

Interviewer

I want to hear about your birthdays in Okinawa.

Carla Judd

It just happens to be that our birthdays are like next-door neighbors. She's on the 18th and I'm on the 19th of December. We were in Okinawa and they threw us a surprise birthday party with birthday cakes and everything.

Rebecca Heal

And we got Teddy bears. They gave us Teddy bears. The young guys- the soldiers. Isn't that cute?

Interviewer

You had a little story - something about officers.

Rebecca Heal

Oh! Well, a question was asked about young men leering at us. And we never noticed that the young boys ever leered. But the officers on the other hand...

Carla Judd

We had to watch out for them.

Rebecca Heal

Yup, we did.

Carla Judd

And it seemed like we were always being pulled off to be with the officers. And we didn't want to be with them, we wanted to be with the guys that were our age. So that was kind of.

Rebecca Heal

That's true. They'd be off to the officers club getting steak, you know, and we'd just as soon be at the NCO's - the Enlisted Men's Club and having pizza.

Interviewer

We need you to sing something together. We were talking about it - you had lots of choices there. We have Beach Boys, we have Beatles....we have all sorts. We need you to sing Sisters. That would be fabulous. So why don't we start out with that?

Carla Judd

OK. OK, here we go.

"Sisters, sisters. There were never such devoted sisters. Never had to have a chaperone, no sir."

"I'm there to keep my eye on her."

"Caring, sharing everything single thing that we are wearing."

"When a certain gentleman arrived from Rome."

"I wore the dress."

"And I stayed home."

Rebecca Heal

It goes on from there.

Carla Judd

But that was about the truth!

Rebecca Heal

It was exactly the truth!

Interviewer

So you sang that on stage frequently?

Carla Judd

Probably, I don't know!

Rebecca Heal

I don't think so!

Carla Judd

We do now! This is the only song we could remember!

Interviewer

Do you remember any of the pop songs from back then you might have sung in Vietnam? Like a Beach Boys song?

Rebecca Heal

"Oooo I need your love, babe."

Carla Judd

Oh yeah, we could do that one.

"Guess you know it's true. Hope you need my love, babe, just like I need you. Hold me. (clap, clap) Love me. (clap, clap) Hold me. (clap, clap) Love me. Ain't got nothin' but love, babe, eight days the week."

Rebecca Heal

We did that one a lot, too.

Carla Judd

Mmm hmm.

Rebecca Heal

We were on a show that had a 40-year-old contortionist.

Carla Judd

And she was amazing!

Rebecca Heal

Betty. An older couple and we all suspected that she had really big false teeth. And really big hair, and she had these fishnet stockings and these French cut, the little tiny bustier kind of things and this huge hair and she would go like this as he did the rope tricks, you know.

Carla Judd

And they played the banjos, you know.

Rebecca Heal

And Eugene Jelesnik on the violin.

Carla Judd

They were so cute!

Rebecca Heal

They were adorable. But this was not the hip show, you know. This was not rock and roll, it really wasn't. Yeah....it was just, it was.....

Rebecca Heal

It was entertaining!

Rebecca Heal

It was really entertaining! Hot Canary every night, and the Orange Blossom Special. You know he'd really bring the house down.

Carla Judd

He would.

Rebecca Heal

With the Orange Blossom Special.

Interviewer

Do you miss any of that? Being young sisters together on the road?

Rebecca Heal

No. (laughing) Well we still sing together, and of course she sings with another group, so. The Saliva Sisters.

Interviewer

Of course, the legendary Saliva Sisters.

Rebecca Heal

Exactly! She married this great guy and has seven lovely children and all these grandchildren and just such a solid, good person. And I became a Saliva Sister.

Interviewer

A serious question. If someone should ask you about Vietnam today, like a grandchild, what would you tell them?

Rebecca Heal

I think I would tell them that we were so fortunate, so lucky to be able to go over there and do one little teeny tiny good thing. You know, in a bad situation.

Carla Judd

It was a very bad situation.

Rebecca Heal

But how blessed were we, you know, that we got to go over there and help a little bit. Even just a little bit. But we got to. I don't think anyone from our generation would ever say "Vietnam! Those were the days! Let's do that again."

Carla Judd

I think it was an unusual war in the fact that it was a type of war that had never been fought before with the guerilla warfare, and so it was different and so unexpected for our troops to have to deal with what they had to deal with.

Interviewer

Did either of you hear something from the other sister that surprised you here today?

Carla Judd

Oh, that surprised me! You know, we grew up so close there wasn't a whole lot that either one of us didn't know about each other.

Rebecca Heal

Well, that's not exactly true. There I'd be, doing my homework. This nice, studious girl and Carla and Sandra would go off with these boys every single night.

Carla Judd

Yeah, that's right. A different boy every night.

Rebecca Heal

Having fun! There's just a lot of things she did that I'm sure I had no idea about.

Rebecca Heal

Well, tell them about toilet papering.

