# Jennifer – Interview 1 2016

(officer, 22 years, married, yes, -12)

## C

Why did you join the RAF?

## Jennifer

Why did I join the RAF? Oh that is an interesting question. I guess it was for the flying actually, I started off …… (Technical faff) it is off putting as I can hear myself. I can hear myself, so I started gliding at age 16, no I started gliding at 15 and I had to wait ‘til I went solo. Loved flying, loved everything about flying. It was all civilian, had nothing to do with the military, and at school I remember having a career interview which was all organised for us and this guy asked well what do you want to do with your life? And I have no idea really and he said what do you like and I said well I like flying. And he said have you considered joining the military have you considered joining the RAF. And I said well I don’t know if they will take me, I don’t know if I am bright enough or clever enough to be in the military and he said well why don’t you take some brochures away with you and have a look and I remember him handing me all the Officer brochures and I was just laughing to myself and I took them home to my dad and said this guy must, honestly he has given me all these officer brochures and if I am going to join the military it probably won’t be as an officer and Dad was like “Well why not?” And that was the interesting thing I love flying I will go and be a pilot in the AIR FORCE and at the time they were just opening up the doors to women and I went down to Biggin Hill and had my selection and I remember I was17 and I wasn’t able to drink and I remember thinking it’s my birthday in 2 days and I could have a drink with everyone else, but I can’t be seen.. If they see me on camera having a drink I was, I know it’s completely random, funny old thing, they said “come back in 2 years” and I thought “oh frig” What am I, I didn’t do particularly well in my A ‘levels at the time and I’m thinking what am I going to prove to them if I come back in 2 years? So that was my decision to redo my A Levels and go to university and join the University Air Squadron. That’s where I decided yes, I definitely now want to be in the Air Force so that was the long winded answer. So I accidentally fell into it the AIR FORCE really from my love of flying.

## C

From your love of flying. So what was it about the UAS then and the

## Jennifer

The camaraderie, the team building, the friendships, the excitement, the being able to go flying go off on summer camps. Being able to, being given something else to do other than go back home in the holidays with university. You know I think I managed to plan through the air force out of the 8 weeks of the summer holidays, I think I managed to spend 6 of them away because you know I didn’t want to be at home. And I just managed to bounce around the AIR FORCE. YI just phoned up RAF bases and I said, I am on a UAS and I have been told that I can organise my own summer camp can I come and spend a week just living in the mess and be on the Squadron for a week and they said ‘yes’. So I just disappeared round the AIR FORCE for like 7 weeks or something crazy and I just loved it I didn’t want to be apart from it so I think the UAS gave me a window to the AIR FORCE so I could say yes I really want this. And I think the AIR FORCE accepted me because of my time in the UAS. So it was kind of like destiny pushed me that way I think, I don’t know.

Yeh, it was never money. I remember thinking, what you mean they pay you to be a pilot? I just wanted to be a pilot, I didn’t realise they were going to pay me to be a pilot. I was so naïve I just thought they gave you food and accommodation and let you be a pilot and didn’t pay you anything. I didn’t realise that you actually got paid as well (Laughter). I couldn’t believe it. I was totally the most naïve person on the planet when I joined the military. I was like ‘REALLY’ you are going to pay me as well that is amazing. I know, how crazy is that? I am not motivated by money at all, which is, that is probably one of the reasons why the military has missed a trick with me wanting to leave because they have stopped offering me things that make me feel good about myself and the whole premise was like, you want to leave well you have a good salary, and your pension and Wing Commander blah blah blah I was like No, I don’t need to be a Wing Commander to that’s not what it is about. But anyway more of that later I guess.

## C

But what is it about then, what?

## Jennifer

Being part of a team, being part of a group of likeminded people. I loved going into the mess in the evening and going, hey I’ve just discovered there is a circus on in town and does anyone want to go and instead of everybody looking at you and going “eh yeh are you like five?” people would go “yeh, I’ll go to the circus with you” and you’d be like cool” (laughter) You know it’s true.

## C

I know. I know it’s true.

## Jennifer

all those sort of things, just going into the bar and going “does anyone want to put a film on, or shall we go to the cinema or I fancy going out for a meal, I know it is like 11’oclock but I’m we will be able to find somewhere that is open for food.” Somebody would go “you’re crazy, but yeh lets go”. Let’s jump on a train and go somewhere, who wants to go somewhere on a train, somebody would go “yes lets go on a train” and I love that, I don’t do planning really but the AIR FORCE is great because it forces me to be a bit of a planner. (Laughter)

C

You’re an operations officer how can you not do planning?

## Jennifer

Oh but I am rubbish at planning, I rely on everybody else to do the planning. Gosh, well no I can plan, I can plan, and I am quite good at planning I just don’t personally like to plan too far ahead. I don’t like to put something in the diary for 6 weeks’ time in case something else comes up that is even more exciting. I am terrible for that, I actually berate my mother for it and I do it myself. I remember once, no seriously, I said (Whispering) I’m coming back from Afghanistan, and am I am going to arriving back on this date, will you be available?” Shall I pop round to see you? and she turned round and said “well get in touch with me closer to the date, yes the diary is free at the moment but why don’t you get in touch with me closer to the date to see if I am still available” Yes the diary is free at the moment get in touch with closer to the date to see if I am still available. I remember thinking, why don’t you put me in the diary so that you are not unavailable. And then I thought I do it as well, I do it too. (Laughter).

So yeh, I like the AIR FORCE because I think I’d have been a complete disaster actually in the civilian world, without the structure of the military, without, I love the fact that I didn’t have to think about what to put on in the morning. Just uniform. Easy I didn’t have to think about anything. I knew where I was working, I knew where I was living, and I didn’t have to worry. I moved jobs, I loved moving jobs, I loved the variety but I would have never moved jobs in the civilian world if I had had to think about where, what job am I going to go to and what house, where am I going to live am I going to get on with anybody? I would just never of done it but in the AIR FORCE so I am posted there, alright, so is there an OM, yes, ok so I am going to get a room, fine. You don’t know until you arrive on the night what your room looks like, you don’t know what the mess looks like and I didn’t care. There’s a room, it’s in a mess there will be people I get on with, yeh I’ll have a new job. And I would have been a complete disaster without the AIR FORCE, honestly I’d have been a complete disaster …. I would!

## C

You’re not now though. So when did you start thinking about leaving the RAF?

## Jennifer

I didn’t think about leaving the RAF until that phone call with the Wing Commander, I decided that staying in the AIR FORCE was lovely but actually turning up to work was incompatible with where we were as a family. So I took my career break because Stephen was due to go off to Pakistan for a year and I couldn’t work out how I could, I was in a command tour, it was my last year of my command tour. It was going phenomenally well for me Stephen had basically become a full time parent to allow me to live in the mess two nights a week so I could work ‘til midnight. I was working silly stupid hours to prove tot eh AIR FORCE that I could do it. And everyone was saying this is your year for Wing Commander this is so you, de de de. And it is a long story about what happened the year previous to the career break. But the career break was my survival in the AIR FORCE. I took the career break in order to stay in the AIR FORCE not in order to look at leaving the AIR FORCE. It was either I had to leave the AIR FORCE or I just had to not be in work and not being in work was a career break and so it was a retention incentive for me, it was I’d really like to come back to the AIR FORCE but I really can’t be in the AIR FORCE right now, I cannot conceive of moving, my little girl was just about to start school in Sep and his was May time and I thought I need to spend time with her before she starts school. Because I didn’t have a good connection with her and I need not to be moving schools, moving nurseries, moving house, moving job finding new friends with Stephen away in Pakistan for a year. I don’t want to be moving her 2/3 months before she starts school. And have to get her into a school where she has no friends, because the nursery she is at there are 10 or 12 of them from the nursery people who she has been with since she was 11 months old were going to school with her. And I thought it was just too unfair on my little girl and my little boy and I hardly knew my little boy, and he’d fall over and hurt himself and he would go running to Daddy saying Daddy, Daddy, Daddy. And Daddy was his centre and I wasn’t and thought I don’t want that. That is how my mum was with us and never have rescued that relationship with my mum and I didn’t want that for my children so I thought if I am going to stay in the AIR FORCE I have to take a career break so that I could fall in love with the AIR FORCE again. Cause I wasn’t getting much out of the AIR FORCE, so yes I took my career break, I was loving my career break and I was looking forward to what I was going to do and I was looking forward to finding out from the deskie where I was going next, I was looking forward to my promotion board. I was told this was your promotion board and I thought if I come 2nd, 3rd or 4th, there is a good chance this year, I know I’m not flogging a dead horse. Quite happy to go back for another year somewhere until I get that Wing Commander promotion and or I am very happy to be offered Wing Commander promotion and then come back, I didn’t even enter my head, it didn’t even enter my head to leave the AIR FORCE not at all. I saw the career break as an offer from the AIR FORCE to say “We value you, we do want you back we don’t you to leave. Go away and do what you want to do as a family and we look forward to welcoming you back when you come back. And I did not expect to find that I had been missed off the career board,

## C

They didn’t put you on the board?

