# Jessica – Interview 1 2017

8 Nov 2017 Length 59.26mins

(officer, married, kids, 17 years, -1)

## C

How cold is it there is it ok?

## Jessica

Actually, at the moment it's not too bad. We have had a couple of really lovely days; the days were probably well it we were up at sort of 16 or 17 so today it’s probably down to 8 or 10 but

## C

Mm

## Jessica

but yeh you know its ok it’s alright.

## C

Falklands

## Jessica

you just get used to it a bit.

## C

You do yeah

## Jessica

You get used to the fact that one minute its sunny the next minute it’s snowing and you are just prepared for all eventualities.

## C

yeh, are you enjoying it

## Jessica

yeh definitely really am we are so glad we came there are just some many things we can do here that we can't do in the UK and we just view that as a big adventure, so.

## C

yeah. Exactly.

## Jessica

We are enjoying it.

## C

That's fantastic

## Jessica

It’s strange at times because the going from the Air Force to erm not being in the Air Force and coming here in the process is kind of crazy, but yeh

## C

It is a bit.  But we can get into that, we can get into that.

## Jessica

Yes

## C

Can I just can I just get the boring bits out of the way, which is the actual

## Jessica

Absolutely

## C

Erm. Are you happy with why I am doing this?

## Jessica

In broad terms yes.

## C

Have I sent you a have I sent you a consent form?  I don't have our e-mail address I don't think.

GIVES - EMAIL ADDRESS

## C

Basically, it’s about identity, it’s about identity transition and how people transition out of the military and how they we their post, their pre and post military lives as they sort of move into a new world really, I suppose.  Erm how old were you when you joined?

## Jessica

Oh, crickey so I'll of been 22, I think? Is that right? yeh

## C

And you are now ..

## Jessica

I am now 39.

## C

39 and your Out of service date was?

## Jessica

well it’s the 31st of December this year.

## C

Oh, so you are not even out yet, even better.  What was your last job?

## Jessica

I was in the Armament Role office.

## C

You are educated to degree level, aren't you?

## Jessica

yes, and I am part way towards a masters, I've got the PG Dip I just need to finish my dissertation.

## C

Oh right, what PGDip?

## Jessica

yeh I did the MSc Logistics Management through the RAF I just haven't done the dissertation yet.  I will get to that at some point.

## C

yeh, get it out of the way. That's it, that's all.  Right what it is I am going to ask you about 10 or so questions.

## Jessica

Oh, you have frozen

## C

Oh, you are jiggling around a bit as well, do you find Skype better than this?

## Jessica

We don't tend to use it to be honest we tend to do WhatsApp video calling.

## C

Lets just give this a go then and hopefully it will be be alright.

## Jessica

I have got Skype.

## C

I think it’s if I can't hear anything I will just ask you to repeat and vice versa.  Nice to see you though you look really well.

## Jessica

Hhhh Well, so do you it’s been a long time since we have seen each Coningsby I guess wasn't it?

### C

yeh, it does seem like a long time ago, well it was a long time ago.

## Jessica

A life time ago.

## C

It was (laughs) I don't miss Coningsby though I never liked Coningsby.

## Jessica

No, I didn't mind it but I hated getting to and from.

## C

What I have got is about 10 or so questions as I said about why you left and why you joined and all that kind of thing and just about what you think about the military and I will just sort of go through them cause I am conscious of time cause I have got to go and do pickup.

## Jessica

Absolutely

## C

So 'll dive straight in by asking erm why did you join the military?

## Jessica

Can you just repeat that?

## C

you are frozen completely frozen.

Pause

06:05 Repeats question.06:10

## Jessica

Ok so erm. A number of reasons part of it is possibly because my <><><><>< because he was always he was an air scout and he was an air cadet and all that sort of other stuff and I can remember and this is going to sound a bit, I'm not sure you can hear me, I think I'll keep talking and see where we go.

