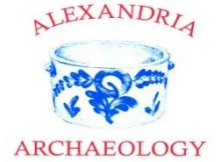




City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: Veterans Oral History Project

Title: Interview with Susan Struthers, former member of the British Royal Air Force.

Date of Interview: June 26, 2018

Location of Interview: Ms. Struthers' home in Alexandria, VA.

Interviewer: John Reibling

Transcriber: John Reibling

Abstract: Susan Struthers, born March 2nd, 1947 in South London, England. This interview covers her upbringing in England, her 6 years as an Officer in the Royal Air Force, and her subsequent work as an administrative assistant, legal secretary, World Bank employee, and Federal contractor for the U.S. Government. She also discusses interests away from work and offers advice based on her life experiences.

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Introduction	
John Reibling (JR):	Today is June 26, 2018. My name is John Reibling, a volunteer with the Office of Historic Alexandria. It is my privilege to interview Susan Struthers at her home in Alexandria, VA. Ms. Struthers is being interviewed because of her service in the Royal Air Force as well as her work in this country. Good morning Susan.
Susan Struthers:	Good morning.
Background and Early Life 00:22	
JR:	Okay, let's start with some factual stuff. Please state your full name, including birth name if different and birth date for the recording.
Susan Struthers:	Susan Struthers. I was born on March second, 1947.
JR:	And that was in—?
Susan Struthers:	London.
JR:	South London—?
Susan Struthers:	South London, yeah.
JR:	Okay. And your mother's full name?
Susan Struthers:	Was Patricia Harris.
JR:	Patricia Harris. And your father's full name?
Susan Struthers:	John Struthers.
JR:	Any other parental persons in your life back then?
Susan Struthers:	No, not back then. [laughs]
JR:	Okay. Your siblings, birth names and birth dates.
Susan Struthers:	I have a sister who is eighteen months younger than I. That's Jennifer. She was born August the eighteenth, 1948. And a brother, Andrew James who was born March thirteenth, 1958.
JR:	And you lived in Clapham.
Susan Struthers:	In Clapham, yes.
JR:	Clapham, South London till you were about twelve.
Susan Struthers:	Uh huh.
JR:	What was it like growing up there?
Susan Struthers:	Oh. I don't think we realized how wonderful it was until we moved away from it. We had so much freedom. In the summer, and I've heard a lot of Americans say this about their childhood too, you left home at sun up and you had to be home when the street lights came on. And we explored everything and you can imagine in London after the, after the

	<p>Second World War, all the bombed out buildings that we had there. And they were wonderful playgrounds because people had left and they'd left behind some of their belongings. There would be tea sets. Tables would be set for dinner. Welsh dresses with lots of things in them. Living rooms that had a wall missing but otherwise the furniture was there. And so we had a wonderful time making up stories and playing house and all of those things. Even though at the entrance to most of these houses it would say, "No trespassing—dangerous—to be demolished." That did not put us off at all. So, there was my sister and I, eighteen months apart and in the apartment below us were two girls at the same ages and the four of us became known as the "Famous Four."</p>
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	And we solved crimes. [laughs] We solved crimes. Yes and so we were always together and always had so much fun.
JR:	You didn't worry about things like unexplored ordinance?
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] I'm sure our parents might have done—you know that's the first time I've ever been asked that question. No, we didn't, never even thought about it but had we found one, now that would have been exciting because we would have gone to the police station and told them about it. We would not have played with it. I think we knew that much.
JR:	Very good. Then you moved to the country about fifty miles from London.
Susan Struthers:	Yes.
JR:	You described this experience as a "culture shock" for you and your sister.
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] Yes.
JR:	What that like?
Susan Struthers:	Well I think the first thing, one was there were no buses. There was like one bus an hour that would take you into the local town and, that was very restricting for two young girls who had been used to going on the Tube [London Underground network] into Central London to a museum or something without much parental control. And uh now we were really restricted, could only go into this small, uneventful, boring little town and, my father and mother wanted a house that—they didn't want to live in a flat anymore. They wanted to live in a house so to them this was joyous. And, we were angry and we let that be known. I don't think we were very nice to our parents at that time. And in desperation my father said why don't you go and search the countryside, go find some frog spawn. And they gave us a couple of—.
JR:	Some what?
Susan Struthers:	Frog spawn.

JR:	Oh.
Susan Struthers:	Newts?
JR:	Oh, okay.
Susan Struthers:	So Jenny and I put on our Wellington boots and off we went to what looked like a swamp. We'd never seen anything like it before, and waded in and found all this frog spawn floating on the top and scooped it up and took it home and of course after a while they grew into real animals, uh which frightened the life out of us.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	This was our first time seeing a live cow or sheep. There were all of these country things that we'd heard of but never seen, but nothing could compare with the life we had exploring London. The countryside didn't have that for us.
JR:	But you became country girls or did you—?
Susan Struthers:	When you start making friends at school and you have these friendships and you visit other people's houses and yes, you integrate whether you really want to or not. Um, there were more buses after a while as more housing developments were built. The buses became like three an hour, and that was a little easier, and the older I got the more likely a boyfriend would have a motor bike or car and that would be used to get us around. Motor bikes though were really not allowed. I had to meet him at end of the road.
JR:	Oh, because your parents didn't—?
Susan Struthers:	Oh, Dad would never let me on the back of a motor bike and in fact when we would drive out and there would be a motor bike in front of us he'd say, "Look at it wobbling, that's what's going to happen to you, you're just going to fall off." So, no, motor bikes were out of the question.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	Yeah.
JR:	Okay. You went off to London at age nineteen was it?
Susan Struthers:	Yeah.
JR:	And you shared an apartment with four other people for a couple of years. What was that—what was memorable about that experience?
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] The lack of space. And, we all slept in one room. It was rather like a hospital ward and, I think at that age none of us really had many belongings and the apartment was rented furnished, so we didn't have to provide any furniture.

	Also, the only apartment we could afford was on the top floor and we had ninety-four steps to get to it.
JR:	Wow.
Susan Struthers:	Yes. There's no way I could do that now. And, uh, but what we did have was a stepladder to the roof. So, we were able to sunbathe on the roof and have parties up there. But the ninety-four steps made you, you know, think twice about how often you would go out.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	You went shopping you stayed out all day to get all the shopping you needed. Yeah.
JR:	No elevators back in those days.
Susan Struthers:	Not in those houses. They were very old and it was in Pimlico which was sort of an arty area and is now I think a lot of bed and breakfasts and small hotels but it was where Tony Armstrong Jones, Princess Margaret's husband came from so it had some repute yes. It was the arty place to live.
Most Influential Persons 07:47	
JR:	Very nice. So, who were the most influential persons in your early life?
Susan Struthers:	Oh, my mother most definitely. And Grandad, her father, were probably the two most influential.
JR:	What made them influential?
Susan Struthers:	My mother was very kind and emphasized the need for kindness and for empathy and put yourself in their shoes before you jump to conclusions. Don't judge people for the way they look, or how they speak or anything. She really was—oh and she hated racism. And there were a few, not many people from the Caribbean who were living in London in Brixton and that was just two stops down from Clapham. And it was a joyous place to go. I mean it had so much fun and there was so much more color. Uh, and the music—everything about it was exciting in Brixton. And I think that was, my mother was just open to everybody and go and explore. Find out what other people are like. Put yourself in their shoes. And I think I'm like that now. Grandad was a Cockney. He was born within the sound of Bow Bells and he would refer to me as "Girl, hallo Girl" which was the way he spoke much to my grandmother's dismay. She was a little posh.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] But Grandad wrote pantomime. Are you familiar with what pantomimes are?
JR:	Not exactly.

