

**Military Operations Research Society (MORS) Oral History Project Interview of
Cynthia Lou Kee**

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INTRODUCTION

Cynthia Lou Kee serves as Administrator for the MORS office and has worked for MORS since 1987.

MORS ORAL HISTORY

Interview with Cynthia Kee
August 26, 2004
MORS Office, Alexandria, VA
Dr. Bob Sheldon, FS, Interviewer

Bob Sheldon: This is the 26th of August, 2004 and we're at the MORS office to interview Cynthia Kee. Where were you born and raised?

Cynthia Kee: I was born in the city of Honolulu on the island of Oahu [spelled O'ahu in Hawai'i], state of Hawaii.

Bob Sheldon: Tell me your parents' names?

Cynthia Kee: My father's name is Bernard Kaikala Wai Hu Leong Kee and my mother's name is Eleanor Furtado. My father has such a long name and my mother doesn't even have a middle initial.

Bob Sheldon: What did your father and mother do?

Cynthia Kee: My father was a mechanic for many years, and then started his own laundry business. In his forties he decided to change careers again and became a bus driver for the Honolulu Rapid Transit Company and drove "Da Bus." My mother was a homemaker and then a waitress at the Honolulu International Airport.

Bob Sheldon: They were life long residents of Hawaii?

Cynthia Kee: Yes. My mother was born on the island of Kauai [spelled Kaua'i in Hawai'i]. Her mother came to Hawaii as a child from Portugal and her father was from the Philippines. My father was born on the island of Molokai [spelled Moloka'i in Hawai'i] and a few months later moved to Lahaina, Maui. His mother's ancestry is Hawaiian and his father was born in China.

Bob Sheldon: Where did you go to school?

Cynthia Kee: When my father was discharged from the Army we lived in John Rogers Veterans Housing, which later became the Honolulu International Airport. It was a lot of fun living there. We played in bomb shelters and fished for tilapia in the swamp behind our homes. I was really surprised when I saw tilapia on the menu at some fine restaurants – of course I won't eat it.

I went to Kaloaloe Elementary School in Honolulu. The school was about a mile from my home and we walked to school every day. After school we would stop at a mom and pop grocery store and buy dried squid to snack on for our trek home. In 1960 the school was torn down because the Honolulu International Airport was being built.

Then I went to Aliumanu Intermediate School, moved to Kalihi Valley and attended Sanford Ballard Dole Intermediate School and Farrington High School. We moved to Kane'ohe my junior year where I graduated from James B. Castle High School.

I also went to the University of Hawaii Manoa and Chaminade University of Honolulu, got married and moved to Washington State.

Bob Sheldon: What did you study?

Cynthia Kee: I wanted to be an elementary school teacher, but after the second year decided to become a dietician.

Bob Sheldon: How many years of college did you have?

Cynthia Kee: Two years at the University of Hawaii and one year at Chaminade University. Then I got married and moved to Aberdeen, Washington. It rained a lot there and I loved it. All three of my children were born there.

I was a stay at home mom for 15 years and loved every minute. I marched in parades with my daughter twirling her baton, bowled on several different leagues with my husband and children, and did charity work for the Fraternal Order of Eagles Auxiliary.

In the 1980s I moved to Northern Virginia. I couldn't decide what type of job I wanted so worked several different types of jobs. I worked as a telemarketer for Times Journal, 5 pm to 11:45 pm, and as an associate at TJ Maxx, 1 pm to 4 pm and a night clerk at a 7-

11 convenience store, 12 am to 8 am – all at the same time. It became too stressful so I took a job as an assistant manager in a tool store (my favorite job) called “Tools and Things.” They went out of business about a year later – and not because of me.

Bob Sheldon: And then you interviewed here at the MORS Office. Tell me about your interview process.

Cynthia Kee: In 1986 I decided that I needed to spend more time with my three children and would work at only one job. I went to a job placement agency which was located in the same building as the MORS office on Whiting Street in Alexandria, VA. The agency sent me on two interviews the next day. The first interview was with an insurance company as an adjuster and the second was with MORS for a secretarial position.

When I got home I received a call from the job placement agency telling me that MORS wanted to hire me. I called Natalie [Natalie Kelly, now the VP for Administration] and told her that I would take the position. A few hours later the insurance company called and offered me the job as an adjuster. I told her that I had accepted the position at MORS. She asked if she could call me back. When she called again she offered me a thousand dollars more a year than what MORS offered me. She was also willing to form a bowling team because in the interview I mentioned that I loved to bowl. I told her that I accepted the position at MORS and would not go back on my word. She was not very happy but said that if I changed my mind to please give her a call.

Bob Sheldon: What qualifications for the MORS job were they looking for?