## C

It’s good

## Jessica

Erm I really liked the idea basically when there was a Remembrance Parade at the guild Hall in Portsmouth my brother was there with the Air Cadets and I was there with the Girl Guides and I felt really ashamed that the Girl Guides weren't marching and I wanted to look like my brother in a uniform smart, marching and proud and it didn't  occur to me at the time that I wanted to join the military but I wanted to do what he was doing  erm so as time went on and we got a bit older and he did join the Air Force I started  having a good look at it and got some careers information and you know I had never done Air Cadets cause that was my brother’s territory and I kind of left that to him.  Erm but there was something I am I like the erm what’s the structured environment, I thrive quite well with structure and erm I respect the idea of discipline and hierarchy and all that sort of thing and erm and I also loved the idea of serving Queen and Country.  I am very much erm very patriotic and loved the idea of doing something that would I could feel really proud of erm and so once I got more information and sort of went to some interviews and things kind of never looked back and it wasn't an easy journey I didn't get in straight away but nothing despite how many times I got knocked back I never gave up because I knew that is what I wanted to do erm

## C

Hmmm

## Jessica

and it was quite strange cause when I was at college I was one of the few people that actually knew what they wanted to do everyone else was a bit you know well I am going to go to university and I'm going to study this and you know I am not really sure what I want to do but I might do this and I just had this really set idea of what it was I wanted to do and I just pursued it until I achieved it basically and erm and yer here we are.  (laughs)

## C

So, it was it was the organisation itself how it worked that appealed as much as

## Jessica

yeah

## C

serving Queen and Country

## Jessica

discipline and erm I suppose at the time I probably didn't actually even know about all the opportunities that came with it that that was just an added bonus when I discovered all that but yeh very much about erm I suppose that's the only way to say it really, it’s about liking the the structure and knowing that there is there is a <>< and erm there's a a disciplined way of achieving it. It’s not that I never had a particular desire to tell people what to do and that has never been my approach but I I liked the idea of the environment where there is a certain degree of there is a way of doing things and that's how we do it kind of thing.

## C

ok.  And erm when did you start about thinking about leaving the military?

## Jessica

When did I start thinking about leaving? Erm PAUSE I I  I Suppose that that started when we had our first child because you obviously consider am I going back to work? Am I not? and erm whilst I didn't come close to leaving at the point I kind of knew I wanted to stay and see if I could make it work and see how it went erm but I suppose that's when the seed was planted because obviously your life changes doesn't it when you have a family and your focus is elsewhere and you know so from that point I accept when I knew I wanted to have children I accepted that the career would take erm second place and I was fine with that.  So that meant erm from the point of view from both of us trying to juggle military careers <><><><><><><><><><><><><> that took sacrifices and in some respects sought the jobs that would make my life a bit easier and not entail ridiculous amounts of extras so that I would have the time to do what is required with the children but I think once we had our second child I kind of knew at that point I would only stay until my 16 year point.

## C

MM

## Jessica

So I suppose that is when I started to think about it and it sort of slowly you come to the realisation that yeah I am only going to stay until the end of my commission and then that would be that erm and of course then the closer I then got to that point gradually I just started thinking about it more and more erm then you are in the pension trap at that point you know I had contemplated, I I did consider what would happen if I left sooner and I think the pension was quite a big motivator to stay but again in my certainly in my last tour I I I was not necessarily able to hand pick my tour but I was given a few options and I deliberately avoided the option of being time away and long hours, you know I was, certainly by my last tour I was very ready to leave and was literally just hanging on because I knew I wanted to walk away with the pension that I had earnt.

## C

yeh

## Jessica

you know, I think it got harder as time went on towards that end point to make it work erm and to not feel well to not feel well erm I think it is impossible to not feel guilty but but the those feelings started  getting more you know as time went on so erm you know when it I remember about the last 3 years I would say of my time I was very much focused on exit,

## C

Really?

## Jessica

very much that yeh erm and that's that kind of <<<>< is part of the reason I started <><>< 2 and a half years ago because when I got to that point I was fed up with not being promoted so that effected my self-belief and about 3 years ago I almost had a bit of an ephiany that I didn't need the Air force to validate me.  Yes, promotion would have been nice and that recognition was really what I wanted but it dawned on me that I validate me not the Air Force or not anyone else in fact.  So at that point I kind of took the bull by the horns and whilst I knew I was going to stay until the end of my commission I started my Master’s Degree I started my business and I erm started the erm annual charity overnight bike ride that I do because I wanted to do somethings for me, erm the business in particular knowing that I was building that as my exit plan from the Air Force so that was quite deliberate that I started the business so I could build it slowly knowing that I then had something to erm to go onto once I had finished.

