# Susan Interview 1 – 2017 (Francine)

(airwoman, 18 years, married, yes, +4yrs 4 months)

17 Oct 2017

Introduction 2.43.

## C

Why did you join the military?

## Susan

OH erm. I wanted erm a career erm and also my grandpa had been in the RAF as well so that erm interested me I think initial actually I think what erm triggered it was erm when I was at school we had a career day erm we went and spent the day with the light infantry we were running around in a field doing all these tasks and I really enjoyed it erm. I think that’s what triggered it I think.

## C

It was just what? Just what was it about that?

## Susan

That was quite fun and I want a I didn’t want a job where I’d get bored. And I thought no two days would be the same in the military and I didn’t want to sit and work in an office erm even though I quite enjoy doing that now. Erm I just thought I’d get bored I couldn’t find anything that I thought would be interesting and that seemed exciting.

## C

Cool and erm for you my next question doesn’t really apply to you because its when did you start thinking about leaving the military? But for you because of your being made redundant it wasn’t a conscious choice to to leave but did you prepare yourself for that redundancy did you think this could happen and did you start thinking about in advance? Before the

## Susan

Erm Yeh I suppose I did when I knew redundancies had come up. I did speak to my husband and said what should I do? Erm and then we both decided that well there was no point in applying for redundancy because you only get 6 months before you leave whereas if you get forced into redundancy you get 12 months so it made sense just to wait and see what happened so I‘d sor kind of thought about leaving but erm hadn’t made my mind up at this it made it up for me I suppose.

## C

And so how that I just really want to get into I suppose how that made you feel when that redundancy notice came through. How did they actually let you know?

## Susan

Erm I got erm a letter erm which was delivered to my OC and then erm on the day when all the redundancies went out erm people got called into the office and I was called in and nobody else did so I knew I was being made redundant. I mean they were all different trades to me anyway so it was not a reflection on me against them, we weren’t in competition with each other.

## C

Because you were at the AVCO, yeh?

## Susan

Yeh cause I was a the AVCO. So, they were different trades. And then my erm OC sat me down and erm and asked as soon I came in as I got called into the office I said I know I’ve been made redundant cause he had a letter in his hand. I was expecting it.

## C

Yeh, yeh. But how how what what was did the emotion like I suppose ..

## Susan

I suppose it was a bit exciting if I recall back to the day I remember walking back into the office and my colleagues and saying “I’m leaving the Air Force” and I got so excited and then erm and I got stood down for the day and I went home and my mum was there and so was our au pair. And erm I said I’ve lost my job I ‘m so excited. So, I suppose initially it was the excitement, it was the unknown and the yeh I was excited I didn’t cry and I wasn’t upset I just like ohh something new and exciting. Which was a bit weird and I remember our au pair saying I’ve never seen anyone so excited that they have lost their job. (laughter)

## C

And why do you think you were, you say it was because it was something new it was did they did you ?

## Susan

I think cause they made the decision for me. When you make a decision you’re always like is it the right decision. I didn’t have a choice in the decision so I just had to deal with it.

## C

And you were just excited at what would come next what would

## Susan

Yeh yeh I was excited and it was because it wasn’t my decision. I knew that the decision might happen but there was no going back on it. It’s not like it was a decision you get a choice in.

## C

Well yeh, yeh.

## Susan

So, I was excited about something new cause I had toyed with the idea of leaving but I hadn’t felt that strongly about it to leave but then I was like right ok it’s a chance for something new.

## C

And you weren’t concerned about anything. There wasn’t any worries that you thought oh god how am I gonna earn a living or

## Susan

No. None of those worries cause my husband’s job was secure. Erm I just had to decide what courses to do I did have a bit of hassle from my Sgt who was a bit of a nightmare. Erm he was a bit of a sexist pig really the only one I have ever met in the Air Force. I’ve always worked in sections where I am the only female and I have never been treated any differently but he was just an arse erm (laugh) and he erm he put barriers up when I tried to book resettlement courses.

## C

Oh right.

## Susan

Well the office is under staffed and we need you and you can’t just book courses willy nilly and I was like I’m leaving the Air Force erm so after that initial excitement erm there was that real frustration and I remember we had a we had erm our neighbour was aactually, cause we lived in civvi street, and our neighbour was a padre in the Air Force, erm I knew his wife and I went over to speak to him cause I was so stressed out and I said is there any way you can get involved because I am getting push back every time I try to book my resettlement workshops or any courses. He keeps sighting we’re under staffed but as far as I am concerned I have been told to leave the Air Force and I need to sort my shit out basically.