## Jennifer

They didn’t board me. (Gasp) That’s the issue.

## C

Oh my Gosh.

## Jennifer

Do you want the full story on that? Not this year but last I was also not boarded when I should have been, When I phoned up and asked “Oh, where did I come on the board” They said “Oh I’m sorry you weren’t boarded” and I was like what, how can that happen I’ve been in this business for so long, how can you not board me. Well they said we decided this year that if you didn’t have a qualifying OOA in rank then you couldn’t be boarded and I said but I have a qualifying OOA in rank and there is, and they said no you don’t and I said er well what was Kandahar in 2007 and they went “Oh I don’t think we looked far enough back in your file”. I said “best you do look back far enough in my file” and they tried to talk me out of it. Oh it was an acting Squadron Ldr job, and I said it was an acting Squadron Ldr job but I was in a rank ranged Wing Commander job I was an acting Squadron Ldr in a Wing Commander post an SO1 Wing Commander rank ranged post as an acting Squadron Ldr. I said the 1\* that wrote my report, if you look at my report said “Until writing this report I had no idea that Fisher was an acting squadron leader in fact she acts just like a fully-fledged experienced Ldr” And I also said the year after I asked if I could do another OOA Squadron Ldr because it hadn’t been in rank as I got promoted shortly after that and I was told there aren’t enough Squadron Ldr OOAs to go round, it has been proved, by giving you another OOA you would be denying someone else promotion and it would be unfair for us to give you one and we will make a note on your file to highlight to people that this one counts as your substantive qualifying OOA. And when I pointed this out to them a year ago, they said you’re right you should have been boarded. So you would have probably only come 6th or 7th we are definitely only promoting one or two we’ve got maybe 3 maybe 4 we are not going down to 7 and he said “we could try to retrospectively board you but it could throw up some negativity round you, that you just don’t need you have another year in your command tour, and you are doing so well in your command tour that if you continue or do better than you have currently done, next year is your year next year is when you will really shine and you will probably come in the top two or three and get promoted and for pragmatic reasons shall we let it go that you weren’t boarded and next year you will come in at the top, you will come in as a first time look and you’ll like get promoted”. And I thought yeh, fair enough. I didn’t get it in writing didn’t think I needed to thought it was quite pragmatic so then when I was on my career break and the board is usually in March, so mid-feb I rang up to say hi it’s me I just want to check that you haven’t forgotten about me because I am on career break for running for promotion because it is really important that I know at the moment the board doesn’t know I am on career break and there is no reason why they should know because I stopped on a report, a normal reporting time, I stopped work a week after a normal reporting point. I said nobody else is being judged as to what new job that they’re in and struggling at or floundering at so the board shouldn’t even know I am a career break, they shouldn’t even care cause I am gaining skill sets that other people aren’t gaining. Cause being at home is a completely different skill set isn’t it? So anyway I phoned up to say please remember me and they said Oh we can’t discuss anything because the board has been brought forward it is going through as we speak and the deskie actually said that its going through this week and we can’t discuss it with you and I thought ok I will leave it well alone, she didn’t say and we are not boarding you cause I could have then said eh can you look again cause you can sneak this in, you had better sort it out. she just sent me a message saying we can’t discuss it with you, she didn’t say that you are not being boarded, so I waited patiently for 3 weeks and then I phoned, cause I hadn’t heard anything, I phoned up the deskie and I got the deskie assistant and I said hi Sarah its Jennifer, and she said “Hi Jenifer how are you it’s really great to hear from you, I bet you are wondering how you did on the board” and it’s been such a long time now, she has been with me all these years and she said let me have a look for you and she came back and went Oh I am really sorry you weren’t boarded. And I said “What” “do you want me to read your jacket?” Yes please and do you know what it said, has yet to deploy in rank OOA (GASP)

## C

Again?

## Jennifer

Again, yep, again. And I was like “WHAT I have, what about 2007?”, and she said “I know” “do you remember this happened last year” “yes I know all I can suggest is you talk to the desk officer about it.” Who was away on stress dedadedadeda, so I got to speak to her Wing Commander and the Wing Commander said to me “Do you really feel that you can be competitive with your fellow Officers who have not, who have not chosen to take a career break and do you feel, you have taken periods of maternity it was your choice to have a family, it was your choice to take a career break. And do you really feel that you can be competitive? Cause I think what is best for you is to take a demanding staff tour to reprove yourself to the AIR FORCE on return from your career break”, and that is what he had written on my jacket for the board, and that is why I didn’t get boarded.

## C

And that was the phone call?

## Jennifer

That phone call lasted 3 days. Because I was so incensed cause I was chatting to him and someone came to me and said “is this your little girl?” and I’d been sat on the floor in this sports centre for a half hr swim lesson. And I was supposed to be on the phone to him for 15-20minutes and he got me really angry and I was chatting away to him and My daughter had come out of the swimming pool and another mammy had recognised her and went “is your mummy not here?” and she said “no”. And she had got her showered and changed and dressed and brought her out and found me in the sports centre to find me in the sports centre and the look on my face was like “oh my frig how long have I been on this phone call?” and I said I am really sorry Sir my little girl needs me I have to go right now and we hung up sort of thing and then I phoned him back the next day and we continued the chat and we must have been on, and I couldn’t record nay of it because my phone wasn’t, I was wanting to put it on loud speaker and record it on the IPad but I never got any of it this recorded but he said to me on several occasions “do you really, how can you possibly believe because you have taken a career break and because you have” and I said “I’m sorry but I’m married and part of married life is providing children and it is not like I am married to another female and we could choose between us, I said it is my duty to have the children, it’s not like my husband can have the children and he was like “yes, but it was your choice to have children” and I was what planet are you on, and I said “yes I understand that but a lot of people have their children after 5 or 6 years now and you are talking to them at the 16-17 yr. point and having had their children, I was unlucky enough to have my children quite late in life at the sort of 15-16 yr. point, I’ve done 20 years it is not like you are comparing me to someone who is in their 13th-14th yr. and hasn’t done their 16 yrs., I’ve done 20 yrs., so subtract my 2 yrs. of maternity and my one year of career break and you still can’t compare me to the people who are.. and I just honestly he wasn’t budging and in the end he said “would you like to speak to my Wing Commander counterpart he can explain to you exactly how I feel” and I said “no actually, I will speak to your Group Captain” or well he is not around for the next 6 weeks he is on extended leave” and I said “fine I will wait to speak to your Group Captain in 6 weeks and I waited and waited and waited and I knew the Group Captain was getting into his office I think on the Tues morning he was due back, I guess he was in he be in at 8 o’clock in the morning and at 9.30 I got this telephone call from this Group Captain saying “I think these things are best done in person, I’d like to bring your desk officer up to see you, when would be a convenient time to come and visit you at home?” and we are what Lincolnshire from High Wycombe, quite a long way away and none of them live up here and he drove all the way up met up with me, and spent a couple of hours in my front lounge and drove away again. And tried to talk me out of wanting a retrospective board, cause it would be embarrassing for them wouldn’t it? And Service Complaint territory I guess.

## C

Yes.

## Jennifer

He was trying to say I don’t understand why you want a retrospective board. I’ve read all the reports, there was 14 people put forward for the Flight Operations board and out of those 14 I’ve read the person who came first, in fact I have read the person who came first and the person that came second, and I’ve read the person who came 14th and the person that came 7th. And he said out of all of those I feel yes you should have been boarded I would say you would fall somewhere between 7th and 14th and then I’d place you smack between them and place you10th. And I said “Sir, that is very nice of you however, there is elements in my report that you might not comprehend in the same way that an operator would understand and it is not for you to say whether I would have come 7th or 14th. I am happy for you to say yes you should have been read and you would have been somewhere in the top 14 that is where your part of the decision making process stops. It is not for you to say where in that 14 I would have come and I was really quite hardnosed with him, this was to the Group Captain. I value your input and this is what you think but an operator might think differently. And I need to understand where I stand because if I truly am somewhere between 7 and 14 then I am not going to flog a dead horse and stay around in the AIR FORCE flogging a dead horse I don’t mind staying in the AIR FORCE and doing a nice fun Squadron Ldr job somewhere and pull my weight but I am not going to be sent off to do a really tough demanding Squadron Ldr to reprove myself back to the AIR FORCE when first of all I don’t feel like I need to reprove myself to anyone and secondly I am not going to reprove myself back to the AIR FORCE and do I demanding tour if I am literally flogging a dead horse.