## C

There are a couple of really interesting things there, so you mentioned guilt but I just wanted to be clear about what exactly you felt guilty, what was making you feel guilty?

## Jessica

ok, erm its things like erm things that you can't do so it might be going to go to a Christmas play at school it might be lots of the other mums going to the school <><> with the children and they would ask me why I couldn't do that my daughter would ask me why I couldn't collect her from school.  you know why I couldn't go on the school trip, you know it’s all those things that you want to do with your children and they want to do with you and you have to tell them no I can't because I have to work and then you feel you are having to choose between your job and your children and yeh that that definitely caused a lot of guilt.

## C

did, yeh. Did you feel guilty the other way around? Did you ever feel guilty about work did you ever feel when you didn't do the extra stuff at work?

## Jessica

Erm yeh definitely I I I have always been one to go above and beyond even when I'm paring it back I will still go above and beyond and I suppose the guilt that comes  from that or feeling that you can't fit everything in the thing that would make me say at work and you know I can remember times on a Friday afternoon when everyone else in the team had gone on the tour previous you know even the Wing Commander would have gone and I'd still be there knowing I had childcare till 6 o'clock I would stay there way past everyone else because not wanting to feel guilty about my duties you know I always felt very strongly about doing the right thing erm and not wanting to feel guilty about not having done it and erm you know

## C

mmm

## Jessica

and so, you then find yourself in a position where your well you are choosing between work and children and sometimes I would choose in favour of work but I wouldn't feel good about doing that cause on the one hand I think was doing the job what the job required but I would feel bad that I wasn't at home at 3o'clock on a Friday afternoon like a lot of other people to play with the kids

## C

yeh

## Jessica

and you know <><><><><>< lots of guilt in many ways I suppose going both ways.

## C

Could you I think that is a common feeling for most parents isn't it?

## Jessica

yeah yeah definitely

## C

Can erm can you give me a really one of your most vivid memories of your military life that springs to mind, good or bad something that ...

## Jessica

Ok erm I suppose some of the good things that spring to mind erm graduation day at Cranwell I er just that that was just incredible I felt just amazingly proud like I could of erm taken on the world at that point other good things erm I I I did some jobs I was very proud of erm in particular when I was out of area in Al Udied and doing basically trying to keep Herrick supplied with LOX which was a real issue erm I felt I I I a lot of it comes back to pride I think erm I I felt very proud I was doing my bit even though I wasn't in Afghanistan I was doing  my bit to keep them going and that was great erm I did when I I held for a year before my specialist training and I spent er 10 months of that working in <><><><>< and I absolutely loved

## C

In where sorry? I didn't get that

## Jessica

I spent 10months working in P1 ceremonial

## C

Oh ok

## Jessica

yep so I was working directly for the Wing Commander and we had events like you know there was a Bomber Command commemoration at erm St Pauls Cathedral and Prince Charles was there and Royal Visits to stations erm Air Force dinners you know I was involved in organising all these things and erm meeting there was particularly when I did the Bomber Command commemoration I got to meet a lot of the veterans and spend time with them erm and again found that found that a very humbling experience and felt incredibly proud to be you know representing the Air Force and representing my country to I suppose 20:00