Susan Struthers:	They're Christmas affairs. They usually have a man dressed up as a woman in the lead and a women dressed up as the man in the lead. So, in pantomimes my grandfather who would take his teeth out so that he would look like an old crone. And he would play like Mother Goose or, they were always children's stories, Aladdin and things like that. So, he would play the old crone. He wrote these pantomimes. They lasted for about two hours and the whole thing was in rhyme. It was, now I look back on it, phenomenal that he could do this two hours in rhyme, and be funny. My mother became what was called a "principal boy." She was the male lead and was the prince that came to save the princess, you know that kind of silly stuff. But we'd all go along. It wasn't, you know we didn't have television, we didn't have a car we didn't have, didn't have a refrigerator when I was growing up. We had a phone which Dad guarded with his life. We weren't allowed to go on it very much. Um, and it was just going to pantomimes and going to church and things like that were great social events.
JR:	Sounds delightful.
Susan Struthers:	He was a lovely man, my grandfather and he apparently tolerated my need to help fix things.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	Apparently I would want to set the fireplace cause you know we had coal fireplaces and I'd want to do that or I'd want to help him fix the bicycle and never wanted to do any of the housework with Grandma, just help Grandad fix things. Yeah. I don't do that anymore.
Military Service 11:41	
JR:	[laughs] You then decided in 1969 to do something extraordinary—.
Susan Struthers:	[laughs]
JR:	You applied to become an officer in the Royal Air Force. What led you to that decision?
Susan Struthers:	Well. London did not work out for me. I was um, the four of us that were sharing a flat, all broke up and went into separate apartments and I got a basement apartment. And it just so happened that the job I was doing at the time was also in a basement and so I never saw the light of day and in the winter it was so depressing that I called home and said please can I come and live with you. So off I went and lived at home and that didn't last either. I mean you cannot go home. And one day I decided to take a day off from work and I went to a local, city called Reading which was a lot bigger and there was an RAF [Royal Air Force] recruitment center and I walked in and I didn't apply to be an officer. They told me they were going to send me to officer candidate school. Now in those days, and I'm sure it's very different now, I'm not sure but you didn't have to have a degree to become an officer. What

	they looked for was leadership quality and there must have been something in the way I barged in there—.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	—that made them think you know, I'd be good officer material. So, I was selected and sent to Biggin Hill which was one of the main Air Force bases during the Second World War, where "The Few" [airmen of the Royal Air Force who fought during the Battle of Britain during World War II] flew from. A very famous place, Biggin Hill. So, I went there for officer training and I was selected and off I went to Herefordshire, I don't remember. Royal Air Force Henlow, to Officer Training. Yeah.
JR:	You must have made an extraordinary presentation.
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] I think that's what got me through.
JR:	Uh huh.
Susan Struthers:	I don't have an accent. Um, I probably do to the audience of this, but I do not have an accent. Everybody else in this country has the accent. [laughs] I had no accent, I had no fear of public speaking. Never have. And I was a quick learn, and I loved law. I liked military law. And pers, what they [called] personnel management in those days, which now [is called] HR [human resources], so yeah.
JR:	So what, so you alluded to some of the things you might have done in the military. You were in the RAF for six years.
Susan Struthers:	Six years. Yeah.
JR:	And you were assigned twenty miles from where you joined.
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] Yes.
JR:	Much to your chagrin.
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] Yes, I joined to travel. And I think my strong presence if you like, the way I presented myself, may have gone against me because they kept posting me to these places where there were no other women officers. It was a very lonely life. Um, I had men friends that lived, you know in the, on the bases as well, but because I was the only officer, woman officer, I was always put away from everybody else and it was a very lonely existence. It was not what I thought the Royal Air Force was going to be. I had pictured myself with a long stick and a map on the table and I was gonna push these ships—.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	—and airplanes into place. I am a child of the Second World War so that's what I grew up with. And I was shuffling paper which I was very good at, but it wasn't the excitement I had looked for.

Practice Wars 15:48	
Susan Struthers:	I remember one time we had a practice war. And this is this is kind of funny because in the practice war you get the klaxon sound in the middle of the night, oooga, and you rush to your duty station where you are issued with a tin hat. Um, and gas mask, and fortunately they were holdovers from the Second World War and so quite frequently the rubber inside the tin hat had perished and the gas mask the same thing. So, you were either issued with one hat or fifty—.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	—depending on how many were stuck together. So, in the end they just, [laughs] they just decided that to acknowledge the fact that we were wearing a hat but [if] we didn't actually have one we had to wear a sign that said, "I am wearing a tin hat."
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	Well at [laughs] some point we were joined by the sailors of the Ark Royal which was an aircraft carrier, sailors and airmen of the Ark Royal, and they saw these signs, we had this practice war and they saw these signs and they started putting signs on themselves that said, "I am wearing Harmony hair spray," which was a commercial at the time. We, it's very difficult to take things seriously. You mark the windows with tape so you don't get bomb blasts but you don't bother to take it off because you know they're going to call another [practice] war [laughs] about three months so you might just as well leave it up. They were very funny. We were up for two to three days without sleep. It was a lot of fun actually. And um, of course it turned into, at one point a nuclear war. And ah, we would have perished, we would not have been around for long.
JR:	So, what were your duties?
Duties 17:49	
Susan Struthers:	So, the first Station I was sent to was, um, a place called RAF Standbridge which was a communications base. And my job was to be in charge of the welfare and careers of all the women enlisted, women, yeah. Boring. Horrible. I had to deal with things like unwanted pregnancies, which I thought very strongly about because once a woman admitted she was pregnant she was out the next day.
JR:	Un huh.
Susan Struthers:	And I thought, you know, the last the last thing you need is to be deprived of salary when you're pregnant and alone. So I would keep quiet about. I wouldn't tell anybody. I'd say this is our secret. And other things like well, did they have sufficient recreation? Were there enough books in the library? Did we have enough drama groups and choirs

	<p>and—that's not me at all. I wanted, you know, I wanted to push things around on the map, not look after people's careers. So that that wasn't very nice. I was there for about eighteen months. And the next posting was to RAF Honington which was in Suffolk, which is the flat land often known as that bump just above London. It's very flat there. It's John Constable [English landscape painter] country. And, RAF Hollington was a bomber station, full of airplanes, Buccaneer aircraft, and ah pilots and navigators and all those exciting people at last! I'm getting closer to my ship pushing. But no, I was the only woman officer of the, the only woman on the entire base, there were no [female] enlisted and no officers. And that was—I was incredibly unhappy there and I shouldn't have been, I should have had a wonderful time. But if your only company is men and you know the last thing a man wants to do is go shopping. Right?</p>
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	<p>So, I made friends with one man, it turned out later that he was gay. Ah, and that he didn't mind shopping. He loved it. So, we were best of friends. And so he was the only friend I really had. Ah, my Sergeant with whom I wasn't supposed to fraternize, ah, was also gay. And he liked show music. And I would go visit him but it was just to listen to the show music and watch television. But those were the only two friends I had. And I was there for two years so it's a long time to be on your own. Um, but I did learn to drive there and I bought my first car there and that helped a great deal. And then the last place I went was Headquarters Transport Command at Royal Air Force Upavon which is on the Salisbury Plain near Stonehenge. And Stonehenge was, at the time you could go and touch the stones, you could sit on the stones, you could have picnics there. It was not like it is now, which is all roped off and you have to walk around to park. Ah, it was also home of the British Army. So there were lots of places you couldn't go because of explosives and things like that. Ah again I was the only woman officer and I lived in a house all by myself, four-bedroom house, all by myself. And they would have, if any women visited then, I would have to put them up in the house. There was a golf course right outside. I didn't play golf. I never thought I was old enough to play golf and there were tennis courts. I was a keen tennis player but no women to play with. Yeah it was, even the job they had given me wasn't one normally held by women. It was a man's job and that was to be in charge of the infrastructure of this base, which included sleeping quarters, fire, guards, security, motor pool, catering, everything that kept the Station going. I was the officer-in-charge of all that. Ah, I didn't mind that actually, it got me out of the office a lot because I had to walk around a lot and I've always been a very interested in fire. What causes fire, what damage it does, how you prevent fires, so to be in charge of the fire department was the high point and they were very willing to teach me</p>