I respect my family and at some point I’ve put my family second and all this time, the whole 20 yrs. I’ve put my family second and I am not prepared to do that if I am flogging a dead horse. The Group Captain totally got it but he, still didn’t understand, was still saying “do you really need to have the retrospective board because can’t you see that we do value you, here are 8 amazing job opportunities and you can anyone of these that you want and that shows you how much we care about you” and I said “no, I need to see more than that” I said “you have told me now that I should have been boarded and I should have been in the top 14 now Sir put your money where your mouth is you put me forward for a retrospective ““Oh I’m not sure if the 1 star will go with it, just because you want one doesn’t mean they will decide to do it. We don’t like putting out 1stars out” and I said “no, it’s not me telling the 1 star that I would like, I said Sir you need to understand exactly why I should have been boarded and you need to go back I need to give you information that you can go back and say in your opinion you believe I should have been boarded and it is the right thing to do to retrospectively board me not that xxxx, woops, Jennifer somebody else says that she wants to be boarded, that’s not the deal. The deal is you want to find out what makes me tick you’ve come to find out to see where I sit and I can’t decide I’m on a cross roads now I’ve loved my career break and following that phone call, that Wing Commanders phone call I decided to see what does the civilian world have to offer. If the military doesn’t really, if the military values that little then what does the civilian world have to offer.

And at that point I had bought the oils for my own personal use I’d loved using them, I’d told a few people about them, I’d enrolled someone by accident because they had said I need these oils and I’d said there is a button here somewhere that says add someone to your team so let’s see what happens and we filled it out and she got her oils and I thought, that is not difficult I can do that so the following day after that phone call was when I thought right I’ve got 2 months I’ve got until April, this was Feb so I’ve got all of Mar and all of April to prove, to dig around, to throw myself in full time in to earthworks and see if A this is something I enjoy and B that I could earn money from. Or don’t really need to earn that much money if I am on a pension cause I only have to top it up. And so yeh the very next day I organised my first class, I did loads of training, I spent a week going to peoples classes, learning and getting the patter and I did my very first class and I had 11 people at the class and 9 of them enrolled straight off the bat and I got a few more that month and I became the top enroller out of 12 000 people in Ryan’s team I was the top enroller in March, by the end of April I was top of the leader board as no 1, in fact by the first week of May I have retained being the No1 leader in Europe for the global convention incentive trip which is in Sept in the States, since the first week of May, not the completion started on the first of march, my first class was 20 th of march from the first of March people had to earn points from enrolling people until the 31 June and anybody who gets a certain number of points get third place prize, anyone who gets above that, this level of pints gets second place prize and anybody who gets above this level of points gets first place and by the end of April I had guaranteed myself a third place prize which was one convention ticket, about 500PVs which is about $500 of products and $500 worth towards flight tickets and I knew that I needed to win, I wanted to win, the two tickets, the $2000 and the 1000 product points, and the 1000$ worth of products. Cause I wanted to prove it but also because I like being at the top of leader boards. (laughter) It’s not for any finance at all, I did it all wholesale. I went right you can’t try and learn a new job, you can’t learn a new job, you can’t prove a company works and try to prove it works financially as well, you can’t put yourself under that level of pressure and I didn’t need the money so I thought right I will do everything at wholesale price then if I do a class and none enrols it doesn’t matter cause I am not trying to make money I am just trying to see if it works I took the pressure completely off me. Did everything wholesale price and ended up at the top of the leader board out of the entire, all the European wellness advocates. In the whole of Europe I am number one for the global incentive and I started on the 20th of March with my first class. And by the first of May I had my first place ticket. And was at the top of the leader board and I have remained at the top of the leader board even though in June I only enrolled one person, I found a builder and I started to train her to do the same thing but I had enough going on to keep me up there.

The collateral damage of doing that and the fire underneath me was “right then Wing Commander” it is going to be 6-8 weeks before this Group Captain comes to see me so let’s see what I can do for those 2 months. And I literally I did two jobs, I was waking up at 6.30 in the morning and doing an hour of Facebook and other things for earthworks, take the kiddies to school. I would then work through the whole of the 9.30 to 3 o’clock on earthworks, sending e-mails talking to people, doing one to one, doing classes and then pick up the kids get them to bed by 7.30 and then by 8.30 I would start again and I’d do all the social media I would draft all the e-mail. By about 9, 10 o’clock I would stop sending e-mails but I would continue drafting them, then I would probably draft another 40 e-mails independently to each person specific e-mail topped and tailed, hi mate how are you doing are you interest in deddade and then I would send them the following morning in that hr before the kiddies got up so that the people weren’t getting them in the middle of the night, so I would work ‘til 2 and 2 am was my cut off and I’d start the next day and I had 4/4 and a half hours sleep each day and I did that, I did that just to see if what would happen and I ended up going on the you know that lavender trip I went on?, that competition started on the 1 Dec and it ran out on the 30 April and I came into the competition on the 20 March and by the end of April I was in the top 35, only 35 people won to go and I came 33 and that is how I got that Bulgarian all-inclusive all paid for incentive trip.

So this Group Captain was sat there saying, “so you are at a cross roads” And I said yeh, Then the post man arrived, can you believe it the post man arrived and brought me this certificate from deters saying congratulations on your elite status and by the way here is your director you have by passed that but we had better send it to you anyway and I opened it and went, “Oh I didn’t know they did this I’ve got a certificate” and he said what is that and I said oh so following the phone call from your Wing Commander I decided to see what the civilian world has got to offer for it. And I decided to do this oil business, network marketing, cause I can keep that going with our without the AIR FORCE and I decided to do it full time to see what would happen, and he said how is it going? Well I am currently no 1 in the global standings in the Europe and I said look and I logged on look see, xxxx woops, Jennifer somebody else, on the top of the leader board, and he was right, and how is it going? And I said I love it, here have a sniff of the oils, alright ok (unintelligible) so he realised that I had been pushed out of the AIR FORCE and I had found my niche by accident really from this Wing Commander imbecile that was so arrogant towards me that, oh gosh, if it had been someone that knew me there’s no way that they would have treated me like that, there must be so many people that these PMA officers don’t know and if they treat people that they don’t know the way they treated me then how many more people are going to leave. I actually said to this Group Captain “you can’t afford to lose any more people like me the Flight operations specialisation is under manned you have lost and I reeled off all the names of the people that they had lost in the last year and I also said what jobs are you offering me and he said this job and I said yeh, Andy Hammonds did that that last time, oh so and so did that one, I’ve spoken to them, all these people have been lost to the AIR FORCE this year. All these jobs the reason you are offering me them, your telling me you giving me the best jobs its only because you’ve lost all these people and you have all these gaps. Anyway so I said no I am at a cross roads I’m not at a cross roads wondering if I should leave the AIR FORCE I am at a cross roads wondering if I should bother to come back to the AIR FORCE. And at the moment the only way I would, and he said what if you didn’t get retrospectively boarded, I said I would definitely leave. And he said you can’t pull that over a one star, you can’t threaten a one star with if you don’t retrospectively board me I’ll leave. No, I said that is your wording that is not what I have said. What I have said is I have not got enough information to make my decision about whether to stay in the AIR FORCE or not without that boarding because without that boarding I don’t know if I am flogging dead horse or not. So without that boarding my best option appears to be leave. With that information I may be able to decide, and I love the AIR FORCE, I’d love to stay with the AIR FORCE but not under the current situation. The problem is that conversation happened a couple of months ago and I still haven’t got any results for a retrospective boarding and every few weeks that goes by I am seeing more and more opportunity to stay out of the AIR FORCE. IF they had come back to me a week later and said to me right here you, you actually came fifth we are reaching down to third there is a chance you might get promoted next year. We will give you a nice job and we will see what happens, duhduhduh. We really want you back, then I might have been lured to go back but not anymore. Not now I have done Bulgaria not now that I have won the global incentive not now that I have go this big team of people underneath me that are loving the oils. Civilian life has been smiling at me and the AIR FORCE has been ignoring me, I feel totally ignored actually, I do and money is not my motivation it’s how I feel about what I do. And whether I feel like I am giving any benefit to anybody and whether people respect what I can offer them the AIR FORCE has not given me any degree of respect that they value what I can offer to them, none what so ever. I haven’t had a weekly phone call from somebody saying hey we still really value, I know it has taken even longer because there is a 1 star on compassionate leave and we don’t know when he is coming back and but let’s start talking about where we are going to put you in Sept on the off chance that something comes through sooner, because, they expect me to choose one of the jobs, I’ve turned down 6 of the 8 and there is 2 left behind, one of them is a bit of an insult but it is co-located with husband and the other would be as boring as …. I don’t know what.