## C

Yeh, yeh. And did he, did eh get involved?

## Susan

Erm no he just me advice about what to do erm

## C

Yeh

## Susan

And I just put my foot down cause I thought what are you going to do are you going to charge me? and if you are going to charge me it’s not going to it’s the end of my career anyway so .

## C

So you went ..

## Susan

I got frustrated because I wanted to plan my life and the Air Force wasn’t an issue it was one individual was stopping that from happening.

## C

MMHmm

## Susan

Or making me feel that I should put the job of the Air Force first instead of my resettlement. Which is so not the case, that is not how it should be.

## C

No that is a real valid point yeh he was still almost treating you were staying in and have a career and he could make you do what he wanted you to do as opposed to thinking about your long term….

## Susan

Yeh and he wrote me a really scathing final report as well. I’d actually moved AVCOs erm about 2 months after the redundancy come out. It was already in the pipeline to happen. You can do a transfer if its within your region and the new one was nearer to my house

## C

Yeh

## Susan

So, when a vacancy came up I applied to transfer over so that he already knew I was leaving his office. And when he wrote my final report erm he gave me a really scathing report saying that I wasn’t a team player because I had left work behind and I was like but I was leaving and it it was also the period when the Olympics was happening so I was hardly in the office I was down at London most of the time and erm yeh I was like I said do you know how much I have picked up when people have let things slip or they have made mistakes and I’ve not told you I’ve just picked up their work I’ve cleared their mistakes I’ve covered their arses (yeh) so if I wasn’t a team player I would have come to you and grassed everybody up

## C

Mmm

## Susan

So so So I was really frustrated at that.

## C

But that was pretty much the only negative

## Susan

Yeh yeh it was this one individual but the rest of my career was I really enjoyed it and I I felt quite bitter that erm I had had this great career and the last 12months had been ruined by one person.

## C

I think it is really interesting that erm that one individual can have such an influence, within the organisation, on you personally and and I think that happens quite a lot actually erm where that one person in your chain of command somehow can just really poison there the whole experience.

## Susan

Yeh the funny thing was I used to go home and moan to my husband about him and you know what it is like you moan to your spouse and they go yeh yeh you are just moaning and erm actually my husband’s co-worker had gone on deployment and this sgt erm was in his living accommodation with him and he turned round to my husband my husband had said she works with this person and he gave him the name and he goes ohh he is such a dick (laughter) and totally validated everything I had been saying for the past 4 months. Ahh yeh he said he is an idiot too and he gave me all these examples erm he had this guy had a bit of OCD about tidying up really badly to the point that erm in the tent or in the bathroom area I think people left things a bit messy and he I because he was in charge of erm I think he was put in charge of some the logistical side of it and he put a notice up in the Sgts bathroom to say if this bathroom is left a mess I shall be cutting off the hot water supply. And everyone was like well you can’t do that stop being an arse. So yeh he’d been so he wasn’t just like that me when I found out he’d been like that with other people that did made me feel a bit better but I just felt it had poisoned my last >>>>> in the Air Force which was a shame.

## C

Yeh yeh. So why did you erm join as a photographer what was it about photography ..?

## Susan

Erm Oh well I considered to, I wanted to do either air traffic or photography and I thought oh God if I make a mistake as an air traffic controller people might die whereas if I make a mistake as a photographer it is no big deal (laugh) erm yeh and I read the description I mean there wasn’t much on line at that point erm but yeh the job sounded interesting and exciting and you had a bit of autonomy and you do you did as a photographer anyway (12.18).

## C

And that was important to have that …

## Susan

Erm yeh. There is creativity in it as well because erm you know as an aircraft technician you have a rule book to follow as a photographer they can teach you but you don’t know what is going to happen in situations change you can use your imagination and I liked that.

## C

And you enjoyed that. So, if you could pick out one and it’s a hard question I know but oh How long did you serve?

## Susan

>>>>> years.

## C

Sorry I couldn’t hear that one.

## Susan

Thirteen.

## C

Thirteen. It’s a long period but if you could pick out one … example what would be the one memory that really sticks in your brain about being in the Air Force and if if you could explain to me why that one.