Carla Judd

Oh. Well you know there's kind of an interesting custom that we grew up with - toilet papering. And it was typically somebody that you liked that you would toilet paper or somebody maybe you had some kind of an issue with. It was interesting the fact that a boy I had gone with in high school happened to be in Vietnam and we ran into him. His name was Tom Gardiner. Cute boy. And somehow he was able to get on a transport and come up to Bangkok and meet with us. And so Tom and I went out to dinner in Bangkok one evening and I went into the ladies room and there was a roll of toilet paper on the back of the toilet. So I stuck it in my purse, and Tom and I toilet papered Bangkok that night and it was so much fun! But I'm sure if we had gotten caught we'd probably been strung up!

Interviewer

Cained.

Carla Judd

Probably cained. Those damn American kids. We were the ugly Americans that night I'm afraid. But we did have a good time.

Interviewer

Were you scared in the big venues? Which was more fun? The very big things or the little things?

Carla Judd

Mmmm. That's a good question. You know it really depends I think. Some of our smaller venues we got to just look right at them, you know? Some of our smaller venues where you really got to look right at your audience, you could kind of share something. And you don't necessarily share in a great big audience.

Rebecca Heal

But the great big audiences would whoop and cheer and jump up and down.

Carla Judd

But there's just nothing like being a 17-year-old girl, a 19-year-old girl, on the stage in front of thousands of young men. And having them all cheering at you and yelling at you and jumping up and down. It is awesome! It is the most incredible ego trip. It's like "Yes! I am beautiful!"

Rebecca Heal

And then you go off the stage and, you know, you don't feel that way anymore but for that one-minute you do.

Carla Judd

For a moment.

Interviewer

What's it like to come home? After all that, and your back on planet earth? What's it like after a tour like that?

Carla Judd

Well Becky had to go back to high school and be normal.

Rebecca Heal

I did, I went back to high school.

Rebecca Heal

We had been showgirls, and so I left kind of normal looking and when we came back we had three, not one, but three sets of false eyelashes that we'd wear!

Carla Judd

On top of each other.

Rebecca Heal

Three sets of false eyelashes! You know we would have all this hair. We had these dresses we had made and we were showgirls. 18-year-old showgirl. And people assumed things of me. I was a senior in high school. There were assumptions that were made that were not necessarily true about what actually happened on that USO tour. Nothing like that even remotely happened. But I think the three sets of false eyelashes gave them some bad ideas, you know. But we came back and people asked us about Vietnam and I just remembered being very passionate about the boys and very passionate about supporting them.

Carla Judd

Yes. And it's true when you go abroad for any reason and see the circumstances that other people....I remember going through Thailand on the train and thinking to myself about some of these people that you saw that just looked

like they lived in such poverty and how blessed we were and are. And to come home, you really do appreciate home. You appreciate the United States of America. You appreciate what you have and what you grew up with and it's a real eye opener.

Rebecca Heal

So true. I remember flying in and seeing the mountains that surrounded Salt Lake City and it was like I'd never seen them before.

Carla Judd

They were beautiful.

Rebecca Heal

They were beautiful, yeah. It's like you don't have any idea until you go away what a remarkable place Utah is and what a remarkable place the United States are.

Interviewer

Did you run into anybody else from Utah when you were on the tour? You saw that one boy come on the scene. Did you see anybody else?

Rebecca Heal

There was this one boy who actually wrote home to his parents that he'd seen us and he was from Holladay and it actually got in the newspaper. He talked about how great it was to see wholesome entertainment. And then he said that we were the hit of the show. We always liked this kid.

Carla Judd

I do remember seeing a couple of boys that I had gone to school with. One was in Alaska, Larry LePerle, and the other one in Vietnam that I saw besides Tom was Howard Brown. Just came up after one of the shows and it was just kind of fun to see somebody that I had gone to high school with. But not a lot. Not a lot of kids from Utah did we see. A lot from back east, a lot from the south.

Rebecca Heal

Oh, oh, oh! And the African-American boys!

Interviewer

Oh, tell us about that.

Rebecca Heal

Taught us hand stuff. The hand shakes. You remember all those really intricate hand thingsthat we couldn't do? But boy we sure tried! We worked really hard on these, and every different outpost had their own little hand things, you know. So every last one of them tried to teach us them.

Carla Judd

And they had their own songs that they would make up. In fact, in one of the places there in Vietnam I actually remember coming home with a book of songs that were written by the men there about their experiences. I don't remember any of them right now, but I remember they gave us a book of these songs. And the words that they had made up to tunes that we weren't familiar with. Kind of like what the Saliva Sisters do!

Rebecca Heal

Oh, oh! And you've still got it?

Carla Judd

No, I don't. I think I probably burned it long ago.

Interviewer

Were their differences between the boys in Alaska and the ones that were in harms way?

Rebecca Heal

Well the ones in Alaska were either in the radar stations or they worked in the hospitals. They were in support type positions for the young men that were over in Vietnam. And so there was a big difference in the fact that they seemed to be more carefree. Not really taking seriously what they were doing quite so much as the young men in Vietnam were. But there was one time when I was by myself up in Korea, and one of the songs that I thought Becky and I had sung because I knew the words really well and we had the music to it (it's called Downtown and it was a song by Petula Clark that had been very popular), I was in the middle of this song and all of the young men started laughing. I mean not laughing belly laugh but just kind of snickering and hitting each other and it was really unnerving. Come to find out afterward that downtown was where the prostitutes were in that little village. And so the bus broke down right in front of that area the very next morning and the young women that were out there were throwing rocks at our bus because as long as we were out there the young men were not coming by. And so that was my "downtown" experience.