So I don’t know if I want to go back but I am too scared to phone up because I want to know what the board says, somebody said to me, I went to a funeral. I don’t know if you know Penny? Penny who died, yeh? Well I went to her funeral, well let’s not call it a funeral, the funeral happened somewhere else. I went to her celebration of life. It was amazing, do you want to see … I know it’s not part of your thing but, bright yellow which was her favourite

## C

It’s fine. I’ll start crying.

## Jennifer

And then inside she loved her colours and stuff, and in side

## C

You are going to make me cry Jennifer.

## Jennifer

Oh sorry.

## C

Oh she looked beautiful, yeh.

## Jennifer

Yeh, I know. We loved her didn’t we. Sorry, sorry mate I’m crying as well. It was amazing, amazing, amazing brightly coloured happy event just exactly how she would have wanted it.

## C

Hmm

## Jennifer

Sorry matey. It is good to let the emotions out, I’ve done lots of crying. I was helping her right to the end. I was doing all the aroma touch and I introduced her to all the oils and it was making her feel a lot better and I just didn’t get to her in time unfortunately. So I’ve been kicking myself.

## C

It happened so quickly. It all happened so quickly so ..

## Jennifer

Yes. I can’t remember what I was talking about now. I’ve lost the thread …

## C

You are waiting for a response.

## Jennifer

Oh that is right, there was at the thing nearly everyone at the thing, was saying what are you doing Jennifer, what are you doing Jennifer? And I was like well I want out of the AIR FORCE but I kinda want to know If I phone them up now and say right what are the PvR rates and how long are you going to hold me to come out and they are going to bother this 1 star who is on compassionate leave if you are, fair enough, if you are going to come out. And I want to know that result I know I would always regret phoning up to give my 6 months notice, I don’t even know if it is 18 month’s notice, I don’t even know if I am on career break if they are going to be willing for me to just not come back. I think I’ve got every grounds to say, “Look, if you think I’m coming back after the way you have treated me and if you think I am putting my uniform on for one day you have got another thing coming.” I think we will take the dates of not being read on the board and my phone call discussing why I should have been read as the date of my 6 months’ notice and I will just extend into my career break until my notice has gone and then you can put me on full pay while I do my resettlement and I will say nothing more negative about it. Or you could force me to come back and that is the day I will spend the first few days on the laptop writing my service complaint. That’s how I am feeling. So some of them were at the funeral were saying, why don’t you just accept Wing Commander promotion if they offer it to you and do it for one day then PVR. But they might make me work for 6 months or 18 months if I do that and I don’t need to do 2 years to get my pension, I can do that through earthworks easily and if a PvR I lose 10% it works out at like at 45 quid a week. I’ve bringing in more than that with earthworks, I think I brought £1500 in, in March and April without trying to make money and they were saying, you can say “Yes I was a Wing Commander in the AIR FORCE, Wing Commander retired”, but rank doesn’t mean that much to me and even to the Group Captain said what if you didn’t get Wing Commander? And I said I don’t need to be a Wing Commander to be in the AIR FORCE, I actually as long as I have got a decent job but to be honest most Squadron Ldr jobs now are a bit dull they don’t offer me a challenge they don’t, I like learning new skills I like challenges I like feeling like I’ve got something new to offer I like sorting out problems I like taking a squadron that is a complete mess and sorting them out, I like a challenge. You put me into a job which is just a Squadron Ldr job, that’s why I want Wing Commander jobs because they are interesting exciting new knowledge, it’s a challenge. If you can find me some Squadron Ldr jobs that have that I would be quite happy I don’t need Wing Commander pay it not the money that interests me, it’s the challenge and the interest that I love and that is why I joined the AIR FORCE. I don’t even need to be a Wing Commander, I can’t be a Squadron Ldr, I mean a Flight Leiutenant, Flight Leiutenant would drive me up the wall I was not good at Flight Leiutenant. I was not good at organising structuring how to do something. I am great at coming up with an idea I like to pass it on to a good WO or Flight Leiutenant and go “This is my idea” and they will go “Oh we can do this this and this” And I’d go Really? Ok crack on, good I can’t come up with that bit myself and then when they come back to me and go “there that is what we can do”, I’ll go brilliant I am really good at broadcasting it telling it to everybody, I can work out all the actions we need to take we need to do that, do that and that. And then I will need the Flight Leiutenant to step back again to finish it off because I’m like ok, you finish it off, I need a new challenge that is not challenging to me anymore now. And so Squadron Ldr was wonderful for me, I loved the rank of Squadron Ldr. I think some Wing Commander roles get back into the here and the here for a Group Captain who is doing up here and down there and I am not sure that Wing Commander would suit me that much, I think I’d be a pretty shit Wing Commander, I’d probably be alright, the troops would love me and I’d probably have loads of fun but as far as the upper line I don’t think the Group Captain would be that impressed to be fair so I think they say you always get promoted to your level of inability and I was, I’ve always felt like a fraud, I don’t know if you did? Whenever I got posted I’d think God this is the year they are going to find out I am a fraud and I can’t do it. and then I can do it and then it’s onto the next thing, Oh I am going to be found out this time, this tour they are going to find out. How on earth did she get here and then somehow I survive it and I get a nice report. And then No, definitely can’t do it, this is the year that they discover. I think a lot of people think like that but I definitely feel I bit scared of like, what on earth will they discover if they promote me to Wing Commander, I’d be like, look just ignore these ..

So I don’t think I need them, it would have been nice, but I don’t think I can put on uniform anymore. I don’t think I can drop my kids off at nursery at 8 in the morning and still be late for work and then pick them up at 6 at night and still have left early and feel guilty that I’m not doing my bit for the AIR FORCE. And not to be able to enjoy the mess in the evenings. That’s with a young family I think what people forget is that the AIR FORCE is wonderful because of the camaraderie, and the OM and the social and there’s this and that the sporting activities and all the expeds that you can go on and once you’ve got a young family you have to put that on hold for about 5 or 6 years and suddenly none of the benefits of the AIR FORCE are available to you. Because they are not available to you because you feel guilty about being at work let alone going off on adventurous training, so you don’t go on adventurous training because you are going to spend that time with your kids aren’t you? Cause they are not available to you, suddenly the AIR FORCE if you are not motivated by money is a very dull place to be. Because it’s actually more frustrating than the civilian world because you are actually going all these things are available to me and I can’t actually make use of them, take those offers, I can’t do those things very easily. Do you agree?

## C

Yeh, I understand what you are saying. We’ve got 2 things I want to follow up actually. First of all this boarding, is that a principle thing now, that is really rubbing you the wrong way?

## Jennifer

Sorry?

## C

Is it a matter of principle? You don’t want the Wing Commander but the fact that they didn’t board you.

## Jennifer

The fact that they didn’t board me, the fact that the deskie hadn’t pay attention to see what had happened the previous year the fact that I’d rung up to say you haven’t forgotten about me and she didn’t ask why or even look at me. The fact that I’d been missed off twice in a row and I had worked so hard to get Wing Commander everything I did, my husband sacrificed a lot for me to work really ridiculously hard at being a good Squadron Ldr in my command tour. And I got a superb report and for that not to be acknowledge was pretty rough and without having the career break and not being offered a Wing Commander probably would have just kept going because I didn’t know what I was missing out on. The career break was kind of enforced and there are certain Wing Commander jobs that I would like but I don’t think they are open to me, I don’ think .. I just think if they want to send me off somewhere to reprove myself or they want to give me a Wing Commander job let say right you are off to Pakistan for 9 months, which is what in our specialisation on promotion you tend to go off for 9 months to a yr. on promotion. They give you that double whammy and you accept it because you are promoted. I don’t know if I want to go and do that to my kids, so it’s not that I don’t want Wing Commander it’s that I don’t think the AIR FORCE can offer me what it is that I need now. Because I have looked at the civilian world, because of the way they have treated me. Does that make sense?