## Susan

Ohhh definitely. Being selected to do ceremonial duties at the Olympics that for me was the highlight of my career. And I did that and I went to do that about a week after I had been told I’d got made redundant so it was like it was like this was like my glory year for my last year although this this sgt had ruined it a bit this was the pinnacle of my career as far as I was concerned being able to do I was on the TV every night. Erm raised, we I worked at the velodrome.

## C

Oh wow.

## Susan

as part of the ceremonial team and erm myself and my partner cause your part you were in twos raising the flag and we got we just we just drew lots and we got selected for gold and we erm we did the first gold and it was Sir Chris Hoy and we raised the Union Jack for him. So, it was totally non mili well it was military cause we were in uniform but you know it wasn’t anything to do with war I just felt really proud, proud to be involved in the Olympics proud that I was in the Air Force and it was just it was really it was one of those things that people were jealous of I suppose I didn’t do it because people would be jealous but I think people were like how did you manage to get that job?

## C

Yeh so how

## Susan

I loved it it was really exciting and fun.

## C

You weren’t down there as a photographer? You were down there as one of the…ceremonial

## Susan

No. yeh >>>>>> We got. In the January before the Olympics erm there was erm something came out asking for volunteers (yeh) and you had to write a paragraph about why you about what you do in your free time and at the time I was a parish councillor and I used to do quite >>>>> a lot of stuff in my free time and we fig and we found out afterwards when we figured out who had got selected everyone had all done a lot of stuff in their free time and given back to their communities and that’s why we got selected.

## C

Yeh. That’s nice that’s g

## Susan

Yeh, erm. I think the sore point going back to this sgt. Was And erm I’d volunteered for it and at the time everyone was like what have you volunteered for the Olympics for you are stupid and I said well actually I think it sounds really exciting and of course oh how the tide turns a few months later G4S mess up on their contract and my sgt gets jiffed to do the security duties and he says this is really unfair you’re a cpl and your doing ceremonial and I’ve got to do 24hr security duties I am going to ring the ceremonial team up and get you and me swopped. That’s how horrible he was I said well I’ve already had my training and (yeh) he wanted to me to to em swop with him and do the security duties and he does the ceremonial even though I’ve yeh that would have pissed me off. But that never happened they told him to take a running jump.

## C

Yeh good yeh.

## Susan

He should have volunteered for it at the time so.

## C

Yeh. He sounds like he was a really interesting man to work with.

## Susan

Yeh he was so bitter and angry that he had got jiffed for security duties like it was personally my fault and if I had not volunteered to do ceremonial I would have been available to do security duties.

## C

Oh well he’s as you said tough for him basically. Ok

## Susan

That was the highlight just doing the Olympics it was just brilliant.

## C

I sounds like it it sounds like something you will er just remember for ever.

## Susan

Yeh

## C

Have you got it on TV have you got it recorded?

## Susan

We recorded some on the set top box but then the set top box broke so

## C

I’m sure it will be on line somewhere, a BBC video of it….>>>>

## Susan

Yeh it will be on there somewhere …>>>

## C

Cool. So if you had a magic wand and you could change anything about your military experience what do you think is there anything you would actually change?

## Susan

Erm

## C

Apart from this guy (laugh)

## Susan

What would I change? Erm I don’t think I would change anything. I did lots of varied jobs erm in different sections nothing was really repetitive. I don’t think I would change anything.

## C

So it was a really positive experience. All in all.

## Susan

Yeh I mean you have your ups and downs but nothing no slips happened overall. No I think I had a good career, I had a happy career and I enjoyed it. I always used to say to people when people used to moan about being in the Air Force I’d say well just hit the PvR button that’s what it is there for I don’t want to hear you moaning. You either do something, change something or hit the button and go and I never got to that point where I thought right I want to PvR. I was pleased I was happy so no I wouldn’t change anything.

## C

Good that is good to hear. So erm if I if you had to describe military life then to someone who didn’t know anything about it how would you go about describing it?