	everything they knew about firefighting. So, when years later I'm in this country and I have what I think is a chimney fire I did what I had been taught and prepared the house for a burst of flame to come out of the chimney and rush around the house. I had wet towels down there. When the fire department arrived they were so impressed. [laughs]
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	Yeah and then finally another fire connection was um, the man I grew up with as "Dad" turned out not to be my biological father and I never wanted to know anything about my biological father. He played no part in my life and I just don't really think it was important to learn anything but, so the deal was if I wanted to know something then I would ask, and the relatives were to answer truthfully. But otherwise, not a bother. Dad was Dad. And this other man was not in the picture. But my mother one day when I came home from Upavon, I went, as I said twenty miles home, I could go home on weekends. And I was telling her all about fire-fighting and how, what I was learning and she said, "You know I'm gonna have to tell you one thing because the connection is amazing." She said, "Your biological father was a fire fighter in London during the Blitz." And he was one of those you see on old films that would be there with the hose and all of these buildings that had been bombed and he was putting those fires out so she was compelled to tell me that. I've always found that quite interesting.
JR:	Hmm. And how did he die?
Susan Struthers:	Who?
JR:	Your biological father.
Susan Struthers:	I have no idea.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	He was I think twenty years older than my mother. So he'd be well-gone by now. I know nothing. I honestly I know very, very little about him. My grandfather did let slip his name. Ah, and that intrigues me. I have a name. And, of course we now have Ancestry.com so there's always a thought in the back of my mind that maybe, I should start looking but the other question, the other thing is what do you do with the information you receive. What would I do with it? Would I rush over to wherever? I believe he lived in the North of England, it's a North of England name. Ah, would I go over there and hunt him down? No.
JR:	You were promoted to Captain. What was the British--?
Susan Struthers:	Flight Lieutenant [spelled Flight Lieutenant].
JR:	Flight Lieutenant. Okay. That's the equivalent of the American rank Captain.

Susan Struthers:	Captain.
JR:	O-4, I'm sorry it's O-3.
Susan Struthers:	Yeah, we have Pilot Officer, Flying Officer, Flight Lieutenant. Yes O-3 it would be.
JR:	Right, right. I should know this since I'm retired military.
Susan Struthers:	[laughs]
JR:	Ah, so and then, why did you decide--? Well the answer's probably gonna be [laughs] obvious. But why did you decide to go ahead and get out at that point?
Susan Struthers:	I had only signed up for six years.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	And I was obligated to do those six years and then I served four years in the reserve. Ah, and I had as I told you, they only ever sent me twenty miles from home. I never traveled.
Assignment on Round-the-World Trip 26:39	
Susan Struthers:	Somebody at RAF Upavon must have felt very sorry for me because I was asked to be the Imprest Officer on a round-the-world trip. An Air Commodore at Transport Command, had been asked to go to RAF bases in Europe, Middle East, and Asia. And they had at the time, we didn't have credit cards then if you remember, so you had to carry currencies for all of the countries you were going to visit.
JR:	Oh. No credit cards. Okay.
Susan Struthers:	So, you paid by, in cash.
JR:	Yeah right.
Susan Struthers:	So I had to carry enough money for all the hotel bills, all the restaurant bills, everything. Ah, I loved it because it was so organized. All these different things of cash. But I had to be first up to go and pay the hotel bills and, ah, last to bed because I had to settle the restaurant bill. Ah so it was kind of tiring, nothing in between, but, you know those things. And I was the, I wasn't the only woman on the, this aircraft. We had our own aircraft. There were seven of us I think. We had a Comet [type of aircraft], and the Air Commodore's wife and I were the only women on on board and everywhere we went. And so she and I would compare notes on our next leg. So we started off and went to, where are first stop was Germany.
JR:	[laughs] So you were talking about the, being an impost officer on that trip.
Susan Struthers:	Yes, the money woman. And so we went to Oman and, yeah I think it

	was Oman, Turkey, Malta, ah, Delhi, Calcutta, Thailand, Bangkok, and Hong Kong. Oh, and right in the middle of that of course was the reason for our going which was Nepal. We went to Kathmandu.
JR:	Um huh.
Susan Struthers:	At the time that had been, that was the drug route that I heard about. You know the sixties, everybody went to Kathmandu to get drugs. A very, very interesting place. You—the mountains are so high, that you are so insignificant, that they're beautiful. The poverty really shocked me. I mean I saw a little bit of poverty in Calcutta, but that was just a busy place. This was poor. Yes, Nepal was very, very poor. And we would see the children, sleeping alongside the sacred cows in the city center because they were warm. Um, I came away quite impressed with Nepal. What a struggle, what a struggle and it's such a beautiful land. Oh yeah, that was Nepal. I got some jewels there. It's one of the things they sell. The Air Commodore's wife and I were comparing our jewelry. Of course, she had bought 24 karat gold stuff and I was silver coated or something. Never really been a jewelry person. But she was very pleasant the way she would come away from her private quarters on the plane to slum it with us. Yeah. It was a good trip. Was a wonderful trip.
JR:	Un huh. A nice way to end your RAF career?
Susan Struthers:	Well and there's one thing I haven't told you and that was, one of the places we visited was Tehran which is a nice segue into the next part of my life. I was so impressed with Tehran. Ah, the colors, the mosaics. When we stayed there we stayed in Central Tehran which I learned later was not the posh part. Ah so it gave me the opportunity to see real Tehran. And you walk, they had the carpet sellers had the carpets on the sidewalks, and you just walk over them. And that was to show you how durable they were. Ah, the food, oh my goodness the food was amazing. So I decided when I get out of the Air Force I am coming back to, actually, the Middle East, somewhere in the Middle East. When I came out of the Air Force I took advantage of a government program to go back to college for a year to convert my military skills into commercial skills.
First Job Post-RAF 33:40	
Susan Struthers:	Um, and then I, somebody came in one day in the classroom and said they're looking for an editor in Tehran. I applied. I got picked for an interview so I went up to London and I happened to have been dating an Iranian at the time so I learned enough Persian from him to go in there and say I'm very pleased to meet you. Thank you for giving me this opportunity and whatever. That was the end of what I could say in Persian or Farsi. Um, but I got the job, and three weeks later I was gone. I had sold off everything that I had and went with a couple of suitcases off to Iran.