## C

Yes,

## Jennifer

And I wouldn’t have looked at the civilian world quite so vigorously if I had been treated a little bit more fairly. The thing that annoys me the most is that the Wing Commander, the Group Captain was lovely once he got his head around where I was coming from the Wing Commander was so arrogant he was so rude to me on the phone so backward the principle is that I kind of want people to investigate because I am sure if you retrospectively boarding someone there has to be good reason. Someone is going to have to have written a letter and looking into exactly what and why and I kind of want that Wing Commander to have at least have been interviewed or something to ensure he doesn’t treat anybody else that the same way so I guess it is principle really. I don’t want him to get away with it, because I’ve heard somebody else had something similar but I can’t remember who it was. Somebody else I spoke to recently said they had exactly the same issue pretty much. You’ll probably want to know who that is cause you’ll want to speak to them, I’m sure.

## C

Yeh, I have a friend going through a similar...

## Jennifer

Have you? You’ve got a friend going through it too?

## C

Yeh, I’ll tell you about it after. I’m sure she won’t mind having a chat actually because she was on maternity and that is when it

## Jennifer

A bad experience when talking to PMA, not PMA can’t call them that anymore, personnel.

## C

Ok, so. It’s a bit you haven’t actually decided to leave you are kinda in that...

## Jennifer

I am on the fence waiting for, I’m getting annoyed because I need to make a decision. I can’t make a decision until the results of the promotion board, because I don’t know really how I feel about the AIR FORCE until that result comes out. And I don’t feel like I can make the decision and I’m thinking September is coming quite soon and I am not going to be bullied into a really rubbish job in September just because September has come round. I need to know am I delaying my career break, am I coming back to the AIR FORCE am I promoted am I not promoted, does the AIR FORCE even love or care about me at the moment. I’m just...

## C

How is all this making you feel at the moment? All this uncertainty?

## Jennifer

It’s awful absolutely awful. I get quite frustrated sometimes I get frustrated with the

kids sometimes I get angry and upset about things for no real reason and when I sit down and think about it it’s just because you kind of need to know. You need to know I am not like a child anymore I’m 44 years old, I’ve got a husband who is away from home all the time, and he’s away from home for 3 weeks at a time. He comes home for a short weekend. I know a short weekend sounds ridiculous but he comes home on a sat morning and he leaves again on a sun afternoon so we get a day and a half off with him, we get one night with him. And he’s knackered and tired so he wants to go to bed early and we don’t really get to see him. He came home last night to see my little girl in the theatre in her first show and then went back on the train that evening back to work. So it’s there is no normality in our lives unless I stay static and I am not sure am I moving the kiddies. I mean Sept is a really big deal isn’t it? If I am going to be making a decision to move jobs then I need to have got My daughter a place in a school, I don’t need to be moving house...and starting a new job

## C

You are within 90 days, aren’t you now if it’s Sept.

## Jennifer

Yeh,

## C

90 day notice to move.

## Jennifer

90 days’ notice to move. And I’ve been offered 2 jobs but I haven’t said which one. I was offered 8 but I have turned down 6 I’ve got 2 left but one of them I could keep the kiddies where I am but it would be boring, it would be just be a case of if the AIR FORCE is going to force me to come back for 6 months or 18 months while I do my PvR then at least I’ve got a job at Lincolnshire and I can leave the kiddies where I am and I can drop the kiddies off at 8 o’clock in the morning and I will pick them up at 6 o’clock in the evening and AIR FORCE can have my time, however long it takes to get to Lincolnshire having dropped them at 8 and whatever time I need to leave in order to pick them up at 6. That means we lose swimming at 7.30 on a Tuesday morning, My daughter loses ballet on a Monday after school, she loses swimming and gymnastics on a Thursday afternoon after school. She loses street dance on a Friday after school. Do you know what I mean? And if I choose the job down at PJHQ then I would be collocated with Stephen but it a week, 7 days of nights, followed by one day swing shift, 7 days of days, followed by 7 days of standby admin normal 9 – 5 sort of thing so I could drop the kiddies off an go in, followed by 2 weeks off. Which sounds great until you work out the maths, so you are missing 3 weekends in a row where you are not with the kids where your husbands off so you are going in at 6 o’clock in the night and working right through ‘til 6 o’clock in the morning. Then I would have to come home have breakfast with the kids, take them to school. Get home for 930 go to bed, get up at 3, so I am only getting my 6 hours pick them up from school, feed them. Have Stephen come home from work to say bye bye for me to go back off to work again. And then to do days it would be 6 o’clock in the morning ‘til 6 pm in the evening. Get home at 7, so I am not going to see them, half an hr when I get back home and then a week of days, so I could see them either end then sort of and then 2 weeks off. It works out as 2 days extra, so in those two weeks off you have to put your leave passes in, there is a formula which makes you take your leave in 2 or 3 day batches over those 2 weeks so you end up with 2 extra days a year doing that system. It sounds like 2 weeks off would be absolutely amazing but speaking to people doing it you are absolutely threaders after 6 months, absolutely knackered.

## C

Well its operations, it’s almost like being on operations isn’t it?

## Jennifer

Well it is the operations desk, yes, well yes it’s a squadron Ldr, you are doing a Operations Officer job a basic Flight Lieutenant - Flying Officer operations job but has to be a Squadron Ldr because of the nature of the information coming across the desk. And you are tied to a room with no windows all night, can you imagine? So… and having to now find a school that has a space for My daughter cause we are inside x number of days and you have to apply way in advance really early don’t you? And yeh …. it could be a school quite some distance away …… It’s not even feasible to discuss that job anymore because they have taken it …. In fact I am going to leave it ‘til they contact me and say well now I can make a decision but now there is no chance I can take any job where I am not left at home. Because I have now not got enough time to start planning what school, getting My daughter accustomed to the school and getting used to the area and making new friends over the summer holidays. Can you imagine ripping her out of school and putting her into a brand new school?

## C

yeh, it’s got to be

## Jennifer

yeh, at 6 years old I don’t think so.

## C

I am gonna, I am going to move us along a little bit. Cause we are only at question 3. (Laughter)

## Jennifer

Oh sorry, do you need it all or is it superfluous.

## C

Jennifer it’s brilliant it is all great stuff actually. But how, the question is about your job as an officer. So how would you describe your job as an officer in the RAF?

## Jennifer

How would I describe my job, what, what do you mean?

## C

So if you think of your most challenging job, that you did, how would you describe it to other people? What words would you use?

## Jennifer

Most challenging job? I don’t really understand you are going to have to give me some more examples of what you mean. Like the most challenging job for me would be something that would be boring because it didn’t give me the manpower. Do you mean

What did you enjoy because it gave me the challenges that I was looking for in the AIR FORCE, do you mean?

## C

Yeh, so if you think of the hardest job that you have done, why was it hard what was it about that job that made it difficult or conversely it challenged you and you thought this is fantastic.

## Jennifer

Yeh, I have never had a job that I disliked or found so challenging that I just didn’t

like it or got frustrated with it. I always find jobs that I love so much that the hardest part is

that I throw myself into them and I commit way more energy and enthusiasm than most people and I find myself agitated when people say its 5.30 not I’m off home and I’m like “What” I wasn’t even considering going home until like 8 o’clock because I wanted to get this finished. Or you send an e-mail to somebody and they are like I’ll get round to that in 2 days. And I’m like I’ve just stayed behind in work a couple of hours later than everybody else to get everything done that people have asked of me so that I am not delaying them in their task and I send something to you and you…. For me I have always worked silly hours so my challenge is walking away from stuff and saying it can wait. The AIR FORCE doesn’t look after me or pay me enough to actually mean that I should be finishing at 8,9,10 o’clock at night. Obviously I am taking on too many things. I guess that’s the challenge for me in the AIR FORCE because I have loved the jobs so much I’ve not seen it at work, I’ve enjoyed it, I’ve enjoyed sorting out issues I think, I think I don’t want to sound too arrogant but I think bosses always loved me because they knew they could give me something and they knew they were going to get so much effort and time put into it. I feel that is why when I went on maternity and I was quite poorly for 4 or 5 weeks of my maternity and the boss was just stay at home, take your time, stay at home, come in if you feel fine but don’t come in if you don’t. I think all bosses feel that they have to do that but my boss really didn’t care because he knew he already had a pound of flesh from me. Does that make sense?