## Susan

Erm you need to be prepared for things to be unpredictable erm and you can’t always get your own way. In terms of leave or time off work or avoiding duties because you just have to do them erm yeh just prepared to be messed around a bit but you get compensated for that you get decent pay. Erm and even though you might get messed around you may have to work long hours it is really easy to get time off usually, you know, for sports or if you work a weekend you will get time off in lieu erm so you might have to work odd hours erm erm I’m trying to think of something positive now …

## C

Yeh

## Susan

And but Take all the opportunities I would say as well that are avail there are so many opportunities that are available. In terms of I learnt to ski with the Air Force I had never skied before. I did wind surfing mountain biking hiking all sorts of stuff so you have to take the rough with the smooth you know. There are the negative but you have got to grab hold of positives and volunteer for all the things that you can.

## C

Yeh that is good. Erm How do you think your life now differs from when you were in the military. So, what would you say is the biggest differences (19.14) between then and now

## Susan

Well the biggest one is that I work part time. Erm so I fit my job around my family instead of in the military where your family has to fit around your job erm so my family can be put first erm yeh I think that is the biggest one.

## C

And that’s that’s worth it. Even

## Susan

Erm I didn’t to be honest I it is but I didn’t find it a struggle juggling everything when I was in the military. We had live-in childcare which made life so much easier. Erm and so if anything happened or had to work late or had to work over night or for my husband we always had that extra that support network by having live in childcare. But it never felt like we struggle or had to juggle anything erm but it yeh I’m happy with it now but at the time I dealt with it ok as well it wasn’t an issue.

## C

Because of the live-in childcare.

## Susan

Yeh we had got that sorted and it was really good.

## C

Erm …. Sorry I am just running through the questions as some of them don’t don’t quite fit as you you made redundant as opposed to deciding to leave. So >>> outside of this this then, outside of this sgt, the rest of your resettlement did that go ok? Did you enjoy it and did you get benefit from it?

## Susan

Erm I got benefit I just I hated trying to figure out what I wanted to do and making decisions. In hindsight the courses I did I wish I’d not done. The original course I wanted to do I backed out of and I should have done it and that its I think it’s making all those decisions should I do it? you can’t predict the future you can’t predict what you are going to get a job in so erm I found resettlement beneficial at the time erm but in hindsight I the courses I am not using now so it was a bit of a waste of time. Did I answer that question or did I go off on a tangent?

## C

No you you you did. But I am just interested to know what what course didn’t you do? The one that you backed out of.

## Susan

Erm Yeh it was a CIPD erm in HR and it would have gone really nicely with doing the recruitment now erm but I didn’t think I’d get a job in recruitment I got told by my career advisor that I wouldn’t get a job in recruitment she said you’ve never been to university erm you wont get a job in recruitment. And I said but I am working in recruitment now and I’ve got a recruitment qualification from the Air Force. You get a certificate in recruitment practice.

## C

Oh ok.

## Susan

erm so I backed out of it and rethought my plan

## C

So you think that was bad advice >>>>>

## Susan

Erm yeh I hate the fact that I’d been pigeonholed. Instead of saying the skies the limit it was they tried to limit yeh, I understand doing recruitment now and working with veterans I understand you do have to manage people’s expectations erm but they would probably turn round and say it was reverse psychology we got we told you you wouldn’t do it and you’ve proved us wrong but I don’t think that is why they said it at the time. (22.40) so its yeh I can understand if people have wild dreams I could understand if I had turned up and said I want to be an astronaut yeh fine ok you know shoot me down but erm yeh I think that just it was frustrating and bad advice I suppose I got and I got told erm that my I’d never done a CV and I got as part of my resettlement and I found that very useful going on the workshop but the erm consultant kept saying that my CV was no good and I said but I’ve I keep getting called for job interviews so the purpose of a CV is to get you a job interview and if I am getting job interviews then it must be doing its job erm but she couldn’t quite grasp that I got quite frustrated.

## C

So just going back to that decision-making process when you were leaving and you were trying to figure out what was what you would do next if you like you had that desire to go into HR because you enjoyed in the AVCO and you thought this is something I could take forward.

## Susan

Yeh I’d really enjoyed the recruitment I’d done the training course I’d done it in practice in the office and really enjoyed it and I thought I’d like to do this in civilian life.

## C

But And when so when that was fu fuwed you had to rethink and try to figure out something else?

## Susan

Yeh tried to think up some other options really so I ended up doing erm the PETALS course which is preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector and I did an NVQ assessors course cause I still I really like a job the where I can help people and those were similar as well with the assessing and the guiding and mentoring people (yeh) so I did those courses cause I thought they might work well together particularly if I wanted to work in a college environment.