JR:	You were how old then?
Susan Struthers:	Twenty-eight. Yes, I was twenty-eight.
Seven Life Rules Learned in the RAF 34:26	
JR:	Susan I would like to back up just a bit just to talk about those seven life rules you mentioned [in earlier correspondence with JR] that you picked up in your RAF career and they are worthy to mention so I want—.
Susan Struthers:	Okay.
JR:	—to get them in this transcript, and this is the seven you mentioned to me. Listen to what people are saying. Reflect on what you hear. Perform every task to the best of your ability. Never be wary of asking for help. Thank people for their kindnesses. Show up on time. Stay, and stay positive. I just love these seven rules. They should be on a—.
Susan Struthers:	[Laughs]
JR:	They should be on a poster. Ah, how do you think these have impacted your life?
Susan Struthers:	[Pause] I've always felt a need to listen to what people have to say. Listening is a skill that a lot of us don't have, don't practice cause we don't know how. When somebody says, "It's a lousy day." You don't just say, "Oh yeah I know what you mean. I have those days too." What good is that? I'm not talking about you. That person is actually saying something. But if you were to listen and look at their body language you get a further clue. "Tell me what it is that's making it lousy." And now you've got a conversation going. You don't have to cure anybody's ills. You don't have offer advice. You just have to be a sounding block and all those jobs that I did like looking after all those air women. That that was an opportunity to practice listening. I couldn't cure people's problems. Um, I could charge them and put them on court martial but I couldn't cure their problems. So, listening came in. Then when I was ah, when I came to this country I volunteered for the DC Hotline and they actually have a listening training for three weeks. You do nothing but listen and respond. Because when people call you on the hotline they don't want to hear that, "Oh yeah the same thing happened to me." What does that mean? Um, you you have to, you know, tell me what it is that's triggered this particular event cause you get a lot of repeat callers. So you know, you know who they are and what their prob— "What is it that triggered your call today?" does a lot more for you than saying, "Oh you again." You know [laughs] I've used that one a lot, the listening. So I'm very happy that, along with my mother's need to be kind and empathetic and step into other people's shoes, has allowed me to be I think a lot kinder to people. It's very difficult today. Ah you don't see much kindness going on really. Certainly not if you are on Facebook.

JR:	Un-huh.
Susan Struthers:	Ah the other things, stay positive, that is a tough one. That is a tough one. I can be very cynical. And sarcastic. And the cynicism sometimes is mistaken for negativity and so quite a few times I've been told not to be so negative. So I worked on it. Um, I asked for specifics so that I could, you know remedy it. And ah I think I have done quite well on that front. I do, I am more positive now than I think I ever have been. Yeah.
JR:	I think you are.
Susan Struthers:	[laughs]
Living in Tehran 38:18	
JR:	Okay the ah, we talked a little bit about Tehran.
Susan Struthers:	Yeah.
JR:	Ah, but what was it like, what was it like living there?
Susan Struthers:	It was everything I hoped it would be.
JR:	Un-huh.
Susan Struthers:	Ah, the weather is wonderful. It is hot and dry. You don't sweat. I mean you might get heat stroke but you don't sweat in the process. The water there comes off the mountains and is delicious. I really remember the water. The food, I still go out for Persian food. I made friends there quite quickly. I worked for an Iranian company. I didn't work for a contractor you know from the States or Europe. I worked for an Iranian company. Unfortunately, after three months, ah, the company itself broke away from its American partners and decided they didn't need an English editor anymore so would I please leave. Here's your air ticket. And I didn't want to leave. And I made that clear. And ah so I got another job. Now I had, I didn't know this, they had only given me a visitor's visa when I went there. So I was really only allowed to be there for three months. Now they said, "Okay, so if you want to stay you're going to have to go to the Security Forces and ask them for an extension." Or a work permit or some other thing. So I went to this government office and I was interviewed by a military officer wearing mirrored sunglasses which [laughs], it was everything designed to scare the hell out of you, right? "Why do you, why do you want to stay?" I wasn't allowed to admit that I'd been working. "Why do you want to stay?" And I said, "Well this, you know, this is the most wonderful country. And three months isn't long enough. I thought I'd only have enough money to last three months but you're all so generous I've got enough money to stay a lot longer." And then he kept on questioning me and, and I had all these wonderful answers but then he said, and then I told him I had been to Tehran. "What brought you to Tehran?" "Well I

	had been here before when I was in the Royal Air Force.” And he looks in my passport and he said, “It’s not stamped.” And I said, “No, because we were on a VIP trip on behalf of the Queen and we were trooping the color, and you know, they were State visits. Approved. So if I’d started with that you know it was very class-conscious there at the time. And so if you had any VIP you got it stamped. Yeah.
Marriage 41:38	
JR:	So while you were there you met and fell in love a military police officer, a U.S. military—.
Susan Struthers:	I did.
JR:	Police officer.
Susan Struthers:	Yes. Yes.
JR:	Ah and ah you were with him until what was it, [19]81?
Susan Struthers:	Yeah it was very short. I mean we had fun in Tehran.
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	A lot of fun. And he has said to me, “You know when we get back to the States it’s not going to be the same, it’s not going to be exciting. Well when we got back to the States, um, well, when I got to the States we picked up a brand new 25th anniversary Corvette and plan was to drive to Rocky Mount, North Carolina where his family lived and stop at all these places along the way like Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Richmond but he didn’t want to do any of that when it actually boiled down to it. He wanted to go non-stop. Well the air conditioning gave up in Delaware. This was September. I was dressed for an English September and was wearing boots. Ah, it got hotter and hotter. By the time we, oh we didn’t stop anywhere. By the time we got to Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and drew up before this this huge ranch house – beautiful, very new. There was an aeroplane in the back yard. Um, there was a lot of land that that he owned, ah, that his father owned. Anyway, his mother came out and said, very unlike my own family which was very welcoming and oh so glad you’re here. It was ah, you’ve had a long drive haven’t you. Do you want something to drink? And I said, “I am dying for a gin and tonic.” Well that didn’t go down well.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	“We don’t serve hard liquor.” Now I had never heard the words, “hard liquor” before. It made me sort of shameful in a way [laughs] what had I been drinking? Now I find out two weeks later that Ray and his dad would keep going into the into the forest or whatever it was to drink moonshine at their still. And I wanted a gin and tonic. I wasn’t allowed to go to the still. Women didn’t go to the still. Um, it was it was a very very different life, very different. There were no books in the house

	which was the first thing I noticed, there were no books, no newspapers, nothing to read and the only places you were allowed to walk and sit were covered in plastic, which I'd never seen before. So um, you made the most amazing noises when you moved.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	Oh it was dreadful, dreadfully embarrassing.
JR:	[laughs] Now you—.
Susan Struthers:	And then I had this wonderful conversation where my mother-in-law said, "Have you been saved?" Now I have no frame of reference for this question [she knocks on table] are you saved? Okay, swimming pool, picture a swimming pool and I said, "No, I haven't." And now I should have done my listening thing, and said, "Please explain what you mean by that?" but I didn't I just said, "No." She said, "Well we've been, I've been saved for some years now and it's made all the difference to my life." And I'm thinking well whatever this is, it's good. And then she said, at some point, "And my husband was saved but he backslid." Now, I've got the swimming pool. She's been saved out of it. He was saved but he fell back in. I had no frame of reference.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	For this conversation at tall.
Susan Struthers:	So I have to ask my husband that night, "What was I listening to?"
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	And he had to explain you know, what "saving" is and um I'd never heard that before.
JR:	Now his name was—?
Susan Struthers:	Ray.
JR:	Ray. What his last name?
Susan Struthers:	Glover.
JR:	G-l-o-v-e-r?
Susan Struthers:	Yes.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	Nice man. Very good looking. Kind. But bored in America. He was a very different person in Iran than he turned out to be and ah, we didn't go anywhere, we didn't do anything and that wasn't my idea of, fun.
JR:	Un-huh.
Susan Struthers:	So we didn't, it didn't last.