## C

Can you give me an example of when you put that effort in, if you like?

## Jennifer

During my command tour at Lincolnshire, I knew it was my last tour. My third year in rank I knew it was the final Command Tour tick I knew it was the final report for promotion towards Wing Commander. I’d been told that it was looking pretty good. So my last year I became President of the Mess Committee of the Officers Mess and I took a room and I said this room is for President of the Mess Committee to stay and you don’t get charged for it unless you use it. So it was like a room allocated for President of the Mess Committee and so I wasn’t having to pay for it unless I stayed in it. And If I stayed in it I warned in and I warned out for that one room but I knew I could put all my stuff in there. My No1s my No5s I could have a basic wash kit, basic stuff there I had some clean shirts so that I could use it when I wanted to because I had that facility I actually Stephen would ring me at like 10 o’clock and I would be like “weeelllll” and he would be like “right you either get in the car and come home now so I can see you before you go to bed or why don’t you go and use your room in the mess and get a good night’s sleep because you are not having to drive home get a decent breakfast before you have to report in and you will be able to go to met brief, cause I used to miss met brief every morning cause I was dropping the kids off at nursery. So Stephen would drop the kids off at nursery but he was jumping on the train to go down to London cause he would normally leave at 6, so he was then saying to his boss I won’t be in ‘til 10, cause he would drop the kiddies off at 8 then jump on the train to London. So that was quite tough for us as a family because I was putting all this effort, and we knew it was a means to an end to get our promotion to Wing rese, and so probably twice a week every week I would stay in the mess for a night in order to achieve all my work. I had 2 secondary duties I was the President of the Mess Committee of the Officers Mess I had my Command Tour I was rewriting and teaching everybody how to do the aerodrome manual which was an additional task on top of my normal day to day. I took on Barkston, Siston and Woodvale. I went up to Woodvale to completely take over what they were doing and bring them into the 21st century. And I was doing all of that and it was requiring at least 2 days a week working ‘til 10 or mid-night and 2 nights in the Officers Mess a week and staying on a Friday night late not drinking but being there to be the President of the Mess Committee to do social events and things. And I was volunteering for every social event I was doing hosting at the lodge I was doing hosting at the, they would ask for personnel to have the cadets hosting you for practice. And I volunteered to do all those things which took me away from the family got the most amazing report which was my tactics for getting an amazing report just to make sure that when I went off on career break that final report was everything I needed and then for it not to be boarded it was just that was just 3 years of work and I didn’t get boarded it was just criminal.

## C

How did that make you feel?

## Jennifer

Gutted absolutely gutted. I bawled my eyes out actually, Sarah told me you weren’t boarded and I said why, and she read out what it was yeh ok I will need to speak to the Wing Commander about that. And I put the phone down and I bawled my eyes out it was just not a there was me saying I think I should be a Wing Commander and there I was bawling my eyes out like some manic women that was never anywhere close to being a Wing Commander its not like what Wing Commanders do is it? I bawled my eyes out because it was like 3 years of and Stephen delayed his Lt Colonel promotion by 2 years because of him being the primary parent his report really wasn’t that good because he had to drop the kids every morning and he had to pick them up every night and he wasn’t playing ball at all, his promotion was delayed by 2 yrs. so that, he said, I took the hit when I was on maternity, he was willing to take the hit for my return to work with my command tour. So he did a 2 yr., he took the equivalent of 2 rounds of maternity career hit for me. And for our family sacrifices for not to be even looked at. Yeh, it was pretty gutting, really gutting. And that is probably where the fire came from I was so gutted to be reboarded I have now got the opportunity to re boarded I am not willing to be jeopardise that reboarding cause I just want to know in my own heart where I stand with all these muppets that I felt I was, well there you go .. I’m still wondering. People say what are you going to do now and I say I don’t know, I don’t know how I feel about the AIR FORCE until I know whether I’ll get boarded or not. And I don’t even know how I feel about faffing around for a year waiting to be boarded I’ve got nothing to show, it was so critical I got boarded, can you imagine next year what has she been doing since May 2015, in March 2016 they are not expecting a file to be on May 2016. So when they look at where is my May 2016 report they are going to go where is her May 16 report, she hasn’t got one what has she been doing. Oh she has been on career break, oh well. Yeh know it was so critical that I got read without them realising there was anything weird or special going on. It was so critical.

## C

Would you have taken the career break if you had known this would happen?

## Jennifer

No. No chance at all. No I was assured that the career beak, Jenniferly this is the perfect time to take a career break there will be, it will be complete invisible to the board, the board won’t know what you are doing post May 2015 therefore what you do is completely up to you. It will be completely invisible to the board you will be boarded before anybody even realises you are on the career break, it won’t make a difference to the AIR FORCE dee de de d and I spoke to my Wing Commander and I said is this going to hurt me? Is this going to hurt me or should I just stay where I am, I can probably survive other people do single parents do they survive maybe I can just have a job in the local area, maybe I can move my family other people do it maybe I can do it. And they said no its honestly this is the best time no one is really going to notice, before you know it you will be boarded before you know it you will be back in a Squadron Ldr job or you will be a Wing Commander and its supportive for your family its supportive for Stephen and its supportive to the kiddies and its supportive to you and I felt a bit burnt out to be honest I felt utterly burnt out after my 3yrs as Officer Commanding Operations Squadron at RAF Lincolnshire and I was burnt out I had given everything to that job and I had given everything the last 6 months knowing that I’d sorted to go at that point to go on a career break and there was nothing left. I had to go on a career break at that point if somebody had told me on that last day before I took my career break that this could screw you over and you might end up leaving the AIR FORCE. I’d of gone, I’m not going. Find me another job so...

## C

Why, why would you have kept going?

## Jennifer

Because at that point I couldn’t imagine myself not being in the AIR FORCE, If I’d thought a career break might mean I was forced out of the AIR FORCE then I wouldn’t have taken that career break as much as I needed because the idea of coming out of the AIR FORCE was like well why would I do that I love the AIR FORCE, I need a career break, I need to support my husband, I need to support my kiddies but only for a year – 18 month s and then I want to be back in the AIR FORCE. It didn’t; even cross my mind that I could do something that could make me feel worthwhile in the civilian world because I loved being in the AIR FORCE. But now I can’t imagine the AIR FORCE giving me as much as the civilian world is giving me right now. But I don’t know if that is going to last forever the AIR FORCE will, I don’t know whether I’m going to get board because after 2 yrs in a tour we all like to move on and do something different and I don’t know if I can keep Earthworks fresh enough so I still don’t know really but at the moment I can’t see that the AIR FORCE is offering me anything you know something is better than nothing and at the moment earthworks is something.

Tera

## C

So if you think of you most challenging tour what were the kind of things that would keep you awake at night?

## Jennifer

I don’t like letting people down. So probably if my boss had given me a task by a certain timescale and it was a bigger task than he had realised or I had realised. I’d rather work later to get it all done before the timescale rather than not achieve it. I just don’t like letting people down so I suppose that is, nothing that would keep me awake at night, I don’t think so I don’t think that is how my brain works. If I fall asleep, I put my head on the pillow, I don’t ever lie awake wondering, I put my head on the pillow and it’s like I close my eyes and I am asleep. It is very annoying if you go to a bothy with me or go camping I will be in the middle of a conversation and I will roll over and just close my eyes and they have said I just stop talking half way through a sentence. (Laughter) I do I can fall asleep in the middle of a conversation. A few seconds later, I’m like sorry that happens a lot, I think I am unique

## C

This question might be redundant then, so is there anything keeping you awake now.