## C

Yeh, and so how did you end up getting your job in HR?

## Susan

This job yeh (laugh) well I was head hunted I suppose it wasn’t advertised I got a random e-mail for erm well the back story is have you heard of recruit for spouses?

## C

No.

## Susan

It’s a it’s an organisation that was set up to help spouses find employment and I’d heard about them in the news and they didn’t have any recruitment jobs or anything like that and I thought well maybe they want some more recruiters so I rang them up on spec just before I left the military and I said I don’t suppose you are looking for any recruiters are you? And they said sorry not at this time erm and then about 6 months later they rang me up and said yeh we were looking for one and they interviewed me and one other person. The other person had loads of commercial experience so she got the job but the person who interviewed me had remembered me and she was friends with our MD where I work now and he’d said to her he was setting up a company and does she knew somebody and she said yeh I interviewed somebody she’s ex-military he gave she gave him my name and I got a random e-mail saying oh I’ve been recommended you by someone and yeh it was like the stars aligned.

## C

Brilliant and and you really enjoy it what you do now?

## Susan

Yeh I left here for 3 months eh 2 months erm because there was uncertainty with the company and erm I applied for a job back in the UK and got that but erm the job was horrendous so erm I came back because they didn’t want me to leave and its not like I didn’t enjoy the job so I said to my husband I don’t care if there is no job security at least I will be enjoying what I’m doing even if it is only for a few months.

## C

And what does the the job involve exactly?

## Susan

So, I work with veterans and clients. Clients erm usually have veteran’s programmes that they want to start or that they already have going erm and they want to employ military veterans from either any of the three services and I also work with veterans and service leavers erm to help them find jobs and also provide support and guidance in terms of their CV doing practice interviews erm just helping them along the way really. So often I will provide erm CV guidance and and erm send all comments back to them saying you need to add this this and this. Erm and they and they are really receptive.

## C

So so what’s what the best bit about this job then do you think?

## Susan

Erm definitely when somebody an inter gets called for an interview or gets called for a job. Er sorry gets offered a job erm those are good bits but what’s really great is often erm you speak to a person about amending their CV and some are really reticent but some are really receptive and often I will e-m get well quite a lot I will get e-mails from people you know saying I am so glad you made me work on my CV I’ve just notice since I have applied for jobs with the new layout I am getting calls for interviews and you think ‘yes’ and I like it because the candidates have that lightbulb moment and they are totally converted and they realise why you have asked them to do what you have asked them to do and I like that. It can of validates what you have asked them to do and I think well you know cause I don’t do all the work for them they do it so I get a lot of e-mails saying thank you which is nice it’s nice to be appreciated.

## C

Yeh yeh it is good. And its all industry sectors is it, all?

Susan

Yeh and there all private companies, well PLCs, it’s not erm public sector.

## C

Erm, let me see then so do you how would you say how would you describe how you feel about having left the air force now bearing in mind where you are at?

## Susan

Erm I feel Its really easy this one. I feel that the Air Force took what it needed from me and I took what I needed from the Air Force and it’s now the end of a beautiful friendship. And that is how I feel.

## C

Brilliant (laughing)

## Susan

I got I got plenty from the Air Force you know I got all the sports and all the opportunities and they got worked me like a dog but it was give and take.

## C

You felt it was balanced?

## Susan

Yeh I feel that its like a break up and you know a relationship break up isn’t it. I feel like I am totally over the break up we have parted our ways on amicable terms and that is it.

## C

I think that is perfect I think that is a really healthy way to to to approach it and to think about it that’ s really good cause it doesn’t always happen so so nicely. If that makes sense. Yrh? I think a lot of people erm feel that erh although they its its interesting because you didn’t get to choose but sometimes people do get to choose but they still feel forced. Does that make sense?

## Susan

Yeh like their hand was forced? Yeh I can see that but I think I always try to feel optimistic about stuff my husband and I have discussed this cause we are friends with another couple and they are both pessimistic and it really frustrates us they always see the worst and the negative and I always tell them to see the best in things and not all the time I would say I am more realists realist optimist but I think sometimes you’ve got to I think not enough people are thankful for what they have got erm and I I am always really thankful.

## C

So could you what is it the most that you think miss about the Air Force?