Admin Assistant for Rose Harper Elder 46:21	
JR:	I got to ask about this job with Rose Harper Elder from January to July in [19]79. You were the personal assistant—.
Susan Struthers:	Uh-huh.
JR:	To Rose Harper Elder who was a professional golfer and is still alive.
Susan Struthers:	Yes.
JR:	An entrepreneur and founder of several golf-related organizations.
Susan Struthers:	Uh-huh.
JR:	An extraordinary person in her own right. She married Lee Elder, the first black professional golfer to play in a Masters Tournament.
Susan Struthers:	Well he didn't actually play in the Masters because he didn't make the cut.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	But because he has won the Westchester, he was invited to Augusta, and that was the first time a black person had been participating, yes?
JR:	Okay, that was in 1975?
Susan Struthers:	Yes, I wasn't here then. Yes I think it probably was in [19]75, yeah.
JR:	I googled. [laughs]
Susan Struthers:	Yes.
JR:	You had mentioned that this work profoundly impacted your understanding of racism. That must have been an extraordinary experience. Please tell me about that.
Susan Struthers:	Ahh. Well one of the, of course I went on a number of interviews and one of the things I noticed first, it's, going into [Washington] DC was that buses going east were full of black people and buses going west were full of white people. And I thought it was odd they don't have segregation anymore so this must just be a housing choice. A choice. [laughs] If you were black you were told where to live basically so it really wasn't a choice. But because I work with Rose and Lee, their friends were all black and one day I said to one of them, "Why do black people have to have their own newspaper and own TV programs?" And he looked at me and he said, "Wait here." And apparently he went to Rose and said, "I need to borrow her for an hour." He came back and he went, "Come with me." And sat me down and gave me a history in racism.
JR:	Who was this?
Susan Struthers:	I don't remember his name I'm sorry. But I was I was just amazed at

	<p>how unkind people could be, to other people, based on something as trivial, as shallow, as complexion, the color of skin. Um, I just thought it was so unfair. And he explained the riots which got me really interested in race relations. Why do we still have this? Why do we, are there places like Mississippi? I just finished reading the book, The Blood of Emmet Till. He was a young fourteen-year-old boy who went from Chicago to stay with relatives in Mississippi. And because he did something, said something to a white woman. There were no witnesses. He was lynched basically, thrown in the river, beaten to a pulp. The most interesting thing about this was his mother Mamie decided to have an open coffin so that people could see just how badly her son, fourteen years old, had been treated. The first time I heard that I was very sad. I just, I remember when I was fourteen and the number of times you put your foot into it and say the wrong thing. That's all this young lad did probably. Um, and the price he had to pay was awful, just so that. I'm very interested in that Southern Poverty Law Conference, yeah Julian Bond became one of my heroes.</p>
JR:	Mine too. So, ah, what was your job when you worked for Rose Harper?
Susan Struthers:	[laughs] I was the administrative assistant which meant basically I ran the office.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	<p>And I remember, you know, and I had no knowledge really of the United States. I mean I'd been here six months, and it was my first job, and Lee had to play in Dallas. Would I get him booked on flights? No problem, except that I'd only ever heard of "Dulles." So I got him a private plane to take him from DC National Airport to Dulles Airport. And, the air[line], thank god everybody laughed about it including Page Airlines which is the airline I had booked him on. Ah, and they just forgave me. Another time I had to send him to Peoria. Nobody gave me a State. There was no Google. So I had this enormous map of the United States and started in the top right, went all the way around and made circles until I found Peoria which of course is in the damn middle so I didn't get to it for quite a long time. But I did find Peoria. Yes that was that was really how it was, it was me covering myself for this total lack of knowledge about anything American and so of course my first real exposure to America was racism and knowing where I was.</p>
JR:	Un-huh.
Susan Struthers:	How big the country was. Yeah.
Legal Secretary 52:17	
JR:	And then you were a legal secretary for a couple of years.
Susan Struthers:	Yeah.
JR:	That started in 1980 in September, what was that liked, you loved it.

Susan Struthers:	I did. I did. I worked for an attorney [Richard Gallagher] who was, had a reputation of not being able to keep a secretary because he was very difficult to work for and very disorganized. And I met him and I liked him. And ah, he hired me and we got along extremely well. I didn't mind the fact that he was disorganized, that was my job. And so I organized him and I started off with all of his cases and made a point of introducing myself to his clients when they came in. Ah he was an attorney for insurance companies. And so I got to know the insurance claims and how insurance worked. He did, he was renowned as a worker's compensation attorney which helped me when I had an accident at work. Ah and he got two cases, one of which I attended at the Supreme Court, and I went along. And ah, that was fascinating to go to the Supreme Court as part of it you know.
JR:	Un-huh.
Susan Struthers:	That was, and I remember the peanut soup in the cafeteria after. Delicious. Yes. I stayed there for two years. Unfortunately, they didn't offer pension plans to support staff so I had to find a job, I'm now in my thirties, where I would have a chance at a pension and so I picked out some big companies and—.
The World Bank 53:50	
Susan Struthers:	One of them was the World Bank. And although I was a green card holder I was hired as an ex-pat and got all the benefits that an ex-patriot got, travel home every two years, an allowance for hotels and the perks were just amazing for an expatriate. And so I accepted a job at the World Bank.
JR:	And you were there for fourteen years?
Susan Struthers:	Yeah.
JR:	Ah, what did you do there. At the time I recall the World Bank was pretty much a lot in the news at that time, so I'm curious what did you do there and what was it like?
Susan Struthers:	I was a secretary. I wasn't anybody really important. But I did get through the ranks pretty quickly and got to the highest grade for the support staff a person could get to. It was quite elitist. People hung around in cliques. But oh my goodness the exposure to foreign names and cultures, foreign to me. Ah, I mean if somebody tells me now my name is Getachew I know they're Ethiopian because you know, and I'm exposed to the languages that they all used to be. I can recognize Tagalog from the Philippines and um, all sorts of different [things]. I mean Portuguese as opposed to Spanish.
JR:	Un-huh.
Susan Struthers:	I can detect, you know which one is which. So that was that was very