## Jennifer

No, cause that is not how my brain works. But what makes me feel agitated during the day in fact no when I was at work if I was feeling under pressure I would feel it during the day, I’d never feel it at night I was able switch off but during the day I’d find myself feeling agitated and anxious I’d know I’d have too many things that, that, that, that, that and that I don’t really know which one to tackle first and that would make me feel quite anxious I’d feel under pressure and so I think sometimes in the morning because we don’t have a routine, well we do have a routine, but not like a military routine sometimes in the morning I do find I’m sitting there going I really ought to do this and I really ought to do this but I really don’t know, I think my earthworks did really very well for the first couple of months because I was just proving whether does it work or not and now the AIR FORCE hasn’t come back to me, I’ve proved that it works I have not been trying to make money out of it but I am now just, and now I am in this lull because I know if I continue and push that like I have done I am going to find I’ve got business people that need training and suddenly, if I suddenly go back to the AIR FORCE I am going to be letting them down so I don’t like letting people down, it’s a big thing for me but equally If I slow down on doing it I might miss some really good opportunities so I am really under pressure at the moment so do I go full tilt with earthworks whilst waiting for the AIR FORCE to make a decision and I suspect that then let people down cause I’d go back full time and wouldn’t have time to train them. You recruited me and you offered me all this stuff and you said you train me I don’t feel prepared and now they are floundering and that would totally be my responsible, I mean they would be fine if they were good business people but it wouldn’t be fair who is a customer who says I might like to try that I need to make some more money and for me to say I can totally train you to do that and it’s nothing special but it takes about for somebody who has got no skill set whatsoever and it takes a while to train them it takes a bit of time and you need to be able to ring them during the day and I do feel under pressure and my business is starting to suffer because I have slowed right down and I really thought 3 weeks ago I’d get my answer. And yesterday I got an e-mail saying I’m sure you would have thought you’d have got an answer by now but we are just waiting for this 1 star to bla bla bla. And I am like do I charge ahead with my company or do I back off because it is going to be a side line tagged onto the side of the AIR FORCE is there any benefit of being in the AIR FORCE purely to tap into the wifey market is there any reason to stay in the AIR FORCE to tap into the international market through the, international wives. I can do all of that as a wife through Stephen to be fair. Does that make sense?

## C

Yes.

## Jennifer

I feel really stuck, there is loads of projects in the garden I’ve not cracked on with there is loads of If I start on those projects, if I start on those projects 5-6 weeks projects. And I get a phone call saying right you are not coming in, you have to

## C

Jennifer we are breaking up, Jennifer?

(Technical difficulties)

## C

Again the next the question might seem a bit redundant but I just want the clarity. What would you say has been your challenge to your career progression?

## Jennifer

I would say it was believing, believing the polices, when they changed the policies and when people say its ok if you want to have babies its ok if you want to go on maternity leave we won’t disadvantage you its ok if you want a career break, it’s a career incentive it won’t damage your this that and the other, it won’t do that. The old system, where if you had a family you leave. That was easy and clear cut and you left and you understood that was what the case I remember when the rules changed, they had only been in for two or three years and they go off on maternity and I was like ‘What, I’ve been here I’ve been told I couldn’t do de de de. Then they come back and they were like Yeh I’ve been on maternity and no one cared because they were junior Flight Leiutenants’ on their career break or on their maternity and they have come back as a junior Flight Leiutenant and nobody cares. Nobody cares, as a Flight Leiutenant you just get the ticks in the boxes and when you get enough you get promoted. I think it only really effects my peer group really for a 5-6 yr. or 10 yr. span where we were the ones that signed up we understood when we signed up that we would have to leave. And then they changed the rules on us and we were like hang on a minute, I’ve not been geared up I’ve been repelling relationships because I knew that if I got into a relationship that would be the end of my career and now I am allowed to have a relationship that is great. But the rules don’t work for senior people in the military who delayed their career, who were forced if they wanted family to stay in the AIR FORCE to have a family later on in their career that really does damage their career profile because the senior people looking at you, me looking at my Flight Leiutenants going off on career break I don’t disrespect that but me, my peer group old crusty’s Wing Commanders with a completely different opinion set making their own judgement calls about what they can and can’t do on a career break has damaged my career. So I followed the guidelines and the principles that the AIR FORCE is spouting and it hasn’t proved to be the case.

## C

And how does that make you feel?

## Jennifer

Yeh, pretty betrayed, yeh I think that would be a good word. I feel really betrayed. I think that is the way to describe it because I gave 20 years of my life to the AIR FORCE, less a career break less a little bit of maternity here and there. I’ve given 20 years of my life to the AIR FORCE I made some big, big family decisions, i.e. put off family because of the AIR FORCE then when the AIR FORCE you can have both that is fine and I saw youngsters doing it with no negative effect what so ever. I thought great, fair enough I can do not that is great. I worked really hard so make sure that when I took my career break I could do it and with my babies the AIR FORCE couldn’t turn around and say you are taking us for a ride. I did it knowing people respected me well enough to say fair do’s Jennifer you go off and do your bit and then come back to us when. And I’ve gone off to do my bit and I am trying to come back and I haven’t had that level of respect back again in the other direction. So I do yeh, betrayed, I think betrayed. There is no .. somebody said to me the other day what you have got to remember Jennifer is that the Army are dog people and the AIR FORCE are cat people. And in fact if you think of the Army and your family are dog people and the AIR FORCE are cat people. When you go home to your dog family at the end of the day they are wagging their tales and they are pleased to see you and when you have been away for 3 weeks they are wagging their tales and when you are gone for 5 minutes they are wagging their tales and they are your best friends and no matter how long you go for you come back and your dog people are there. Loving you and but the AIR FORCE is like cat people,. You go away or you retire or you disappear for a few days or weeks and you come back and no one really gives a shit that you have been gone. Just like a cat. You disappear and come back and the cats like yeh, I see you I see you happen to be hanging around again whereas a dog big waggy tale, big licks, big cuddles. So the AIR FORCE is cat and your family is dog, and cats and dogs don’t get on. (Laughter). At some point one of them wins, you either join the cats or you stay with the dogs, don’t you think?

## C

I love it.

## Jennifer

You can use that if you like.

## C

I will.

## Jennifer

The Army is more dog because not only do they accepts physically dogs in the work place but when you disappear off on retirement you get invited back to the mess, this is Colonel retired you are somebody. Your family looks forward to seeing you. When I a good example of this is I was running in the league for RAF Lincolnshire and I would turn up for Lincolnshire and we didn’t have a team strip, and people were like oh hi and they were like oh you’ve turned up cause you want to run and well no I like to be part of a team. But I don’t feel like part of a team and they were very much cat people, if you didn’t turn up one week it wasn’t like oh what happened to you last week? It was like oh you’re here this week. What I found was, my husband’s team at Grantham were like hey Jennifer, are you here running with Lincolnshire again. It’s really good to see you and I was like yeh, dog people. And I eventually ended up running for Grantham, I stopped running for Lincolnshire. Because I’d turn up same run, same number of points scored but I was like should Lincolnshire get my points they don’t even care if I turn up or not. Grantham are like hey Jennifer, send me a text, are you coming next Wednesday it would be really great to see you.

## C

And that was an Army .

## Jennifer

Army. Army yeh and I still haven’t run with them for about 4/5 months and I still get an e-mail message saying Hey Jennifer, here are the dates if you want to come, if you have a chance to come back and join us it would be great to see you. Nothing from Lincolnshire. And they are still my home unit. That is not Lincolnshire that is just people at Lincolnshire. You know you have had a cat or you have come across cats. You know if you go away for any length of time they sulk on you there like you left me for 2-3 weeks I couldn’t give a shit about you, you are going to have to really smarm up to me for a few days before I give you any love and even then I might not even give you any love. Whereas doggie family (laughter) I’ll give you a cuddle right now. There you go, clearly I am dog, earthworks gives me dog.

My family give me dog, you had better word that slightly differently though (laughter). But the AIR FORCE is cat and they don’t give a shit, once you’re gone you are gone. Oh you’ve chosen to leave the family you have retired, couldn’t give a shit about you now. Off you go pal. Just think about all those one stars out there they retire and they do say don’t they you speak to people and you go how is it going, well I am retired I’m just a nobody now, I’m just. They are not a nobody, they have served the AIR FORCE for all those years and we can’t even consider to give them an invitation to the OM or make them feel like loved in anyway, no we don’t because we are cat. There you go.

## C

OK, so.

## Jennifer

You weren’t expecting that were you?

## C

No I wasn’t (laughter)

## Jennifer

You are going to have to listen to this about 10 million times to make any understanding of it.

## Jennifer

Tell me about it. It takes, an hrs recording takes about 6/7 hrs

## Jennifer

8 hrs at least, it’s a full day per hr of recording.

## C

Yeh I know and we are on an hr and a half

## Jennifer

yeh, I know sorry (insincerely) (laughter)

## C

I won’t get bored, ok, so if you had a magic wand and you could change one thing what would it be?