## Susan

Erm The camaraderie, the banter, the friends. Erm everything that just not tangible

## C

Yeh

## Susan

Erm, >><>> just the excitement sometimes you never know you get jobs and you do get sent away from family but sometimes they can be very exciting. Sometimes the unknown is quite exciting.

## C

Yeh

## Susan

Erm but yeh mainly camaraderie, the banter just having a laugh I’ve had in some civilian jobs there is just no sense of humour you’ll somebody will say something and you will see the filthy double meaning in it and you’ll start giggling and then everyone else in the office look sat you like you are an idiot and be like what are you laughing at? And when you explain it they are just like, look at you they look down at you. I miss the sense of humour.

## C

So would you say you are still consider yourself part of the military family? Do you still …

## Susan

Erm

## C

The wider military family?

## Susan

I suppose so because my husband is still serving but I still see it as a job, I see I see his job as a job. Erm he goes to work that’s his job and I have my job. And I don’t feel that erm I want to take any of my identity form it anymore because I have my own I feel I have my own identity or at least I like to think that erm and I don’t want to pull all of my identity from being … I don’t know if this sounds really wrong but a military spouse. I am a spouse and my husband works in the military but those two things are separate things. I didn’t join the military, well I did join the military but I am not in the military and and I don’t feel like I should I feel like it’s almost poaching off people who are in the military by using it as part of my identity now because I am not in the military. I’m I have I have my own job I have carved out my own career. I don’t know does that sound silly?

## C

No not at all. Not at all.

## Susan

I meet so many people whose identity is centred around their husband being in the military and … yeh what happens when your husband leaves the military have you got no identity anymore because you have piggy backed on somebody else’s?

## C

Mmm that is really interesting

## Susan

I don’t know.

## C

That’s really interesting. So you’d erm but would you consider yourself a veteran, would you ever call yourself a veteran if you were talking to people?

## Susan

I am quite reluctant to do that I don’t always tell people that I have been in the military. It’s not that I am ashamed. I just think well I didn’t do anything spectacular or remarkable. I didn’t save someone’s life erm I don’t know I just feel like I am not a glory hunter

## C

Mmm

## Susan

but I am not ashamed if somebody asks I’ll tell them. >>><>><if you are around people who are in the military but it’s not the only thing I have ever done in my life. I am more proud of being a mum really.

(33.14)

## C

So where do you see yourself in about another year, so what I am just trying to work out, you have been out now for 4 years.

## Susan

4 years, yeh

## C

Yeh, so which you know you have had lots of time to think you have had lots of time to move on. A year doesn’t seem that much difference but do you still see you still see yourself working in the same environment in 4-5 years’ time?

## Susan

I hope so yeh I mean to be honest although I am saying about my husband’s identity and him being in the military we’re still I’m still beholden to where we ‘re going to get posted to. So, I still have some of those restrictions imposed upon me, where we are going to get posted to, so I still have some of those restrictions imposed upon me where we are going to get posted to, what kind of house we’re going to be given because unless we are going to live near to where our actual home is erm we have to live in a quarter. So, I still have those restrictions erm I would still like to be doing the job I am doing erm but my husband wants to leave the military as well. So, I will be doing the supporting role where he supported me when I left so I can’t at the moment do too many career moves because I need to be settled and secure.

## C

Mmm

## Susan

So, we have a steady income ready for when he leaves erm to give him that safety net I suppose.

## C

Yeh

## Susan

So, at the moment its up in the air but that’s just really to do all to do not necessarily to do with the military making our decisions always it’s to do with the fact that my husband wants to leave. >>>>><<>

## C

Mmm

## Susan

So, we have to make decisions together.

## C

Yeh. So, what would you say was your biggest professional challenge in that erm transition from working within the military to working within a civilian organisation?

## Susan

Understanding erm commercial language and how the commercial industry works. When I look back at some of the first job interviews I went to I feel really cringey erm I think oh my God I must have made a right idiot of myself. Erm you just have to get in the commercial mindset if you want to work in the commercial sector erm so I think that’s a big it was a big shift for me

## C

Do you think

## Susan

Erm And I found quite a lot with my job even with my erm our erm managing director who is ex-Army erm and I will not stand up to him in a a rude way but I will often push back stuff erm and quite often it is me turning round to him and saying but there is no commercial benefit we are not getting any money out of this. And he’s like oh yeh I suppose you’re right. So sometimes you’ve got to you have to get into the commercial mindset which you don’t always get in the military it’s just like let’s do the job and it doesn’t matter how much it costs. (35.49)

## C

He he still has a bit of that?