## C

mm

## Jessica

to those people  <><> the currents of the Air Force, you know

## C

yeh

## Jessica

So those there are some of the stand out great memories but I am sure there have been plenty of others as well erm I I suppose the from a negative point of view was the big thing was as they years went by and promotion seemed to get further and further  away despite the fact that I had worked my nuts off the entire time and often gone you know <><>< onto the more than the people who  were promoted and thinking what am I doing wrong?  There was a period of years up unitl about 3 year ago that built up and really got me down cause you start to doubt yourself and think well what am I doing wrong then maybe I am just rubbish. Maybe I am not good enough erm and you know erm I think now I am almost in hindsight a bit cross with myself for letting myself feel that cause I have always been good enough it just didn't work out for many reasons you know is not erm no one ever sat and said you hey you are not good enough you are not going to be promoted it’s just one of those things and the way it panned out but as the years went on that did have quite a negative effect erm on me and to a degree on my opinion of the RAF as well erm and whilst I definitely left on a high I am quite glad to of left and in some respects I feel like a rat leaving the sinking ship because I am not the only one that's kind of had those issues  but also manning and everything the way it is now everyone is just working so hard and there is just no and I worry for the future of if you like of sustainability of of what we are committing to and what we do erm and so I think that  I guess that is probably another negative erm that that's that I feel now, it’s not negative as such it erm but its maybe more negative than positive so that kind of made me <><><>< that I had made the decision to leave because <><><><<><> you know all the things that you can't change because there isn't the money and there isn't the people and you know.

## C

MMM

## Jessica

lots of frustrations I guess.

## C

So, would you say that is your you know would you say was there anything that concerned you when you were in? would you say that sort of lack of confidence if you like in the system would that be the major thing that concerned you while you were serving?

## Jessica

Erm probably erm yeh erm yeh erm yeh that probably sums it up. and I suppose adding a bit of sometimes a bit of a lack of accountability because senior officers move on and just leave whatever behind and you know erm yeh I think the system has got some benefits definitely but I think erm is also got some distinct draw backs you know the very very senior people are all air crew I suppose as you see more and you spend more time in and you see the filtering that goes on you know these are the grass root problems you feed it up to middle management and they filter it and then it gets more filtered as it goes up and up erm to the higher levels and so I suppose that that probably did lead to a bit of a lack of belief in how business was done and you know how how things operated erm I I think that has to be set against the back drop of some how things are always achieved which I think says a lot for the people still that just make it happen erm despite the issues and the lack of people and the lack of finance to put in place what you really need but the spirit of the people and the can do attitude still makes it happen anyway so I think I had erm sort of a a degree of lack of belief if you like in the system but belief in the people, certainly at the lower level.

## C

yeah, yeah Ok so if you had a magic wand then and you could just change anything about the Air Force what would it be?

## Jessica

(laughs) ok so if I could change anything I think we need more people and a refocused approach of what we need as in erm you know if you are going to contract some things out then fine if that is the way things are going but I think erm that is too often the quick response and it is not always the right response so I think we need a more focused approach but that probably needs more people and more money and I also think we should come into the modern era as far as non-aircrew and females getting into the higher echelons of power because until the higher echelons actually reflect erm the rest of the Air Force then you are not going to get a rounded approach I don't think. And I I know there are from the erm from the female point of view I know that is happening I know there are people there are women out there who are doing very well and are getting promoted erm and up in the air ranks which is fantastic and my 2\* when I left was a female and erm she was great but I think until they get rid of the requirement that it is all aircrew in the top positions then I think nothing is going to change, you know change happens so slowly in an organisation erm and I think someone needs to have the kahunas to say actually if you are good enough it doesn't matter if you flew an aircraft, fixed it, got the parts for it from one place to another you know it doesn't matter where you came from or what you did if you are good enough you should get there and in America I am sure I heard that they they have had the first female Chief of the Air Staff or whatever their female equivalent is

## C

mm

## Jessica

Erm, or it was either that or the first non-aircrew.  Well anyway they are more liberal anyway with gender and background as to what they will promote to the top and I think there needs to be a shakeup erm in the higher echelons we are a bit dinosaur like I think still in that respect.

## C

So, do you think then that your gender and your specialisation effected your promotion prospects? Or is that

## Jessica

Erm, I am not sure particularly that it did my branch change went against me because I spent 5 years in one branch then changed to another and I was always warned and told to my face by various deskies ah well you branch changed you know that's you haven't got the experience as your peers ignoring the fact completely that I had already been a flight commander and done various things in my previous branch that all seemed to be swept under the carpet and irrelevant which always seemed crazy to me. Erm then I was also told that age was against me because of the relative seniority I had as a Flight Lieutenant when balanced against my age and my level of logs experience that that meant that I couldn't compete with my younger more experienced peers which again I find crazy you know if you are good at what you do and you work hard erm I don't yeh I don't quite get why that should be why you can't compete its its I think there are lots of occasions  and I am sure it is across the military because of the way we do reporting and promotions erm its always been strange to me that the Air Force, you know I never even got boarded once.