## Jennifer

Get rid of all the crusties or rebrand them into something modern and new. The problem with the military is you cannot recruit people like, think of a big corporation and they need a big career change or a change of direction or they need someone fresh and new coming into the company. They just go and recruit a senior CEO from another company, offer them a big packet of money and say come and join us and sort us out. And these guys who are about to go bankrupt they bring in a really top bloke who goes why do it like that, that’s crazy and changes it all. We can’t do that in the AIR FORCE we have to grow our people from within and when you treat the people from within like shit and you don’t value them they are not going to stay around long enough and it’s not the people who are doing really well in the AIR FORCE that decide to stay. It’s the people that are doing really well in the AIR FORCE that choose to leave because what they can do outside becomes more interesting to them and more valuable to them than what they are doing inside. So what happens all your best people end up leaving at some pint because they go why am I doing this and the people who feel like they don’t have much to offer anywhere else will hang until the grim death in the AIR FORCE and it’s not the case for all people I think that is why I like pilots being in charge of things because they are there e because they love flying and they got sucked in and then they have no other skill set that they would rather do. And we do end up with some very intelligent air crew that is not to say there aren’t other intelligent groups out there but and I am not this sort of like, I do think aircrew have a lot to when it comes to managing people I think you need a good engineer or a good adminer if you want to manage people well and you need a good aircrew buddy if you want to have some really punchy decisions out there to change the course of the AIR FORCE.

## C

But the aircrew are in charge.

## Jennifer

Well, yes they are at the top level but quite clearly this Wing Commander I spoke to was so crusty and I don’t even know if he is crusty. He came across like some old fuddy duddy he came out with so much un PC stuff for someone with so much in manning. I just wish I could have had it recorded, bloody good job for him I didn’t have it recording. With the things that he was saying. So magic wand what would I change. I think you can’t really bring people in but I just think that would be really good for the military to recognise you can’t bring people in you have to grow them from the bottom so give people at the bottom or the middle management end a little bit more respect and look after them a little bit better or otherwise you are never going to get any decent people getting up to the top making any sort of decent decisions. By the time they have got to the to … they are so stretched wit where they have been and what they have done they have been so badly looked after themselves, they haven’t got any energy, why should they look after anybody the same. You treat people the way you were treated and if everybody is treated in a bad way at some point nobody is going to look after people in the organisation.

## C

So why couldn’t you bring someone in?

## Jennifer

Well, yeh you see, people would say, exactly why can’t you? I think having this full time reserve service and people like that is an opportunity to bring some people in. Bringing in a senior person from another company of course they could pick it up you could, well I don’t know if the years of indoctrination into the military gives you something special with the way that we think. The way, the analogy I have with the people that are civilians is that there are a lot of what we do in the military is about being able to anticipate how somebody is going to react in a situation. Right down to your soldier on the ground. If you have got sudden fire comes in and you’ve got certain people on the ground and you watch how they react you can pretty much make a good judgement call and be 95% right how are people going to react and therefore you can work as a team without even having been briefed on a certain situation because everyone in the military has been trained a certain way and react a certain way and people who aren’t reacting that way they are the ones you are suspicious of you go ok that person is either stupid and doesn’t understand the system and needs a bit of support and we need to go and look after him because he is not doing what I expect him to do or that person is foreign or that person is not in the right place. It is like Operation Roundup is a perfect example, you call Operation Round up and people disappear indoors and find a POC and register the fact that they are there and anybody still walking around afterwards, ah, that is suspicious because they are not reacting the way you would have expected them to. And I think in the military, you grow up in the military learning what all the appropriate reactions are to certain things without even realising it. So when you get to the top you can pretty much judge how someone is going to react and what the fall out is going to be on your decisions based on what the majority reaction would be to it. Does that make sense?

## C

Hmm

## Jennifer

So you can actually make some very powerful decisions just knowing how people are going to react. I think that only really happens in the military to our level of subtlety. I think we are all very much more similar than people realise and I think if you bring somebody in from the top they may make a decision or do something which we may think is a little bit alien and we wouldn’t understand why, it just wouldn’t quite feel right... I am not saying that would be a bad thing but I do think we ought to grow people a little faster through the ranks to make sure people are getting into a decent position young enough that they see it as a career and they keep going. Cause at the moment it is hang in there long enough and eventually you might get promoted. That is not a career for anybody is it?

## C

No

## Jennifer

No Bot with youngsters coming in, Our youngster they want two careers they see the AIR FORCE as there first career and learning how to deal with people and leadership and they see they are going to do it for 8-10 yrs. and then they are gone to their second career. I f that is going to keep happening you are just going to be left with all the people who can’t imagine getting another job and don’t see it as a career just see it as a job. around in the AIR FORCE and all the bright individuals are going to be gone. So magic wand get people moving faster give them quicker, accept that people are going to come and go we accept people leaving the AIR FORCE and coming back on part time reserve service why not accept someone who wants to come back full time having taken a yr. out on a better terms than your reserve service. We have a Wing Commander at Lincolnshire, he has never been a full time regular he has never been through Lincolnshire, he has only ever been reserve service. Then he somehow managed to get offered a job as Wing Commander as a FTRS, having never been full time before and he is utterly crap, utterly utterly crap at this job he is a complete disaster and everybody knows it and they all put up with it. Because, oh well he is FTRS. No, we shouldn’t have to put up with it and anyway, so yeh. That is pretty annoying isn’t it? I was working around him and he changed some of the thigs that I had implemented without speaking to me or asking me and then of course they then failed and had he bothered to ask my why did you do it like that I would have said because if you don’t it will fail. But there we go point in case... (Laughter)

## C

Ok, last question. And it’s a nice question.

## Jennifer

Ok let’s make it last another hr so you have got another 8hrs to do.

## C

You are a cruel cruel woman. Perfect Wing Commander. material.

## Jennifer

Oh thanks wee.

## C

What is your best memory of the AIR FORCE?

## Jennifer

Being on the side of the mountain, mountain is a bit strong. In Otterburn probably, with my cadets I was a Flight commander I loved being a Flight commander you have got these 8 or 10 young fresh faced, eager to earn big smiley faces literally wanted to eat breath and sleep everything that you did. And wanted to listed to everything you said about leadership and marching up across the bondu in the snow at like 6/7 o’clock in the morning, in the fresh air, having escaped from capture and the look on my cadets faces was a little, they were kind of a bit wibble. Like its cold and it’s scary, and I was like guys guys forget that I am a Flight commander for about 5 minutes. How many of your friends from university are out in the fresh air tromping around in the snow playing some silly games pretending to learn about leadership an getting paid to do it. And they were like yeh, no one and I said how you feel now. And they were yeh actually I feel pretty dam good. I am getting paid to do it. And then for the rest of the day they just had their big smiley faces and it was just lovely to have that much effect on a young person and (starts whispering) after you have been there Flight commander for about 5 weeks they start saying your sentences and they start saying your expressions and you start realising what you say because they become little mini mes they really do. (Laughter) It’s quite scary. They say that’s excellent and I’d go that is exactly how I say it too (unintelligible) so that was my best tour and I would love to go back and do that again. I’d love to be a squadron commander or Wing commander at IOT, I think teaching other people to improve their personal development, to improve their leadership skills to watch them bloom to watch them progress to set them off on their bran new careers in the AIR FORCE all shiny and new that was my best memory and the most specific memory was being out on FLC with them. Things like, all the Flight Commanders are deadpan. And I am oh my God you can’t be this dead pan we can have some fun with the cadets, and they would be like on nono.. and I’d be the only Flight commander when it’s the ex where everyone gets cammed up and you say, right go and get yourself cammed up and I am like the one Flight Commander that likes jumps off the bus, all cammed up and then I’d go down to ground and I’d crawl over to my flight (whispers) right I need …. And they are like Cool, cool and they are all getting cammed up because I jumped off the bus in my cam stuff and I am getting in on the ground and getting them into scenario. How false is it to walk over and say right blogs it’s your lead and you take them to one side and you say right your lead is blab la bla. And is everybody is stood there like this waiting for the leader to come over. Whereas if you’ve jumped out and gone crawling over to them and taken them into the woods come on lest get out of here and they are all looking at you and you take one person away and as soon as you look they are there getting their cam cream out and you are just leading people from the front aren’t you and it is those memories that I like where you could just be with your team, you could just be yourself and use your personality whether it’s right or wrong I dint care. Normally right that is my happy memories being with people who want to learn and teaching them about the AIR FORCE that I love. Yeh

## C

Brilliant, that is a perfect place to stop ‘I think.

## Jennifer

no more work for you, whhoohoo.

## C

I am pressing stop

1hr 8.02

20.25