What types of positions are still closed to women in the Marine Corps?

GENERAL MUTTER: The positions closed today still are the infantry, tanks and artillery, but we do have some experiments ongoing about perhaps opening some of those. We have women in tank and artillery units who are supplies and clerks who are not actually operating the tanks and operating the artillery pieces. But as we gradually have more and more women doing more and more things, closer and closer to the front, if you can define a front, there's less and less reason to keep them out of those jobs, unless there is a physical limitation or mental limitation, and again, I think that should not be defined by gender, it should be defined by what are the requirements of the job.

QUESTION: We see more images than ever before of women in combat.

GENERAL MUTTER: Yes, I agree. I've been concerned for awhile that knowing what the women are actually doing out there and what we see in the magazines and the paper, base papers, and in even in our military museums. If we see women at all, we see them going out there giving candy to the little kids, holding a baby in their arms, all the fluff things is what we're seeing, not what they're actually doing and I don't know why that is. But it's definitely there, and it's something that I keep raising to the people that I can try to influence a little bit to say we really need to show what it is they're really doing. This is a part of history and they are doing a very important job that's very necessary and senior Marine Generals, officers, males that I've heard talk, have said we couldn't do it without them. And talking about the physical strength, there's always been a concern on the battlefield that a female might not be able to pick up a fallen comrade and carry him off the battlefield. That she didn't have the strength to do that. There was a female who with the help of another man carried a comrade off the battlefield. You hear stories all the time about mothers who lift cars off of their kids because the adrenaline at the time kicks in and you can do superhuman things. Everybody, male or female, can do superhuman things. So, I think that's a bit of a red herring and an argument that is not valid.

QUESTION: You were the first woman to be promoted to the rank of three-star general. How did you feel about that?

GENERAL MUTTER: It was humbling, and to be completely accurate, you said it right, I was the first promoted to three-star general, I was the first nominated to three-stars, but the three-star admiral was promoted a month before I was. [LAUGHS]. We were in there right together. I was nominated a little bit before she was and she was promoted a little bit before I was. It's very humbling. Number one, it's an opportunity to continue to serve and do things for Marines and their families and to try to make sure that we do the right things for our Marines. And the more senior you are the more impact you can have. You certainly don't get paid enough for what you do. The main reason that you want to stick around and get promoted is to be able to have that additional impact and be able to do things for the Marines and their families.

QUESTION: You must have had to overcome a lot of obstacles. How did you do that?

GENERAL MUTTER: Obstacles, you know, I don't know that I recognized that they were obstacles at the time. My maiden name is Schneider, I'm a hundred percent German, and people accuse us of being very stubborn, and so that has a little bit to do with it perhaps. But I just always wanted to get out there and do my best and hope that it was good enough. I didn't want to embarrass my family, I didn't want to embarrass myself, I didn't want to embarrass the people around me. I just wanted to do my best, and if something got in the way of that I figured out a way around it. You know, you come up against a brick wall, you look and see if there's a door. Is the door locked? Is there a way to get over the wall, is there a way to get under the wall, or maybe you step back and say, you know, maybe I shouldn't be trying to get at what's on the other side of that wall, maybe there's something else I should be doing. So, I just had a lot I tried to learn from everybody around me. Some people you learn what not to do, some people, a lot of people, you learn what to do. I've just been a life long learner. That's been one of the things that I enjoy, whether it's for school or real life, learning just what I can and continuing to do my best.

QUESTION: Women have had to fight for the right to fight. What does that struggle say about women's determination?

GENERAL MUTTER: I think that women have often found themselves in a second-class citizen kind of environment. In the beginnings of this country the men ran the family. Women couldn't vote, women had no rights and they were treated like property in the laws and so forth. Everything that has been achieved by women has been through struggle and determination. Women have seen, some men as well, that this isn't right, that there's more that women can and should be allowed to do, and oh by the way, we are ignoring a good half of our potential productivity as a Nation. So it's in our best interest to make the best use of the capabilities of half of the population.

QUESTION: What can we do as a Nation to better recognize the service of women?

GENERAL MUTTER: The film you're doing is a step in the right direction. Anything you can do to educate people, to get the word out about what women are really doing and to be less reticent about telling folks what's going on. I think the idea that there are not supposed to be women in combat may be one of the things that's kind of holding folks back. We don't want to brag too much about what they're doing in combat since we're not supposed to be in combat. But the laws changed and there are still people who feel strongly about that, who are concerned about women being at risk in a combat environment. But the fact that they can and they are doing things that can't be done by men, and that they are doing things very well, they're persevering, and as women have always done, they're proving that they can do it. So, getting that word out is important. I don't know that we need more statues or that type of thing, but books, magazine articles, newspaper articles, documentaries, all of that contributes. There is no silver bullet.

QUESTION: Leadership comes in many different forms.

GENERAL MUTTER: Being willing to step out and make decisions and not just to do what you're told. I think there are different forms of leadership, as you said, different people are successful at different forms of leadership. And maybe from a female perspective I felt that I was more successful in getting people to come together and coming up with a common approach to things, and not just saying, this is where we're going to go and I don't care what anybody else says. Most military leadership is not that way, even though most people assume that it's very autocratic. But it's not, it's a matter of getting information, talking to various people, getting

recommendations and finding out what's really going on. You never have a hundred percent of the information you want before you have to make a decision, so, a key part of leadership is knowing when it's time to make the decision to actually move forward and get things done while you're waiting for some additional information, and the waiting could be decisive in itself.