## C

Your joking. you are joking.

## Jessica

No, I am not joking and I don't think I have been this year either because I think my report was too late so you know the Air Force as an organisation shows numerous times with numerous different people not to board me yet I have got Warrant Officers that erm worked for me saying you are the best flight commander I have ever worked for, hang on a minute that that doesn't match <><><>

## C

they wouldn't say it would they, they have no need to say that to you

## Jessica

Excactly, they have reached the pinnacle erm they have no need toile and so that was always quite hard to, oh whats the word I am looking for, er not assimilate erm I can't remember what the word is I am looking for.

## C

well yeh to get your head round, yeh

## Jessica

yeh yeh erm

## C

I can't believe that Jessica I'm absolutely gob smacked and do you do you put that down to the branch change do you think?

## Jessica

I think it is a number of factors I think its the branch change I think it is the breadth of logs experience for the amount of seniority and I also think it is also down to reporting officers as well.  I was very unfortunate in one of my tours erm I was in an ops chain of command not my branch so my one RO was erm SLOPS and then 2 RO was OC OPs, neither of them well there were a number of different people in those posts in the 2 reporting years I had not one of them had any clue about my specialisation and in the reality was that I might as well have been the SO2 plans.  Because I was the one that I knew what was going on I had to grab hold of all the other people in the office there was admin and ops people as well and run things because the people who were in charge of us didn't have a clue about what needed to be achieved.  they didn't understand deployment, they didn't understand what was required for equipment and roulements people you name it. they just didn't get any of it so when that then came to reporting they knew what  a good job I had done and they told me that to my face and they got me a third RO for it however, the reporting wasn't specialisation centric they didn't really understand what I do its a black art so  they wrote some wonderful things about me but I feel it wasn't related enough to my specialisation and then unfortunately the third RO the stache changed over a few weeks before I left so the third RO I got was a guy who didn't know me so it was a waste of a third RO so there has been a number of things like that that have happened to me in reporting which are out of your hands. So the previous tour I did erm the guy I worked for my 1 up erm wasn't a people person in the slightest, so that was <><><>< he was in charge and he basically liked people, never went out to the Squadron to see the people who worked for him erm I I was the face of the Squadron from a management point of view I went and did all of that and whilst he reported well on me that wasn't really reflected in the second RO I don't know he just hadn't but it well across enough I had even done some extra  work for the second RO and one of the other Squadron Leaders and that wasn't it didn't seem to be bourn in mind that I had done all this extra work as well and I had juggled the whole thing and juggled the family and juggled my husband going away all the time erm and because erm because basically this this extra project was looking at internal <<<><>< and I ran a CI event and I did all sorts of research and all sorts of things because I didn't have enough time to put lot of things in motion before I left because the CI event was not long before I left erm I think they saw that as not having achieved anything and I was like hang on a minute I have achieved loads here I've done all this research and I have told you where all the issues are and what needs to be done about it and then run a CI event to come up with a load of actions that can be done but because then I have got to hand it over to the next person because I am posted

## C

They will get the credit

## Jessica

yeh yeh so I think there has been some bad luck there has also been I haven't pushed myself or my case enough, hindsight is a wonderful things and I think there were a number of situations that I would have tackled differently that had you know given a second chance, erm because I a lot of the time just blindly accepted what was written in my report and didn't really argue my case  I guess er so it is a bit of all sorts I think.

## C

So how did all of that all of that how did that make you feel about the Air Force?35:15

## Jessica

Erm yeh it lost my confidence in the promotion system and made me realise you really are just a number you are a bum on a seat and they don't look after you individually.  You know and the the work load the desk officers have these days it’s kind of not surprising cause they have so many people to look after they cannot actively career manage everyone or help mentor people maybe that is something the Air Force could have done better is give me some mentoring changing from one branch to another I was always on the back foot I suppose