Cynthia Kee: Mostly clerical – assisting Natalie and Dick [Dick Wiles, now EVP Emeritus], filing, opening mail, etc., very easy tasks and no stress!

Bob Sheldon: What was it about the MORS office that appealed to you?

Cynthia Kee: Well I liked Natalie immediately. She had a nice smile and a friendly manner – not bossy. Dick was very direct – but also had a nice smile and a no nonsense manner. They were also willing to be flexible with my schedule and understood the demands of a single parent – plus the benefits were pretty good.

Bob Sheldon: So you were on duty here at the MORS Office for a couple of months and then your first MORS Symposium. Tell me about your first MORS Symposium you went to.

Cynthia Kee: That was the 55th MORSS at the Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, in Montgomery, Alabama. Since it was my first MORSS I could not judge whether it was good or bad. I must say that the Air University was an excellent facility and the support from Dan Fox was one of the best in my 18 MORSS.

Bob Sheldon: Tell me what was bad about it.

Cynthia Kee: The Montgomery Airport was being renovated. When we exited the jet, the humidity was so thick it slapped me in the face. Wires were hanging from the ceiling as we walked through the airport to our rental car and until this day I believe that the mosquitoes were almost as big as small birds.

The HQ hotel was the Sheraton Riverfront Station. It was a nice hotel, but a bit run down and the service non-existent. The Directors dinner was held at a plantation. While sitting on the porch, I was bitten by one of the bird-like mosquitoes. Two hours later I went to a hospital due to an allergic reaction to the mosquito bites. My calf was so swollen that I could not put my jeans on.

Bob Sheldon: Allergic reactions?

Cynthia Kee: Yes.

Bob Sheldon: How were the people in MORS that came to register? And what was your job at the symposium?

Cynthia Kee: The people were nice and pleasant - some more chatty than others. Most of the MORSians I met are now MORS Fellows, like Wayne Hughes, Clayton Thomas, E. B. Vandiver, Marion Bryson, Lannie Elderkin, Marion Williams, Ed Brady, Mary Pace, Socky Solomon, Jerry McNichols, and many other Directors. We went out dancing where I met Harry Thie and Sam Parry. Natalie and Harry won a dance contest walking like an Egyptian. I had a really nice time.

My duties were to assist Natalie in registration and security. I also met Peggy Lambert for the first time. I was taught by the best in security procedures for wrapping and mailing classified packages.

Bob Sheldon: Any glitches or administrative hurdles you had to work around?

Cynthia Kee: Not really. I thought it was very organized.

Bob Sheldon: So you survived your first symposium?

Cynthia Kee: Yes.

Bob Sheldon: You went to the pig picking?

Cynthia Kee: Oh yes. Even with my swollen leg that I could barely get my jeans on because it was so fat - but I went and I danced and had fun.

Bob Sheldon: I assume the workload really built up fast and furious up to the symposium and things tapered off after the symposium.

Cynthia Kee: Yes. It is still that way after each MORSS.

Bob Sheldon: What was your next big adventure after that in MORS?

Cynthia Kee: We had a special meeting in the fall of '87 that I had to attend because Natalie had a prior commitment, so I accompanied Dick. Most of the Generals and Colonels at the meeting looked very young. I told Dick that they were promoting Generals at a younger age. Of course Dick immediately put things in perspective and said "They're not making them younger, you're just getting older."

Bob Sheldon: Our next symposium we were out in Monterey in 1988.

Cynthia Kee: That was great. From the worst site location to the best. That was a lot of fun. And Natalie was so excited about going that she made me excited. In fact every symposium for the last 18 years Natalie would always get so excited about going. It made me excited about going too. She has so much energy.

Bob Sheldon: Did you go out there for any of the planning sessions too?

Cynthia Kee: No. Dick, Natalie and Dick's cute, bouncy wife Ginny would do the site visits.

Bob Sheldon: Was it your first visit to Monterey?

Cynthia Kee: Yes.

Bob Sheldon: Had you been in California before?

Cynthia Kee: Yes. I lived in San Diego for a year.

Bob Sheldon: Tell me what you recall from that symposium?

Cynthia Kee: Monterey was so beautiful. I liked it because it was so cool and overcast. The food and restaurants were fabulous. And of course, Dick and Ginny took us to some really nice places. We visited the Hearst Castle and Dick would have such wonderful facts and stories to share.

Dick and Natalie were excellent managers. Add Ginny and you have a top notch team. I visited exquisite restaurants, ate delicious food, visited places that I otherwise would not have visited if I had accepted any other job and stayed in some very nice hotels. Plus I had my own room, which is nice. Getting away from the kids--I enjoyed that.

Bob Sheldon: And probably much higher attendance than there was at the Maxwell Symposium?