	interesting but ah, it was very elitist. It was very much divided between professionals and support. And to get from one to the other was, I knew a couple of people that did it but it certainly wasn't easy.
JR:	While you were there you earned a degree for Georgetown University.
Susan Struthers:	No. I wish. No, it was a diploma course.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	Yes. I did go to the, when I left the World Bank with a package that included an education grant. And, I had dabbled, I became a Word Perfect Seven expert.
JR:	Un-huh.
Susan Struthers:	And I also hung around the IT [Information Technology] folk cause I found computers to be quite interesting in how they worked. And so I learned how to use DOS [Disk Operating System.] And how to write little programs in DOS that would tell people they had a fatal error and then they could call me and I'd go over and say, "Oh yeah I think I know what's going on and I'd take out the DOS file and, "Voila! I fixed it." So eventually they invited me to become what they called the Office Technology Coordinator and so I became responsible for installing, um, new computers, transferring files, the expert on Word Perfect and Lotus One Two Three I think it was, databases. I knew how a computer worked and I knew enough about the software to get people out of trouble.
JR:	This is while you were still at the World Bank?
Susan Struthers:	Yes.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	And I was promoted to the top of the support staff ranks for doing that. And I quite enjoyed that one.
JR:	Yeah.
Susan Struthers:	Because I got to meet more people. I'd go around with a little trolley with my tool kit on it and new computers and go and install them and I talked to the people in the office while I was doing it. You know, yeah.
JR:	[laughs] It strikes me that you used your people skills very much so throughout your career.
Susan Struthers:	Oh I have yes.
JR:	And you were frustrated when you didn't get to use them.
Susan Struthers:	Yes, I've always, I'm an introvert which most people find, they've already decided I'm an extrovert so when they find out I'm an introvert, um, yeah, I'm an I-N-T-J [on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Test, which refers to one of sixteen personality types.] Yeah.

JR:	Which means simply that you recharge your batteries doing “alone” kind of things.
Domestic Partnership 57:53	
Susan Struthers:	Yes, I enjoy my own company. I don’t mind living alone. I’ve lived alone now since 1981. Well no I did have a brief, a brief, I had a ten-year affair with a very nice man who is now a best friend of mine and he has married again and I’m good friends with his wife and that’s been very rewarding that we didn’t lose our friendship as well as the romance, So, I’m very happy with that.
JR:	And just to be clear, he wasn’t married at the time you were with him.
Susan Struthers:	No and I wasn’t married either. And I never wanted to be married again, it didn’t suit me.
JR:	In the U.S., “affair” means ah that you were messing around with a married person.
Susan Struthers:	Oh, that’s right it does yes.
JR:	So I should clarify that [laughs].
Susan Struthers:	Yes ah we were, what would you say, domestic partners? We shared an apartment.
JR:	Right. Okay, that’s good. [laughs]
Susan Struthers:	Yes. No intention to be married. But he wanted to be married and, yeah.
Government Contract Worker 59:11	
JR:	Very good. Ah, then moving on here you started in 1998, you spent the next seventeen years working with three different U.S. Government contractors. Retiring in 2015?
Susan Struthers:	Yes.
JR:	Tell me about that work.
Susan Struthers:	So, when I graduated from, with the GW [George Washington University] diploma as a multi-media producer, I needed to get some skills on my resume. When I asked the University for advice— where is the best place for me to do this? I’m prepared to be an intern. And they put me in touch with the Redmon Group which was in Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia], still is. And it’s thriving. And John Redmon, the owner, and his wife Veronica, gave me a chance to be an intern as a programmer, they’re not called programmers in multi-media, they’re authors. They use a more object-oriented approach to programming. Um, I was hopeless. I just had no logic that allows me to do programming of any kind. I just do it ass-backwards. I cannot figure it out.

JR:	Yet you conquered MS-DOS. Is that right?
Susan Struthers:	Yeah, well, they were very simple.
JR:	Okay.
Susan Struthers:	<p>But not actually creating something big. No, I had no idea how to do it. I tried very, very hard. I knew I would like it if I ever got the hang of it. But I never got the hang of it. So then—but it was a good company. I enjoyed the people. I was getting exposure to the multi-media world. And I wanted to stay. So, I said to John, I'd been an intern, "What would I have to do to get a full-time job here?" And he said, "Well why don't you write me a proposal telling me why I should hire you." What a wonderful thing. So I wrote a proposal why he should hire me and he and his deputy interviewed me and the first thing they said was, "My god you can write." [laughs] So, they offered me a job as an instructional designer which meant that we could go out and look for business to do instructional design and that is exactly what it is. If you want to learn how to change the tire on a bicycle I would be the one that would create the diagrams, but more than that, the order in which you learn it and the objectives and the questions and all that. I was a natural. I had, I mean I was now sixty and I had found the job I should have had when I was eighteen. I loved it. I was a natural for this and so I stayed seven years with Redmon Group and then was offered a job by Northrop Grumman to go and work on Army contracts and that is when I got my [U.S.] citizenship which I needed to have.</p>
JR:	In 2005.
Susan Struthers:	<p>Yeah, I needed to have that to join certain contracts. It just made life easier too. And so I went along to the ceremony and I had to take somebody with me who'd always wanted to see a swearing-in of new citizens, so that was kind of nice, and when I got back they had a cake with a flag on it. It was nice, very nice. So, I worked for the Army and quite impressive to my mother when she said, "Well what exactly are you doing?" I said, "Well I'm actually designing training for people who maintain the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and the M1 [Abrams] Tank. And [laughs] she says, "I don't know how you do it." She said, "We have people who lose their jobs here at fifty and they can't for the life of them find another one and here you are doing something completely different than anybody, than anything you've done before." And I said, "I know, isn't it exciting?"</p> <p>And Northrop Grumman was not a nice place to work. The people were amazing. But they were going to do away with our section, they did not want to do what we were doing. They were going to send it down to Fort Knox [Kentucky] where they were very, very good with PowerPoint. Now we used real multi-media programs, but they wanted to do everything now in PowerPoint, so we were losing our jobs. And</p>

people were going out for interviews. And one of the programmers had come to a place called Oak Grove Technologies and had interviewed there and they were looking, apparently, for an instructional designer so he came back and said you may want to call them. And I called, and I spoke to Denise Lawson who was running the office and she and I hit it off over the phone. And I had decided in my head I didn't care what this job was, it was a half a mile from where I lived, and I had been commuting to beyond Fairfax from Old Town. If it meant driving an ice cream truck I was gonna take this job. But it turned out to be the best job I ever had. Ah, and I ended up there running the instructional design side of the business. The headquarters for Oak Grove is down in North Carolina. And they also have a role-playing site. Ah, Fort McCord I think it is. Or Camp McCord I think, but there they do training of SWAT teams. I don't, you know they have guns and things like that. They do rappelling, they teach people basically how to save others from hostage situations and what have you. But they also have a site that has an Afghan village. Has a South American village. Has an African village. And a European village and, so people can take their teams there, the Army can take teams there and they will be, they hired nationals for Afghanistan and to speak the language and the culture and everything. That was very exciting, but that was not the site of the business I was in. But government contracts are not easy to get. They are often won by big companies like Northrop, Lockheed, Booz-Allen or what have you because those are companies that already have staff on board with the appropriate security clearance. Small companies who hire when there is work available try to get people with security clearances but they're not out there. So, they have to apply for security clearances and that takes a long time. I had to get security clearances to do the job I was doing, and it took a year. None of my friends were ever interviewed. I don't know what they were doing with my application but, anyway, I got secret clearance in the end but that's one of the reasons why small companies have such a tough time getting government contracts and we ran out of government contracts. We'd done a lot of work for the Department of Veterans Affairs. A variety of different things: suicide prevention, we worked on X-ray safety, customer service, all, billing insurance, every aspect of Veterans Affairs. So, I have a very soft spot for the VA [Veterans Affairs] and I totally understand why they are as overwhelmed as they are. I never met anybody at VA who didn't have the veteran in their sights as being their primary goal, to take care of the veteran. I have a lot of respect for the VA.