## C

MM

## Jessica

And there was no format of facility to do anything about that so I just kind of went on my merry way erm I suppose just thinking that hard work was enough and looking after the guys was enough and it wasn't you know erm so yeh that was quite hard to take but I am quite philosophical about it now cause erm someone said to me last year and it’s an ex-serving female just remember Jessica it’s not personal and when she said that me actually yeh you know what its rubbish and I haven't had the recognition I have deserved  on a number of occasions for a number of things but no one has singled me out and said that it has just been bad luck and timing and you know whatever you name it all sorts of things erm but at least that made me realise I've done nothing wrong and actually I can still walk away head held high very proud of what I have achieved knowing that you know the respect of the people that have worked for me is probably actually worth more in a way  than promotion because I was able to sleep at night knowing that I had done my best by them and that they like working for me and you know that means a lot so while the recognition would have been nice along with it it is very nice to know that erm what people think of me people that know people that have actually worked for me rather than a desk officer who has never met me.  And I think that is another thing, my erm networking within the branch all the desk officers that boarded me never knew me, you know I wasn't a known name in the branch cause I didn't grow up in the branch, I grew up my formative years were in a different branch so if I had been sitting there that might have been a very different issue because I knew all the people while in the new branch I was always playing catch up you know.

## C

mmm interesting yeh I don't know if it is good enough though, I this is what I get frustrated about I don't know if it is good enough for me for an organisation to demand so much and then ultimately just to treat you like a number.  For me that is not good enough I get very cross when I hear stories like that.  Cause I am absolutely gob smacked that you were never boarded there is no reason, no reason.

## Jessica

yep, I know.

## C

Right Ok. Ok So when you finally made that decision to leave can you describe to me how that felt cause I know you obviously you had planned for it but there is a difference between planning and committing.

## Jessica

yes, very much and erm I I I faffed about for a couple of weeks or maybe a few weeks because I knew basically I had to I had to PvR because I had accepted an extra year so I could get the tour to High Wycombe but I never really wanted to serve that year.  So when it came time you know it was approaching the erm basically this time last year really it was approaching the 16year point or the year prior to the 16 year point erm and so I knew I had to sort of take some action so I wrote to the pension society to get a forecast so I was waiting for that to come back  I did a lot of talking to my husband and well looked to the the future and because I was PvRing lost pension and lump sum over x number of years  and l l of it just paled away you know I said to my husband but it’s not about the money I am not leaving because I'm getting a pension I'm leaving because I want to spend more time with the children so if you tell me if I'm going to lose a million pounds between now and the age of 80, presuming I live that long, erm it wouldn't be enough to make me stay because I might go under a bus tomorrow.  So, I want to spend all the time I can being with the children and not sacrificing so much anymore from their point of view erm and so this had gone on and I was waiting for the pension calculation to come back and like literally the next day 2 people independent of each other will your pension calculation make a difference to your decision? No, it won’t (laughter) well why don't you PvR then.

## C

What are you waiting for?

## Jessica

I don't know what I was waiting for. There was a distinct subconscious hesitation to do it because it had big ramifications but I got on the phone to my husband and I said we have discussed all the figures and we have talked all this through erm an you now my boss and someone else had said tome will all the calculation make any difference to you and I said no they absolutely wont so why aren't I just doing it, what am I waiting for, shall I just do it? and literally I shared my screen with him on communicator the messenger things, shared my screen with him and did it there and then.

## C

Your husband? (laughing)

## Jessica

yeh yeh so he watched while I did it which was quite nice actually. It was quite nice erm and I kid you not I was so excited I was like a giggly child erm I found it a very nerve racking experience doing the clicks and filling in the right things.42:11 but once I done it I could not wipe the grin off my face I felt absolutely elated and just I I guess release just the pressure off the shoulders and just gone

## C

yes

## Jessica

and it it just felt amazing I never expected it to feel like that but it just felt incredible.  Absolutely incredible and of course from that point the countdown was on because I had an exit date so I had squeeze all my resettlement into a year and that was exciting I knew what I was going to do and you know it is a shame I had to squeeze it all in but that's alright so I then quite enjoyed all of that because I was even more than ever focused on the future and you know I was still as always doing my best and then some in my day job but my focus was elsewhere and I was like this is exciting I am going to be doing the school run every day and erm I am going to be the one that can go on the school trip and you know choose my working hours around what I want to do to suite me and the kids. you know it was all very exciting.