Carla Judd

Actually we went to a place in Thailand, we did, it was a dance hall. We went to a dance hall in Thailand, and there were all these girls on the dance floor dancing and they had little nametags, and so you'd say "I want that girl, that girl". And they were color-coded, depending on what kind of health department certification they had. The ones that had one particular color were certified and the other ones were not. We actually had a few of them called to our table and we were introduced to them.

Interviewer

And what did the young girls from Utah think of that?

Rebecca Heal

It was exciting! It was exciting! (laughing)

Carla Judd

Being that we weren't familiar with their custom to, that's for sure.

Rebecca Heal

Yeah, that's for sure!

Carla Judd

And it was interesting because Oriental girls don't grow hair on their skin like we do, so they would come up and rub our arms. They just thought that was so fascinating that we had hair on our arms.

Interviewer

About your hair, what color was your hair at that time?

Carla Judd

What color was our hair? (laughing)

Rebecca Heal

Depends on which wig let we had on.

Carla Judd

They were beautiful. They were beautiful girls.

Rebecca Heal

Oh yeah. They had these great outfits with the little panels there and the pants on. They'd ride their bikes. They were lovely girls. We didn't speak to a whole lot of them. I remember we were sitting around once and these two little Vietnamese guys, they were probably in high school, came up. They were holding hands, and Oriental men do that. They were holding hands and one of them says "You're eyes like pools of madness!" I guess it was one of the statements that they'd heard the soldiers teach them that they could say to American girls. You can tell them that their eyes are pools of madness. Really? Wow! I'm gonna do something about that. I guess I better put my dark glasses on. Uh!

Interviewer

That's a deal closer, isn't it?

Rebecca Heal

Pools of madness! "Look at those girls -their eyes are pools of madness!" Oh, and then there were the women that chewed - beetle nut?

Interviewer

Beetles nuts?

Rebecca Heal

Beetles nuts is that what that's called?

Carla Judd

Beetles nuts, I think.

Interviewer

It was something they'd chew?

Rebecca Heal

Yeah they'd chew them. Yeah.

Interviewer

Tell us about that.

Rebecca Heal

Well, a lot of the Asians would sit haunched, I mean they had these amazing abilities to sit with their knees right up and their rumps on the ground. I mean they were just amazing the way they could sit and we'd see these women, they'd be chewing these beetles' nuts and there was some kind of drug in it that was very addictive. So they were very addicted, and their teeth would just be black. Just very, very black. It would turn all their teeth black. We'd never seen anything like that in Murray, Utah, had we? Never. No.

Carla Judd

We saw a lot that we'd never seen in Murray, Utah.

Interviewer

Tell us more of what you hadn't seen in Utah.

Carla Judd

That impressed us or depressed us?

Interviewer

You choose. You can tell us what impacted you.

Carla Judd

A thought is just coming to my mind. I was talking about going on the train in Thailand and stopping at a train stop and there were - I believe they must have been monks because they had their heads shaved and they had the orange. But one in particular was acting very erratic and very strange, and our liaison officer said that he was probably on some kind of narcotics. And I'd never seen anything like that. That was another thing that was unusual to us, was to see people who this was part of their everyday life was having to take narcotics of different kinds. It was kind of strange.

Interviewer

You said you got on the roof of this hotel and watched the war.

Carla Judd

Yeah, we watched the war.

Interviewer

Tell us some more of those things you saw on that roof. In some detail what you'd see and hear.

Rebecca Heal

Of course the fighting wasn't going on close to Saigon when we were there. So they were like tracer bullets, kind of like fireworks but they weren't. That's all we could see.

Interviewer

Did you hear rumbling or fire in the distance.

Carla Judd

Yeah, yeah. All of that, yeah.

Rebecca Heal

You know really far distance. Nothing really that close by to where we were.

Interviewer

What was Saigon like?

Carla Judd

It was a big city. And it was very bustling. A lot of people and very French. Everything was either in Vietnamese or French. Very little was in English. And they had mamasans that would come pick up your laundry and do your laundry for you.

Rebecca Heal

I think one of them knew "girl", and so she'd say "Girl! You girl. You girl." "Yeah mamasan, me girl, yeah." "You girl."

Carla Judd

I remember one time calling down to the desk to order breakfast. This has become kind of a joke with my children is when you'd pick up the phone you'd go "Moshi, moshi! I want bacon!" "Ham." "Eggs flied or scrambled?" "Scrambled." They only knew certain words so that's what you were limited to get over the phone.

Rebecca Heal

And they talked very fast.

Carla Judd

Very fast. Yeah. I wish we had great adventures. "And then we were kidnapped!" Let's make something up. "We were kidnapped by the Viet Cong and taken across the border to Hanoi and tortured, but we sang our way out. We just sang Sisters, Sisters and they cried and let us go!"

Interviewer

"And they told us our eyes were pools of madness!"