But they [Oak Grove] ran out of contracts and I was working from home one day, Oak Grove had started this working from home thing, but the working from home, I'm embarrassed to say, that day involved going to a friend's house and drinking beer and while I was there I got a phone call from my boss who said basically we have decided to let you go.

	<p>Um, obviously you'll have to come in tomorrow to pick up your things but with no work so basically goodbye, thank you and goodbye. I went back to the table, poured myself another beer [laughs] and said, "Well I'm not working anymore." And I had a wonderful day. I then realized that in actual fact I had invested well. The World Bank had provided me with a small pension and so I was gonna be fine as long as I didn't do anything too ex—, you know. I had to sell my house because I couldn't afford the mortgage and that really didn't upset me. I moved into this rental apartment and I love it. Have great landlord. I stay in the same condominium, Parkfairfax, which I have grown to love a lot. And I manage. I'm managing very well. I like it. I haven't lost any of my friends from here. I did lose my dog. She died yeah.</p>
<p>Work Most Proud of 1:09:18</p>	
JR:	<p>Right. So, of all the work you did over the years what were you most proud of?</p>
Susan Struthers:	<p>I think working with Richard Gallagher the attorney. I, a lot of it was because of him. He realized that I knew what I was doing. He didn't interfere in how I was organizing things, as long as the file he needed was on the desk when he needed it, as long as I didn't take a long time finding things, as long as I could talk to the clients without offering legal advice obviously but I could get, I got them the interviews they wanted. I got them the references they wanted. I was able to guide people where they should go. It was very gratifying to be appreciated for one's strong points which was leave me alone and I will do a great job for you. And he was able to do a better job. In fact, he and I got along so well that he bought me, out of his own money, a word processor so that I wouldn't have to keep retyping these long briefs. Um, especially when we got to the Supreme Court as there were a lot of briefs involved in that. He bought me, I remember it was a Lanier word processor and I had to go for training and I took to it, ah, like a fish in water. I just loved it. Yeah, but as I said they didn't have a pension plan for support staff and I to leave.</p>
JR:	<p>That was certainly reasonable.</p>
Susan Struthers:	<p>Yeah.</p>
<p>Other Interests 1:11:26</p>	
JR:	<p>Now you've mentioned friends, moving on to other interests. You've enjoyed life-long friendships ever since your school days in England.</p>
Susan Struthers:	<p>Yes.</p>
JR:	<p>Tell me about those relationships. What was it that made them work and how they've grown over the years.</p>
Susan Struthers:	<p>Well, I have obviously given you the wrong impression because I didn't keep in touch with my school friends, but I got on to a website</p>

	<p>somewhere and it was friends reuniting or something like that. And I put in my school and then suddenly these names came up. And as soon as I put my name in I got a message from my friend, Robin. Ah, we'd been friends in school, high school, and she said, "Are you the same Sue Struthers that we knew in school?" And I said yes, and she said, "Well I was Robin Smith." And I went to visit her. At the same time she also told me that another school friend of ours was living in Columbia, Maryland. I called her. I went over there. I remember I didn't like this girl in school. She was very pretty, she took all the boys.</p>
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	<p>So, you know [laughs] I never liked that kind of competition. I'd never made a friendship with her, but I went to Columbia to meet with her. Ah, lovely home. She was living in a lovely house with a swimming pool and everything and, obviously had done extremely well. Still very pretty. Beautifully dressed and we hit it off. I mean it was, we'd even had, you know those school photographs they take where every single pupil in the school is there and the camera goes, pans around. She had one of those and a magnifying glass and we were going through. [laughs] It was so much fun and since then I've found Air Force friends online. I'm going to England in September and I will be staying with these people. And ah, enjoying English food and nattering and pubs and all the things that I do miss from here yeah.</p>
JR:	Very good.
JR:	So um, tell me about your passion for French and Iranian movies and your love for live concerts.
Susan Struthers:	<p>Yes. So, Iranian—I wanted to get into Iranian movies because it was my glimpse back to Tehran. Ah, I couldn't go there anymore, because of the Revolution. In fact, I'd live there through the Revolution, through part of it. Came here in August [19]78 and was willing to go back, had a job set up, everything. My husband was gonna get out of the Army. My company had offered him a job too but then February the 2nd I think it was, in 1979, on the TV news Khomeini had landed and it was pretty obvious that we weren't going back. So, the only way I could really stay in touch with the place was through movies. I recognized the language.</p>
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	<p>Ah it wasn't that foreign to me, I still had to read the subtitles, but it was comfortable on the ear. The people were the people I knew and I, they looked familiar to me. The landscape was what I was familiar with and the humor was there and the culture and I just, I started watching so many movies that were made in Iran, and I still watch them as they come out.</p>
JR:	Uh-huh.

Susan Struthers:	And there are a few directors that are really good. Um, and they're easy to find online. French, just because I so love the French. I love French food. I like their joie de vivre. Um, yeah, I like France.
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	I'm not supposed to cause I'm British. We're not supposed to like the French very much but their food is wonderful. Their wine is good, and I've enjoyed my few visits there.
JR:	Tell me about live concerts.
Susan Struthers:	Live concerts. I used to go to live concerts when I was in my teens because that was the swinging sixties and ah, one of our local bands if you'd like to call it that, was The Rolling Stones. They were our local band, played in a pub in Richmond. And so in the sixties you were one of two camps: you were either a Beatles or a Rolling Stones fan and I was Rolling Stones. The Beatles are fine, but to me they sounded like nursery rhymes. Possibly John Lennon's songs were more rock and roll but Paul McCartney to me has always sounded like a poem. The Rolling Stones were rhythm and blues and I loved it and I used to hang around with my blues friends and we would go to all these concerts. Ah, Alexis Corner was another one. And then The Who came along, all of these bands were playing more clubs. So, we used to go and see them. Now let's move forward to 1993 when I met possibly the greatest love of my life, Michael, and Michael was a Rolling Stones fanatic and loved English rock and roll, English rhythm and blues, everything. Two or three years younger than I, but our joint love of this music, and Michael had always, I think always wanted somebody to go to these concerts with and I was a willing partner in this. And so, we must have gone to about thirty-two Rolling Stones concerts.
JR:	Wow.
Susan Struthers:	Yes. I was a groupie.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	I was [laughs], I had reached the grand old—.
JR:	Not in the usual sense of that word.
Susan Struthers:	No, no, not in the old sense.
JR:	[laughs]
Susan Struthers:	But here I am in my in my late forties, early fifties, and I'm going to rock concerts. I went to The Who, Van Halen, Neil Young. I mean you name it and Spin Doctors and all of these wonderful bands we went all over the country. So, we had divided jobs. Michael's job was to fix, get the tickets 'cause he knew how to bargain for tickets and we never sat anywhere but on the floor. We were right there, he was brilliant at