## C

So, what was that how would you describe that then if what did making that decision represent?

## Jessica

Freedom, that is probably the biggest thing in so many ways.  time freedom erm freedom to choose erm what I do with my life you know freedom to erm just all sorts things related to the children so erm freedom to be able to show them they can achieve anything they want to do erm and and to to I I I have always kind of hoped I've been a strong example for them in what I have been doing since they have been in the world but equally I want to show them that there are numerous ways of doing things numerous ways of skinning the cat and actually if you put your mind to something you can do it yeh very liberating.  Freedom is definitely the theme, the yeh.

## C

So how would you say your life had changed I know you are obviously not officially out but I know you are not working

## Jessica

It has changed massively already, I literally I finished work on the Wednesday and we flew here on the Sunday.  Erm So it all came all quite suddenly in some respects and there it’s been an interesting transition there have been some quite tough moments erm you know initially it was just really exciting doing the school run erm and then some of the realities start kicking in and you know when I started chatting it all through with my husband I said to him bear in mind I have spent this many years doing what I have been doing in the Air Force where my opinion was respected people would listen when I spoke people would come to me for advice erm and I you know I was happy and confident at doing that I know spend a lot of my time (laughing) with two gorgeous little people who half the time don't listen to a single word I say so there the difference between the 2 is absolutely immense you know and polar opposites so it has been strange because I have achieved what I wanted to which is having  time to do the school run and to go on school trips, I have already been on one, you know to be able to take the kids to park when they finish school or the soft play in the families centre erm you know I can take them for a piece of cake in Oasis café on the way home from school you know I can do much more with them so that is  unquestionably mission accomplished and its brilliant it’s just its almost everything else that is the issue.  So, housework you know I <><><><

## C

sorry you are breaking up a bit

## Jessica

Its rubbish I hate it.

## C

you are breaking up a bit

## Jessica

Housework is a necessary evil and it has to be done and the expectation is that I will do it because I am the one that is at home  but its rubbish and I hate it and it does not fulfil me in anyway shape or form and there is lots of things like that so the the administration of a household which I always did most of anyway when I was working full time but you just kind of fitted I tin the nooks and crannies I suppose whereas now erm you know when the kids are at school that I the obvious time to get on and  do those things but they are not fulfilling to me as a person and I don't think I had thought about that side of it and I I do all the trips to the store the day after the air bridge has come in and you get some fresh fruit woo hoo, you know I do all of those things and grease all those wheels to make everything happen erm but yeh it’s a weird one because I have achieved absolutely <><>< but it comes along with some other stuff that isn't quite so wonderful erm and add into the mix that I have had some mixed behaviour from the children at times because of course they are transitioning as well to having me around all the time erm and there has been times when I've gone Oh My God this parenting is awful they are not listening to me at all this is terrific erm.  (laughter)But you know I I think because I am around so much more that is so much more obvious now or it has more opportunity to manifest perhaps so yeh its been its been a strange transition and it does make me realise that I do need to work cause I need something for me that fulfils me as a person erm and I suppose that is why I stayed in the Air Force as well because I love my children dearly but I needed something that was me being Jessica rather than me being mummy so I think I will always work but now I have made the conscious choice to arrange my work around the children rather than I am a working person and they fit round me sort of thing.

## C

yes

## Jessica

Erm so yeh its its been interesting to get used to but overall it has been great because I have achieved the thing that I wanted to achieve which is time with the children.

## C

And you are going to be out there what its a year? yeh?

## Jessica

yeh we are out here for 12 months so we will go home next end of next August

## C

so that will be another big change again wont it because ..

## Jessica

oh, very much very much.  Yes, it will be the first time not the first time because we haven't always lived in quarters but we won’t be going into quarters so I won’t be on a married patch which I have been for the last 4 tours erm so that that will be a big difference getting to know people that don't necessarily have anything in common with you.50:17 i.e.  that is we are all in or married to the Air Force erm so that that will be strange and someone did say to me a few month back that they thought coming here was actually quite a good transition because I am very much still ensconced in the RAF environment but erm not having to work in it but still being surrounded in it and then after that then make a move to you know being completely out of Air Force life, a normal person. (laughs) a normal person in a normal house and get to know the neighbours in the old-fashioned way you know. 51:00

## C

mmm that will be interesting as well

## Jessica

yeah

## C

Erm I just want to wrap it up really because you have answered a lot of the questions in what you have talked about anyway while while we were chatting.  But erm

## Jessica

Oh ok.