Cynthia Kee: Absolutely.

Bob Sheldon: And more people there meant more work for you?

Cynthia Kee: Right. But again I was still learning. Each MORSS offers new challenges so my job is constantly changing and evolving.

Bob Sheldon: Which people at the Naval Postgraduate School did you meet?

Cynthia Kee: I don't remember. We had dinner with Wayne Hughes and his wife Joan; they were and still are very hospitable.

After the MORSS Natalie and I flew to Hawaii. It was Natalie's first trip to the islands. I think she had a good time – I know I did. On one of our sight seeing excursions, I took her to Waimea Falls where they were having a Hawaiian performance. We were in the audience and they asked for volunteers to learn the hula. I convinced Natalie to go on stage with me. When the music started I jumped off the stage so I could take her picture. She was not very happy with me abandoning her but I got some really lovely pictures of her dancing the hula. And she gave me really, really dirty looks like I'm going to kill you. As you can see in this picture she had a great time.

Bob Sheldon: Have you scheduled any symposiums to be in Hawaii since then?

Cynthia Kee: Every year, but you know it hasn't gone.

Bob Sheldon: We were out at Fort Leavenworth in 1989. During that interim year leading up to that, anything significant?

Cynthia Kee: I started revising the forms – the method – because we were transitioning from the typewriter to computers. So I made a few changes that would make registration more efficient.

Bob Sheldon: I know you're in charge of the final program and have been for many years. Did you pick up that responsibility right away?

Cynthia Kee: Not right away. Up until that point, Natalie did everything. She never ceased to amaze me. I started to change the procedure with forms and different things, then it started to come more my way. And eventually I started to do the programs. That was my favorite part. Designing and editing.

Bob Sheldon: Let's talk about your first visit to Leavenworth, Kansas.

Cynthia Kee: It was all right. I've always heard about Leavenworth Prison in movies and was curious to see it. Natalie wasn't too keen about going when I asked her if we could go there. And Natalie said, "No, no I don't want to go." And usually I would say okay – no big thing but this was something I really wanted to do so she said, "Oh all right, we'll go, we'll go." So we drove up to the prison, got out of the car, ran up the stairs of Leavenworth Prison and posed for my picture. Well the guards came running up the stairs and said, "What do you think you're doing? Get out of here. This is not a tourist spot," or something like that. I laugh when I get nervous which irritated the guards even more and Natalie was really nervous. We got in the car and we left.

Bob Sheldon: You got the picture?

Cynthia Kee: No. Natalie was holding the camera and I was on the stairs posing. This really mean guard rushed her and told her to get the heck out of here. It was fun but a bit scary. But I got to the top of the stairs in front of Leavenworth Prison.

Bob Sheldon: Other than that any other notable memories from Fort Leavenworth – from that symposium?

Cynthia Kee: Not really.

Bob Sheldon: By then you're starting to get used to the routine of the symposium and how they operate. Was it all smooth and uneventful?

Cynthia Kee: Oh never. Each symposium is different. The problems that pop up, the logistics, how you're set up, and what the facility has to offer. Always different.

Bob Sheldon: From Leavenworth we go to Annapolis in 1990.

Cynthia Kee: And that was beautiful. I really liked Annapolis.

Bob Sheldon: And that was when you guys had the T-Shirts because you'd worked all the special meetings that year.

Cynthia Kee: That's right. We all survived – Mr. Thomas looked so cute in his shirt. There were six meetings that we did, or seven, including the symposium.

There was an incident at Annapolis regarding the Spouses Program where I was “yelled at” by an irate husband. Dick found out about it and approached the attendee. In essence Dick told him that he (Dick) was responsible for his staff and if he (the attendee) had a problem with them he should see him directly. A few minutes later I received an apology from the attendee.

Bob Sheldon: Dick really stood up for you?

Cynthia Kee: Yes. He has always taken care of his staff. Oh yes, Dick is the best of the best. You always knew where you stood with him, always. It was either yes or no. There was no fuzzy area.

Bob Sheldon: Anything else about Annapolis?

Cynthia Kee: Usually when we go to a site Natalie will show me everything, so that I know where everything is located. After that I'm in the office for three days. Natalie is usually running around putting out fires.

Bob Sheldon: So that is 1990, Annapolis.

Cynthia Kee: Oh my goodness. Fourteen years ago.

Bob Sheldon: Next year we're up at Dick's home territory at West Point. Tell me about that symposium.

Cynthia Kee: It was unbelievable. So much history, bravery - it was like being in a movie. Dick and Ginny always took us on such wonderful tours. We actually learned a lot from Dick's history stories. By the time the symposium starts I'm usually in the office. And the MORS meetings are very pleasant. In the 18 years that I've attended

MORS meetings I don't think there's been more than five people that I've dealt with who were rude, upset or angry towards me. And that's why I still love my job.