## Susan

Sometimes yeh.

## C

Interesting. But your, do you think erm is that partly because he wants to help people as well do you think? and he’s trying to

## Susan

Yeh I think he gets really excited and he gets loads and loads of things plates that he is balancing erm and I have to turn round and say right we have to prioritise, we have to prioritise what is going to make money it is not that we’re not going to do these other tasks but we need to do the ones that bring an income in first and then when we have got capacity then we do the other tasks. So, its about getting him to work out what our main priorities are sometimes or reminding him anyway.

## C

What erm what do you think was your biggest personal challenge in that transition out of the military?

## Susan

Erm. Personal challenge was when I didn’t have a job. Erm there was a period when I didn’t have a job and I’m lucky I didn’t end up on anti-depressants. I remember I just I felt horrible I felt I had no identity I had no job and I was asking my husband for money and that we had never been in that situation as a couple. He was fine about it but we had always had separate bank accounts we had always had our own incomes I had never needed to ask him I had had my own money and I remember it was erm winter and I wanted some winter boots because mine had a hole in and I said to him my winter boots have got a hole in and I need some new boots erm please can I have some money. And he was like why are you asking just take it from the account but I felt almost it had made me feel like a child,

## C

MMM

## Susan

relying on him and asking him for money. Because I was used to if I wanted something I just went into a shop and bought it. So, I felt yeh not having a job it was not having my own financial independence. Because then you and for me I felt like it was a stressful time for our marriage and I felt that sometimes am I only there because I don’t have my own inde financial independence because when you are financially independent you are there because you want to be there not because you need to be there and so there were a few challenges but yeh not having a and I didn’t have a job my whole identity was around cleaning the house and looking after my son who was at school anyway and I just thought oh God, it was horrible. Even when I had a crap job it was better than having no job cause it gave you that sense of I got out of the house had a sense of identity and I was worried what other people would think cause I think cause I think of other people who have kids at school all day and have no job and who are not studying well what on earth do you do all day? And I was >>><< well people are going to think that of me, what the hell does she do all day she is not studying anything her son is at school all day I didn’t want to be a lady of leisure.

## C

Yeh its it wasn’t part of your make up.

## Susan

No, its not me I can’t just its nice I like going to a spa day and going out but not 7 days a week.

## C

No that’s that fine that’s brilliant. Its really fascinating because I think I had a a year when I left the Air Force where I er basically I was exhausted from trying to juggle the job and the kids and and constantly we moved well even now we’re 9 years married this year and this is our 7th house. And its just you spend half your life packing unpacking constantly you are just knackered so I took a year and I felt very similar I used to say I’m just a toilet cleaner now that is all I do all day. Clean the house yeh I didn’t like it and that financial thing. I’ve had a job since I was 14.

## Susan

MMM

## C

You know and then all of a sudden you have got, you haven’t got your own money it’s just no. I did not like it either.

## Susan

It was frustrating. I mean I had used my redundancy to pay off the mortgage my husband is like for crying out load you have halved our mortgage why are you feeling guilty about asking me for a pair of boots.

## C

Yes but it’s interesting cause that self worth and identity as you said I think when you have been financially independent its very hard to give up.

## Susan

Yeh I mean when I grew up my mum had always worked I my grandma worked full time with my grandpa they ran their own business and my mum was mainly brought up by her grandma because my mum my grandma and grandpa worked. So, I’ve always been around strong working females, role models, I’ve never been around females who stayed at home.

## C

MM yeh that is really good really useful stuff. Erm that is that is pretty much it we have covered everything I wanted to cover and I really thank you for that. Cause it is awesome to have somebody who is a bit further down the line than the people I have been interviewing and having a different perspective but is there anything else you would like to say about the topic of identity and how you transitioned out of the Air Force?

## Susan

I don’t know I think the whole process is almost like you know like with the grief circle when you you erm resist the idea and then you get to the acceptance stage and I think it is very much like that you’ve got to get to the acceptance stage erm and then I think you will be happy because if you are always fighting a situation that you can’t change erm you you never its it just doesn’t do anything for you mentally at all.