## C

Which is fantastic. I don’t really need to go over then but erm what just going very quickly back to the Air Force what do you think was the biggest challenge to your career and what do you think is the biggest challenge now to the life outside?

## Jessica

Oh, crickey.  oh, that is quite a tough question.

## C

sorry! (laughs)

## Jessica

On no that is alright. <><><>< erm biggest challenge so I think probably in broad terms the biggest challenge from an Air Force point of view was juggling two Air Force careers as you can well relate to that can be very problematic.  We were pretty fortunate in our postings and in the way things went only because I made a conscious choice to accept whatever job erm and I did the less stressful one and so that was probably the biggest challenge and so what was the next bit the biggest challenge in the real world.

## C

If you can call the Falklands the real world.

## Jessica

yeh huuh yeh (laughter) Its not the real world, it’s something but it’s not the I think I think probably the biggest challenge certainly in comparison to the Air Force is erm being ...... how can I put it .... so in the Air Force you know it’s easy in some respects because I have stripes on my shoulder so that was instantly recognisable and it gave people an appreciation of what you do, not necessarily the ins and outs of the branch but you know she is a flight lieutenant and that is kind of easy to understand I think you don't have that luxury in the real world you have to make a name for yourself in whatever you are going to do that  and you just have to work hard to achieve it th there is no erm sort of automatic assumption of what you have done before because people just won’t know.  yeh erm so I think that is potentially could be .......

## C

I've lost you

## Jessica

quite a shock cause at least when you get posted you walk

## C

Hello, I've lost you

## Jessica

yeh I think you have to erm or you have to put yourself out there a bit more and almost prove who you are and what you do and what your good at which doesn't perhaps exist in the same way in the Air Force.

## C

Is there anything I mean I know you you have been working on this business as well, your business has that really helped with the transition?

## Jessica

yeh definitely because it is very much something for me erm and I have got some quite big goals for the longer term with what I want to achieve with it and it really has helped give me a new direction and I think to leave the Air Force with no plan I think that would have blown my mind I think I would have been very scared and may be not pressed the button. I don't know I you know I it’s kind of I suppose fate maybe that it has all fallen into place in such a way that you know I have already been running the business for 2 and a half years so I am more than comfortable with how it all works and and what I need to achieve to be successful or what you need to do to be successful erm and its now led me and my long term goal is I want to be a life coach so that will tie in quite nicely with what I want to do in my business but will also be a second and separate income stream as well and I never would have thought previously about doing something like being a life coach and I am very excited about the idea of doing that I do believe in fate and that things are meant to be and that is how I feel about the journey I have come on in the last couple for years to lead me to where I am now and where I want to be in the future it is definitely good to leave knowing that you have a plan.

## C

mm

## Jessica

That has made a big difference I think.

## C

Cool, I am going to have to wrap it up because luckily the school is literally 5 mins away here at Wittering but is there anything else you would like to add?

## Jessica

Oh gosh er I don't know nothing that springs to mind I think I have covered most of the things that I've felt very recently about transitioning I suppose the only thing I'd add which is a very trivial thing but when I got here because I am a dependent here I am not on the strength so I have an ID and I now have a dependant’s card.  When I first got here I was showing my ID my military ID all the time erm now when I come in the gate I show my dependent pass and that for me kind of sums up that I am accepting that I am now a dependent and not in the Air Force in my own right and that is ok. (laughs)

## C

yeh that is interesting, it’s a funny one because it is such a physical

## Jessica

yeh

## C

that you have carried with you constantly everywhere for 16 years

## Jessica

and yeh people do speak to you differently when you are in plain clothes if they know you are a Flight Lieutenant or they think you are just visiting they speak to you differently and that has been part of the transition has been kind of coming to grips with that I think.

## C

Thank you

59:01