Bob Sheldon: Are those five people still alive?

Cynthia Kee: Yes.

Bob Sheldon: So it must not have been that bad?

Cynthia Kee: No.

Bob Sheldon: So the next year in 1992, we get to go back to Monterey.

Cynthia Kee: That was great too. Monterey is always wonderful. And I think we had a really nice hotel, really nice room. But I think that was the year that Natalie had these keys – you've heard the key story, right?

Bob Sheldon: Yes.

Cynthia Kee: I can still see her in my mind walking towards me with a handful of keys that were all jumbled and knotted together, with tags on them. And then she said, "But that's okay because the door locks were all disabled and won't lock." The locksmith made all the keys for the doors. So when she said, "Look at this jumble," he said, "It doesn't matter, the rooms don't lock."

Hork Dimon couldn't stop laughing. I think he was there with Natalie when the keys were presented to her. Hork Dimon was President when I was there. In '88 I think. He was the first President who wrote a letter to me thanking me for all my work. After that, there were a few Presidents who wrote to me, thanking me.

Bob Sheldon: Then we go to Dayton, Ohio at AFIT in 1993. What do you recall from that symposium?

Cynthia Kee: Not too much. That was really boring.

Bob Sheldon: I remember our Air Force people stayed in the Hope Hotel on campus.

Cynthia Kee: We always stayed at really nice hotels. Except for one. Oh which one was that? My room was full of water. The carpet was all wet. I was lucky I didn't get Legionnaires Disease. I think it was Kansas.

Bob Sheldon: Was the water leaking?

Cynthia Kee: The air conditioning system. That's when Chris Fossett was President.

Bob Sheldon: Did you go to the Air Force Museum in Dayton? I think the social function was at the Air Force Museum.

Cynthia Kee: Yes. That's the one where dinner was served on little dessert plates. I think there were around 400 people and they had enough food for maybe 200. I saw people eating the garnishing.

Bob Sheldon: They were desperate.

Cynthia Kee: Yes, that was really sad. And it's not Natalie's fault, but she gets blamed anyway.

Bob Sheldon: The next year in 1994 we went to the Air Force Academy.

Cynthia Kee: That's where they have the nice Cadet Chapel. Oh, that was beautiful. And again, we toured – I think we went to Breckenridge, one of the skiing resorts that's out there. That was a lot of fun. I enjoyed that.

Bob Sheldon: Did you go up Pike's Peak?

Cynthia Kee: Yes, we did.

Bob Sheldon: Take the rail car or drive up?

Cynthia Kee: Rail car. That was really scary. But I enjoyed it.

Bob Sheldon: Was there snow on the top?

Cynthia Kee: Yes, it was beautiful, but I had a hard time breathing.

Bob Sheldon: Anything notable from the registration or administrative process there?

Cynthia Kee: The room that we had was a board room. It was one of the nicest rooms we ever used for the MORS office but it was too far away from the sessions, auditoriums and board meeting. But it was nice. Excellent support. Oh, and West Point also had excellent support too. And the year that Mike McGinnis was at TRAC-Monterey we had excellent support there.

Bob Sheldon: Then let's go back to Annapolis in 1995.

Cynthia Kee: I mean after a while they all blend. So other than being beautiful and doing tours and eating good food, and working.

Bob Sheldon: By then you have your routine down?

Cynthia Kee: Right. Well I'm always changing procedures, forms, etc. When I walk into our onsite office I usually do the configuration. I always watch the flow - how they come in, questions they ask, and what they need. Peggy Lambert was our on-site security officer. I usually put her in a corner away from everybody because she was very particular about her space – she's an excellent security officer. Natalie gets mad at me sometimes (not really mad, just frustrated) because I am constantly changing things – forms, filing systems, furniture, etc.

Bob Sheldon: Do you recall anything from the social function at Annapolis?

Cynthia Kee: It was a banquet. Oh man that was boring. It was hot and awful. I don't like to be hot. I always travel with a fan.

Bob Sheldon: Let me back track to one of your functions. You arrange the MORS trinkets – the souvenirs that people buy. When did you first start doing that?

Cynthia Kee: I think it was maybe Monterey – maybe before that.

Bob Sheldon: How did you pick up that role?

Cynthia Kee: I would say, "Dick we need this, or it would be nice if we have a mug." And he would say, "Go with it. Bring me the information, how much is it going to cost, blah, blah, blah." I say, "Okay." And T-Shirts and then I added the bags, and then membership pins.

Bob Sheldon: The trinkets? Have those been hot items?