	<p>getting tickets. And he had quite a bit of money stashed too, which certainly helped. And I was the one who, um, planned the trip. So, we went to Albuquerque, so I, you know I said okay, well we are definitely going to see the surrounding countryside. We went to, I can't think of the name, something Canyon. Chaco Canyon. And we went, which was a prehistoric site. Fascinating. I fell in love with New Mexico. That was a beautiful place. And we also went to Bandolier which is dwellings in cliffs, fascinating, and story-telling. Wonderful place. I loved it. I loved Albuquerque. But we also went to Minneapolis I think and into Toronto and, we went all over the country except the South. I will not go to the South. Ah, I'm terrified of their insect life. When we have cicadas here I am out of it. I pack up and leave. I go far away where there are no cicadas and I come back, and I ask my friends to please sweep the driveway or the pathway, so I can get into my house. Please make sure there aren't any in my house which I have locked down. My friends are very, very understanding. I have always had a fear of flying insects. And so really good friends, not those who go, "Hey guess what I've got" cause I'm convinced there's something in there, and then they go, "Phfft!" Ah, I don't like that. Um, but anyway my friends are always very understanding. It is a true phobia. I actually get sweaty and pass out, it's horrible.</p>
JR:	Hmm.
Susan Struthers:	<p>Yeah. Ah, I can never go to Singapore. My sister lived there for years. I could never go and visit her. Ah they have butterflies and moths, this big, no, not for me. I don't like butterflies. So, and this actually is a quite easy place to live. There's not that many flying insects. We do have these horrible roaches, but I can usually stamp on them before they do any harm. Ah, but anything that flies I don't like it.</p>
JR:	[laughs] Other interests that you have now—swimming lessons is it?
Susan Struthers:	<p>I was taking swimming lessons and well and I was also going to a gym. I hate exercise. I just, there is nothing graceful in sweating as far as I'm aware. And, I mean I should exer—everybody should exercise. I just can't get into it you know. Yeah. I think my favorite exercise is walking because I can listen to my podcasts while I go.</p>
JR:	That's good.
Susan Struthers:	<p>Parkfairfax however has become a bit of a challenge because it is nothing but hills. Mount Eagle has become has become a very good track for me because it is flat. But yeah I like walking. So, yeah. Not good at exercise. Not good at swimming.</p>
JR:	And you're looking forward to some travel?
Susan Struthers:	<p>Yes, a friend and I are trying to put together and we're not being very good at this. We both want to go to Barcelona, more than anywhere else we want to go to Barcelona. And we're both going for the same issue</p>

	which is art, the artwork. We want to go and [see] the Sagrada. We want to see the modern art that's there. The, not Picasso, who is it? Well I don't remember. But we got all these books and we've been looking, and we just really have to get our act in order and go. We're planning on going in September. I hope we can pull it off. We're really not very good at getting things done. But yes, I would love to go to Barcelona.
Advice Regarding Military Service 1:23:09	
JR:	Sounds great. Okay. In summing up, what advice would you give to a young person contemplating military service?
Susan Struthers:	Oh, my goodness. What advice would I give them? Keep your mouth shut. I think to begin with basically do what you're told and do the very best you can at doing it.
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	Because eventually you will get to a position where you will be the one dictating what people do. If you object much it's gonna make your life bloody miserable. You just put up with it. I wasn't a very good officer. I didn't like the class divisions. I didn't like this "officers get perks" but if it's enlisted personnel who do the same behavior that's not good. You know I saw officers throw eggs over buildings to see if they would land on the other side of the building, but if an enlisted person played the same game they'd be up on a charge the following morning. I just didn't get this double standard. I also don't like class. It's not something that I've ever been comfortable with. So, I really wasn't the ideal officer.
JR:	But you would recommend military service, to a young person.
Susan Struthers:	It's a very nice disciplined life. It—yes. I don't know what life is like as an enlisted.
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	I do know when I was in the Air Force the women lived in huge dormitories, the enlisted folk lived in dormitories. And they worked very hard. They worked shift work in a lot of places. I don't know it just, but when I was in the Air Force if a women got pregnant she was out the next day. I totally disagreed with that. The man, nothing happened. The women were so loyal to their men they never mentioned their names. It was like the whole burden, the financial burden, they were gonna lose their livelihood. Ah, I couldn't, I didn't like that at all.
JR:	Hmm.
Susan Struthers:	I think it should have been kinder.
JR:	Yeah.
Susan Struthers:	I think I think I should have been given a chance to serve overseas [laughs]. That's why I joined, was to see the world and thanks to that

	last trip I did see some of it. But I really wanted to serve overseas, but didn't get the chance.
JR:	We should mention that that how you wound up in Alexandria was Ray's orders to Fort Belvoir.
Susan Struthers:	Yes. He actually first of all got orders to go to Fort Riley, Kansas and soon as he got his orders he went into a catatonic state and said we are not going to Kansas. And then someone, I was working with a few Americans at that time. They were saying things like, you know, you might as well just cut your jeans off now because that's all you're gonna be wearing, cut off jeans. Beginning to think Kansas must be the armpit of the world. Anyway, Ray has had a daughter and he used her to get out of Fort Riley, Kansas. So, I never got a chance to see Fort Riley or cut my jeans off or any of those things. We, he got Fort Belvoir because his daughter was actually living in Rocky Mount, North Carolina and it was closer.
Susan Struthers:	He was an MP at Fort Belvoir. I think he was very good at what he did. And he certainly seemed to enjoy it. But we lived on [U.S.] Route One, which was not a very nice place to live. We had this Corvette that had air conditioning problems. Um, I didn't like the Corvette. It was sitting in the middle of a Coca-Cola bottle, so I got myself an Italian Lancia, and toddled around town in that car.
Final Comments 1:27:48	
JR:	So, we're about finished. Is there anything you'd like to add to what we've talked about? Any post-scripts?
Susan Struthers:	Well I, in a in a way I'd like to sort of thank the United States for allowing me to have such a fun life. Ah, it's had its downs, but you get through them and I would say memories are usually very positive, very good. I'd made very, very good friends in this country. I would like to see more of this country.
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	And one of my neighbors and I are tootling around with the idea of renting an RV and just going. I mean I've been to Yellowstone and I've never seen the Grand Canyon. I want to see the Grand Canyon. Ah, and I want to see Utah, you know, go down through Utah to Colorado. Utah to the next one, the next one. New Mexico? No, it's got something in between.
JR:	I should know geography better.
Susan Struthers:	I'm drawing a blank here but yes to go down on through the cowboy and Indian country that I grew up with on television.
JR:	Wyoming and places.
Susan Struthers:	I've been to Wyoming, not south of that. Utah would be my starting

	point and points west.
JR:	New Mexico?
Susan Struthers:	New Mexico, yeah.
JR:	Okay. Well sounds great. Anything else?
Susan Struthers:	I must say that the hardest time I've had here is with food. Too much sugar in American food. [laughs]
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	And I love food. Ah, and it's always been disappointment. Everything has sugar on it. There's syrup on things. There's, you couldn't get a piece of ham without pineapple or you can't get a piece of pork without an apple, something or other with it. Ah, but new cuisine is changing that and I'm getting to enjoy a few things now. Yeah.
JR:	[unclear]
Susan Struthers:	Yeah, the food's getting better.
JR:	Great. Well it's been my pleasure to interview you today.
Susan Struthers:	I've enjoyed it. Well I hope they realize how very much I have loved living in Alexandria. I mean apart from a short period living on Capitol Hill.
JR:	Uh-huh.
Susan Struthers:	I've spent most of my time in Alexandria from Beauregard Street to, the GW Parkway to here in Parkfairfax. Parkfairfax being my favorite of all the places. It's a lovely place to live. It's a wonderful place to live. If I could just figure out it's parking, right? Yeah, I like, it's a great place to live. And thank you very much for this discussion. I've enjoyed it.
JR:	As have I. Thank you.
Susan Struthers:	You're welcome John.