## C

What advice would you give to somebody then who was just about to leave?

## Susan

Don’t expect, erm don’t expect to feel normal or straight away give it time it could take 2 or 3 years before you get settled. Don’t expect to get settled straight away <><

## C

Why <<><>

## Susan

And expect a bit of a culture shock I suppose.

## C

Yeh I was about to the culture that’s that’s I was going to say why do you think it’s could take 2 or 3 years to to adjust?

## Susan

Because erm you might not find, the first job you take you might not enjoy I mean the first few jobs I had I didn’t enjoy and I walked out of erm the because the organisation cause you are always going to compare it to your career in the Air Force so for the first 2 or 3 years you are always going to be comparing well we did this in the Air Force or in this job we did this erm and you I think you are always comparing it and expecting it to be the same and it isn’t

## C

I Can I just delve into that a little bit more in what ways is it is it not the same.

## Susan

I think you expect your colleagues to have the same work ethics as you. And quite a lot are lazy at times. Erm I quite a few places that I have worked in erm everybody has got I felt like I was the odd one out because I was the only one that didn’t have an illness or a disability or a problem erm everybody wanted to have something to identify them as unique that is the way I saw it. and it was like, oh this one can’t do that and this one can’t eat that and this one and I was like and it just got really frustrating then everybody had a I’m not saying I have anything against people with disabilities or health conditions

## C

No its fascinating

## Susan

But it was like I felt like I was the odd one out because erm like I don’t know people were taking a lot of time off sick at work I remember being in a job and somebody was off for 5 days with a cold and I was like who the hell has 5 days off with a cold? (laughter) and then I am coming in with the sniffles and they are like oh aren’t you going home? And I was like no I’ve just got a cold its fine. Erm so I think its that, there is less of a team work mentality and loyalty and that is hard to get around I’ve got that now where I work because most of the people are ex-military we are very we have got each other’s back and we don’t stab each other in the back but in civvi street there is a lot of stabbing you in the back. And there is less working together. Even Where I work now one of the girls who has left when she first joined she said oh its really different I am used to being stabbed in the back and you are all helping each other out and I was like yeh that is how things get done when you help each other out erm so yeh sometimes the team work and loyalty is lacking.

## C

That is really good. That’s you know I am so pleased you know I went back to my supervisors and said do you think it’s a good idea to speak to people who are a bit further along the line. So, it has been really really good. I can’t thank you enough for taking the time.

44.39

General Conversation

46.10

## Susan

….. I was talking to it’s quite funny cause I was talking to my husband the other day about this the whole back stabbing thing but it was quite funny because when my co-worker was on maternity I took over all of her work and a big chunk of it was managing training courses and before she went on maternity she left massive hand over notes and when she came back we had a meeting and she was taking it over because I was leaving and I’ve come back now, and my boss said oh you’ve done a fantastic job covering for the past year and she said erm oh yeh its really great there are some fantastic handover notes and I said I wouldn’t have been able to do this fantastic job without you leaving the handover notes in the first place I have made them evolve and I have improved them but if you hadn’t left the handover notes I wouldn’t have been able to do such a good job it’s a team effort you started it and I finished it. But I said I can’t take all the glory because I would have fallen on my face if you hadn’t of left me all these notes to begin with I like that I like that we helping each other out. The other thing my husband and I used to always say about the military was it’s a game you have got to play the game if you resist or if you fight against the system sometimes it just makes you miserable quite a lot of the time. So, we got married quite quickly would we have got married in civvi street probably not we would have just lived together cause we could have done, we loved each other we didn’t have to get married it wasn’t for religious reasons but we were like well we’re fighting this we are never going to get a married quarter if we are not married we loved each other so we did it. We married we got married in we had only been together about a year and a half when we got married and we were just like well if it’s the only way that we can be together, the only way we can guarantee a posting, if this is the rules of the game we are just going to have to play along and so we found sometimes that if you resist too much erm then you end up just getting miserable and sometimes it’s just easier to play along. It sounds really horrible it sounds like erm … it sounds like we have given up all hope and we haven’t it’s just that some battles you have got to fight and some you have just got to give up and go you know what there are more important things in life to argue about.

49 mins

## C

Yeh. That is brilliant thank you very very much.

**Interview ends**