Cynthia Kee: For a while they were, but now – well if we had any mugs, T-shirts or bags left over we gave them to the guards.

Bob Sheldon: Do we generally make enough money off them to pay the costs?

Cynthia Kee: I think we break even. Because it's more of a good will thing. You know all we want to do is break even. Because we usually give

them, not only to the guards, but to the staff at the facility that we're at.

Bob Sheldon: And then people wear them later on. Great advertising for MORS.

Cynthia Kee: Right. And you'd be surprised where people wear their MORS T-shirts.

Bob Sheldon: Yes. This one has always been my favorite (AF Academy MORS T-shirt).

Cynthia Kee: I know. It's from the 68th MORSS at USAFA – I'm so glad we got it; and Maureen Harrington helped me out of a situation. A week before the symposium – this is while I'm on-site in Colorado – my supplier calls and says she cannot get me the shirts or the bags BEFORE the MORSS. Maureen Harrington happened to be there when I got the call and she immediately got into action. She was amazing. She took me to a local T-shirt and bag company, explained the situation, helped me choose the color of the T-shirt and bag and voila - they had it done in four or five days – shirts and bags. Maureen saved the day!

Bob Sheldon: This shirt has held up well over the years too.

Cynthia Kee: And that is one of my favorite shirts. I like the color.

Bob Sheldon: Back out to Leavenworth in 1996. And I think this is the year we went to the Farming Museum for our Wednesday night picnic.

Cynthia Kee: Oh yes. That was all right. I didn't like that one because it was hot. What made it memorable was Mike McGinnis playing the harmonica – he was pretty good. That was nice. Nothing else.

Bob Sheldon: Any other recollections that year from Fort Leavenworth?

Cynthia Kee: Yes, Phil Kubler was our Site Coordinator. He set the standards for future site coordinators. That was the year that Natalie went from one binder of MORSS information to two. She and Phil would compete to see who had the thickest information binders.

Bob Sheldon: You had seen the exciting part already?

Cynthia Kee: Yes, that was the prison. You know, I don't ever want to go back to Kansas. I don't remember the year but I offered to be Gene Visco's driver for his Buffalo Soldier research. He was having a few health issues. We visited several forts in Kansas where Buffalo Soldiers

were stationed. I didn't realize we would travel a 1,000 miles. I think it was more like 900 some odd miles. By the time we finished I decided never to drive in Kansas again.

Bob Sheldon: You saw enough of Kansas then?

Cynthia Kee: More than enough. Everything looked the same – mile after mile after mile. I mean I was so excited when we got to the forts even if it was just a run down building – it was a nice change of scenery. I thank God Gene has so many wonderful stories. Because that's the only part I enjoyed was his stories – I don't think I'll ever volunteer to drive again. Not in Kansas. Somewhere else maybe, but you know, done that, been there.

Bob Sheldon: The next year we're at Quantico in 1997.

Cynthia Kee: That was amazing. It was hot too but the Marines were unbelievable. We had over 50 Marines at our beck and call. I didn't lift anything. So that was really nice.

Bob Sheldon: Did you go to the parade, the tattoo ceremony?

Cynthia Kee: Yes, that was wonderful. I really enjoyed that.

Bob Sheldon: The buildings were a bit spread out.

Cynthia Kee: They were.

Bob Sheldon: Were there any other administrative issues that you had to work around?

Cynthia Kee: Audio/visual was a problem but the support staff handled it well. And that's when we started charging an additional \$100 for on-site registration. We had a few unhappy attendees.

Bob Sheldon: So before that you couldn't do on-site registration at MORS?

Cynthia Kee: You could register on-site but there was no additional charge so a lot of people took advantage of the situation. We would have over 150 attendees trying to register on-site. It was chaos.

Bob Sheldon: Any complaints since then? Now people are used to that.

Cynthia Kee: We always have complaints – someone is always unhappy about something.

Bob Sheldon: And the Marines did a lot of extra work for you there?

Cynthia Kee: They were wonderful.

Bob Sheldon: Then in 1998 back out to Monterey again. Another enjoyable visit.

Cynthia Kee: Always but support was scarce – I remember one year at Monterey, or two years, we had to lug all of our stuff up to the second floor.

Bob Sheldon: Why?

Cynthia Kee: Because the delivery people said door to door, not upstairs. And of course after that, I changed shippers. And made sure it said from door, upstairs, elevators, whatever. You know, from site to site.

Bob Sheldon: Those boxes of books are heavy.

Cynthia Kee: Yes. And we had trunks, foot lockers. If you ask me what is the worst part of this job, it would be all the lifting and hauling. I can't do it anymore. I'm getting too old.

Bob Sheldon: Then let's go to 1999 at West Point. You'd been there before? Anything different at this symposium?

Cynthia Kee: Nope.

Bob Sheldon: Just rolling along with the good times. Then in 2000, one of my favorite years, we were back out at the Air Force Academy, and that's the year this T-Shirt came out. So Maureen Harrington was helping you out?

Cynthia Kee: Yes. She was wonderful, she was excellent. The support was good there too. And our office was better; it was right next to everything. It was more central.

Bob Sheldon: Anything else administratively?

Cynthia Kee: Again, like I said we keep improving, changing.

Bob Sheldon: And then the following year we're back out at Annapolis again. And we didn't have any Y2K problems.

Cynthia Kee: That's the year that I brought my ukulele and kazoo. The staff was supposed to sing "The Air Force Song" to Roy Rice. We were ready, ukulele in hand, Corrina and Jarvey had kazoos. Then

Natalie decided not to do it. I don't know what happened. I said, "Come on let's go, let's go." We could not budge her. Guess she was having a bad day.

Bob Sheldon:

In 2002 we're out at Leavenworth again, and I remember the Steamboat Museum.

Cynthia Kee:

The steamboat; yes, that was fun.

Bob Sheldon:

Who picked the Steamboat Museum?

Cynthia Kee:

Natalie. She picks all the venues (although most of the venues are suggested by the local host organization -- in this case it was Mike Bauman of TRAC). She's good at it. She was a good host.

Bob Sheldon:

Then last year we were down at Quantico again in 2003. And I assume you had good support from the Marine Corps?

Cynthia Kee:

Excellent – but not as good as the first time. The first time at Quantico we had Captain Don Bates. And what a firecracker.

Bob Sheldon:

Finally, this year we were out at NPS and other than the heavy lifting problems, any other administrative issues?

Cynthia Kee:

No. The lines were shorter, less problem registration. The new thing that we did was mail out postcards a few weeks before early registration ended to everyone who registered for MORSS. It was a success. Most of the registrants met the early registration date. Within the last, I would say four years.

Bob Sheldon:

You got a process going?

Cynthia Kee:

Less problem registration.

Bob Sheldon:

You also put together the MORS Organization Manual, the MOM?

Cynthia Kee:

Yes.

Bob Sheldon:

When did that first start up?

Cynthia Kee:

It was before my time. I just changed the format, the way it looked.

Bob Sheldon:

How has that evolved over the years?

Cynthia Kee:

Well now it's on a CD so –

Bob Sheldon: When did we first start putting it out on CD's?

Cynthia Kee: I think about four years ago.

Bob Sheldon: And the contents of it have stayed the same?

Cynthia Kee: Basically it's stayed the same, right.

Bob Sheldon: Flip side, special meetings – did much of your work involve supporting special meetings?

Cynthia Kee: Well yes, it's like a mini-symposium. It's the same amount of work; just less people. And then I usually go on site with Natalie during the registration and support Brian [Brian Engler, the current EVP] and Natalie on the first day. Once things calm down – usually by noon of the second day – I will return to the office if it's close. But if not I stay.

Bob Sheldon: Do any of them stand out as being either problems or working really well?

Cynthia Kee: They're all just about the same. It's my job and I like it. The smaller meetings are much easier.

Bob Sheldon: And that takes care of my World of MORS agenda here. Let's flip through some pages of your photo album there and you can tell me about some of your other recollections.

Cynthia Kee: Well one story – Dee Ritchie was the *PHALANX* editor. She and I would work on the weekends on the *PHALANX*. At the time I was still a smoker and so was Dee. We were in the office working for about five hours and the office was filled with smoke.

Well, Dick and Ginny decided to come into the office to pick up some paperwork. They opened the door and there I was sitting at my desk, furiously typing away with a cigarette hanging out of my mouth – the office full of smoke (MORS is a non-smoking office).

That was the first time I saw a look of disgust on Dick's face. Ginny scolded me and shook her head and they left. On Monday morning Dick put an ashtray on my desk that had a picture of a good lung and one of a decaying smoker's lung. The next time I saw Ginny she offered me a hundred dollars to quit smoking. Needless to say that was the last time I smoked in the MORS office.

Bob Sheldon: When did you quit smoking?

Cynthia Kee: I quit smoking on April 16, 1992. After twenty eight years of smoking I went from three packs of cigarettes to zero.

Bob Sheldon: How did you manage to accomplish that?

Cynthia Kee: I could tell that my health was starting to decline and my skin color was looking ashy. Two years before I quit smoking I began modifying my smoking behavior. I stopped smoking after eating, while on the phone, etc. I also changed the brand of cigarettes that I smoked.

My youngest son Richard hated the fact that I smoked. He would tell me facts about the hazards of smoking. One day out of the blue he said “Mom, I’ll make you a deal – I will cut off one of my fingers if you quit smoking.” At that point I knew I had to quit.

My health plan offered a free class to help you to stop smoking. It was an eight week program. There were eleven people in my class. We talked about why we smoked, whether or not we really liked smoking or just did it as a habit and we were also shown some videos of smokers. One of the videos really hit home for me. It showed an attractive mother in her early forties, smiling and waving on the beach at Waikiki on vacation. Six months later they showed the same mother, lying on the couch, 50 pounds lighter who was diagnosed with lung cancer. She died a month after the video was filmed.

The smoking class kept in touch with all of the participants in my class for five years – out of 11 participants only four were still nonsmokers.

Bob Sheldon: And you're one of them.

Cynthia Kee: I also drank a six pack of coke a day – it went well with the cigarettes. I needed the caffeine. Besides my three children, quitting smoking was the best thing I ever did.

Bob Sheldon: Did you talk Dee Ritchie into quitting smoking too?

Cynthia Kee: She quit without my help. She started again a few times but I spoke to her the other day and she is a nonsmoker. I know that if I take a puff of a cigarette I would be back to three packs a day. Once in a while the cigarette smoke smells good and I want a cigarette but I do my breathing exercises and the feeling goes away. After I quit

smoking I realize how awful people smell who smoke. A very nice Hungarian woman owned the sandwich shop in our building on Whiting Street. One day she kissed my cheek. I could smell the nicotine seep from her lips onto my cheek. I ran upstairs and washed my face and realized how awful I must have smelled to all the nonsmokers. Well that was one with Dee Ritchie.

We had a lot of fun when she was the *PHALANX* editor. We would work all weekend and then go over to the Mexican restaurant Chi Chi's and have dinner and margaritas. When she retired as the *PHALANX* editor, the MORS Office gave her a leather bound book of all the issues she published as Editor. The leather bound book was red, because that's her favorite color.

I was the *PHALANX* composition editor while Dee was Editor. Without my knowledge she and Natalie put together a leather bound book of all the issues I worked on as composition editor of *PHALANX* – in blue because they knew it was my favorite color. (My favorite color now is orange.)

Bob Sheldon: She was the editor right after Jack Walker?

Cynthia Kee: No. There was one other editor after Jack. When Jack Walker was editor, we used to cut and paste - let me find a picture of that. This is how we used to put the *PHALANX* together.

Bob Sheldon: On the floor?

Cynthia Kee: We would have to type and code all the text, then send it to Intergraphics. Intergraphics would call to let us know that the text was ready. Then someone would come in to do the galleys – he would put them on boards – each board was a page in *PHALANX*. Jack would come in and put the galleys on the “wall” in the order that they would appear. I mean it was a long process.

After about two years of doing the *PHALANX* using Intergraphics, I asked Natalie and Jack if they would let me have a shot at doing the *PHALANX* in WordPerfect. Jack decided to give me a chance and gave me a new title – *PHALANX* Composition Editor. The process was much easier and took less time and it gave Natalie a little bit off her plate, which was always full. After a few years and added responsibilities, it became too much for me to handle. The overtime was nice but it was too much. I felt like I was back working my three jobs before I worked for MORS. So when Dee Ritchie took over as Editor she changed the look of the *PHALANX*

and hired FCS Communications to do the galleys and life was good again.

I also had a part-time job working for SCEA which was down the hall from MORS. I did all the data entry on weekends.

Bob Sheldon: I noticed some of the other people in these pictures. Clayton Thomas of course, and Marion Williams.

Cynthia Kee: Marion Williams is such a nice person. Gene Visco, of course he's one of my favorites. He became the Sponsor's Rep in 1987 – the same year I started. He has a lot of interesting stories and his voice is so pleasant. And he's good to hug.

Bob Sheldon: Let's flip through some more of these pictures.

Cynthia Kee: Love Jack Walker and his wife Toni. Great sense of humor and loved to tell jokes. The beach party in Monterey was fun - the best Wednesday night function for me. The food was catered by the Whaling Station – grilled sword fish and artichokes, strawberries dipped in chocolate – yummy. There was a dance band and Ginny Wiles had a lot of fun dancing. It definitely was the best.

When I first started Dr. Solomon was the Program chair for my first MORSS.

Bob Sheldon: And Mary Pace.

Cynthia Kee: Mary Pace, she's – as we say in Hawaii - no ka oi (the best). She's a good friend now and represented MORS well as President. She spent a lot of hours in the MORS Office going over the MORS Organization Manual [MOM], past symposia, and putting together the MORSS Program Chairs manual.

Bob Sheldon: The MORSS Program Chair Manual didn't exist before her time?

Cynthia Kee: No. Anything she does, she does well.

Sam Parry loved to dance. He always brought life to any MORSS function.

Once a year Dick and Ginny would invite us to their home on the northern neck of Virginia. We would have crabs galore – from Dick's traps.

Bob Sheldon: Is this when Greg Parnell was President?

Cynthia Kee: I don't know. I liked him. He made some changes when he was the President. I can't remember specifically what they were but they were some really good changes. E.B. Vandiver, I liked him. Strong MORS President. Before I quit smoking, he was my smoking partner. After I quit smoking I kind of missed chatting with all the smokers, but I didn't miss the smoking.

For my birthday Natalie and Dee Ritchie bought tickets for the Michael Bolton concert. We asked Mary Pace to join us and I was really surprised that she liked Michael Bolton. We were all screaming and yelling, we were all having so much fun. And then we made a whole night of it. After that we went to Dee's house and we had a pajama party. We all bought Michael Bolton T-shirts. We really had a good time just having fun and laughing. It was a wonderful evening.

That's it. This is the pig roast.

Bob Sheldon: Was the pig roast well attended?

Cynthia Kee: Oh yes. Excellent turnout - a lot of dancing.

This is where I got bitten. It was at the Directors Dinner.

Bob Sheldon: Oh boy, you really did swell up then. Bad mosquitoes in Montgomery.

Cynthia Kee: This was in Monterey. As you can tell – oh look at me with a cigarette.

This was in Hawaii – you know, I took Natalie to the island of Kauai and my cousin was having a birthday party for her son, first birthday party. A child's first birthday in Hawaii is a big thing. I guess it goes back to the past – if a child made it to his first birthday then he had a good chance of survival – so it was celebrated. Anyway, we had fresh ahi (tuna) caught a few hours before the party, poi, roasted pig and much more. There were also Hawaiian and Tahitian dancers.

Bob Sheldon: Do you still have a lot of relatives in Hawaii?

Cynthia Kee: Yes, quite a few.

Bob Sheldon: Any plans to retire there?

Cynthia Kee: We'll see. I would like to but it's so expensive to live there. It's so beautiful. The cost of living is so high though.

Bob Sheldon: Are these a lot of the photos that Jack Walker took?

Cynthia Kee: Yes, Jack Walker presented me with this photo album on one of my anniversaries with MORS – can't remember which one. But these were just ones that I had. And then of course the Old Buzzard Dick turned 60. We had a surprise birthday party for him.

Bob Sheldon: Sixty?

Cynthia Kee: Yes. Lannie Elderkin brought the buzzard cake. The theme was the 'old buzzard' – we had 'old buzzard' pins and balloons. It was a wonderful day.

Bob Sheldon: You've seen MORS people come and go. When you started out, it was you and Natalie and Dick, and one other administrative assistant. Who was the next to arrive in the MORS Office? Michael Cronin?

Cynthia Kee: No it was Dick Blomster. He was the husband of the secretary before me. Sandi was her name. She was a good friend of Natalie's. He had retired from the Marines and then he was hired.

Bob Sheldon: What was his role?

Cynthia Kee: He handled the phones and publications. And then we got Michael Cronin, and he was really good and cute. Nice Catholic boy. I liked him. But he moved on. He went to work for the Naval Engineers – I think something like that. The last time we heard from him he was at a college in Pennsylvania.

Bob Sheldon: Corrina came in to replace him?

Cynthia Kee: Corrina was hired as the Communications Manager. She was a breath of fresh air – well more like a whirlwind. She was excited about working for MORS, was young and energetic, and seemed like a team player. It's worked out very well having Corrina – she definitely turned out to be a team player, is extremely intelligent and has a nice sense of humor.

Bob Sheldon: At what point did we bring in a fifth person?

Cynthia Kee: That was about six years ago.

Bob Sheldon: Didn't we have somebody before Jarvey?

Cynthia Kee: Yes. Christine Parnell – Greg Parnell's daughter. She was young and cute. She found the job a bit boring so took a management position at a Christian store.

So things are working out very, very well. We all have our duties. I'm very happy.

Bob Sheldon: You've worked with various MORS Board members over the years. During your first couple of years at MORS, any MORSians that stand out in your mind?

Cynthia Kee: There are a lot of memorable MORSians, but THE most memorable are Jack Walker and Clayton Thomas. Mr. Thomas had a quiet sense of humor with excellent timing. Jack Walker could do no wrong – oh except for some of his outfits – like the green jacket and palm tree trousers.

Bob Sheldon: Any other comments about the changes in MORS over the years?

Cynthia Kee: Just different.

Bob Sheldon: Any other parting comments before we wrap it up? Okay, we'll call it a wrap then.

Cynthia Kee: Thank you.