

OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW

WITH

Martha Rohner van der Vlugt, M.D.

Interview conducted March 2, 1999

by

Joan Ash

SUMMARY

University of Oregon Medical School alumna Dr. Martha Rohner van der Vlugt shares her reminiscences of her early life, medical school years, and long career as both a private practitioner in Eastern Oregon and a medical officer with the United States State Department. She begins by describing her childhood in Granite City, Illinois, the town to which her parents had emigrated when she was just six years old. After a period of five years during which they established their residency in America, the family moved to Portland, Oregon, deemed “most like Switzerland” by her father.

Martha talks about her early education in Portland, from Kennedy Elementary through Jefferson High and on to Reed College. She addresses the issue of women in science, noting that many of her teachers were women and that none discriminated against her on the basis of gender. While attending Reed, she obtained a position working as assistant in the bacteriology lab at the University of Oregon Medical School under Dr. Harry Sears. She talks about the lab and tells the story of her courtship with fellow medical student Jerry van der Vlugt, who was obliged to take the bacteriology course twice in order to pass.

The day before her graduation from medical school in 1937, she and Jerry were married. After some further training (he in surgery and she in OB/GYN), the couple headed out to Eastern Oregon where they embarked upon private practice. She talks about the challenges and issues facing rural practitioners, and about the private challenges they faced in raising a large family.

After Jerry’s death in the 1960s, Martha joined the State Department as a medical officer in the foreign service. She spent almost ten years in Southeast Asia, including two years in Saigon during the Vietnam War. She talks about the clandestine way in which important patients would be brought to her embassy office after normal working hours.

Returning to the United States, she went to work for another federal department, the Office of Personnel Management, where she and a colleague started the journal *The Federal Physician*. She notes that the government post allowed her to work right up until her retirement at the age of eighty-two.

Gerold V. van der Vlugt, son of Jerry and Martha and UOMS alumnus of the Class of 1963, had passed away shortly before the interview was conducted. Martha talks a bit about her son and shares details from his obituary.

Finally, Martha addresses the issue of women in medicine, and shares her advice for women seeking to enter the profession.

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Interview with Martha Rohner van der Vlugt, M.D.
Interviewed by Joan Ash
March 2, 1999
Site: Dr. van der Vlugt's home, Silver Springs, Maryland
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

[Editor's note: The interviewee seems to become confused at certain points during this interview.]

ASH: It's March 2, 1999, and this is Joan Ash interviewing Dr. Martha van der Vlugt in her home in Silver Springs, Maryland.

Where were you born and raised?

VAN DER VLUGT: I was born in Switzerland, and we emigrated to this country when I was almost six years old, and I started grade school not speaking English. I hadn't had time to learn too much yet, but I was learning.

ASH: How did that affect you?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, when I went to school every day, the teacher, Mrs. [Philly?] put me on a chair right beside her desk, so I could watch her. She said I should watch her face and her motions and everything, and then I would learn English faster. But I'd come home every night and cry, and my mother would cry with me because I wasn't learning fast enough, I thought.

My brother was also in school, but he could speak English better than I. He was three years older than I, and I always thought he was smarter than I. So I always had to make myself do something better. But they finally decided the reason I cried was because I didn't have a desk; I was just sitting in a chair. So my brother told the teacher, so she put me in a desk in the front row, and then I didn't cry anymore [laughs].

ASH: What school was this?

VAN DER VLUGT: It was—let's see—I can't remember the name. It wasn't Kennedy, but it was the name of some United States President.

ASH: And it was in what town?

VAN DER VLUGT: In Granite City, Illinois—

ASH: Granite City, Illinois.

VAN DER VLUGT: Which was just next to East St. Louis. Had a reputation of being kind of a tough town.

ASH: And why did your parents move there?

VAN DER VLUGT: Because they were acquainted with the Methodist minister, and this minister gave us a little house on the back of his property. As I look back now, it was probably a slave house, you know, in those days.

So I had three brothers, and my father had them work two hours every night to dig a basement. And he found some big logs, and they moved this little house on top of the basement, and he built onto it until we had a lovely house, which was right next to the preacher's house, up in the front part of the lot, and we were very proud of it.

ASH: What a good idea.

VAN DER VLUGT: My father, he was a bright man. He could build, and he built houses and furniture. He built three churches in Switzerland. I have a picture of two of them. He was always very, very busy.

ASH: What was his occupation?

VAN DER VLUGT: He was a carpenter and a builder. Whatever you call that person that can do everything to make a house or a church.

We lived in a big house, one section, and the other section of the building was used to build furniture, and he had a lot of Italian workers. My hair used to be a little more curly than it is now, and my father would tease me because all the Italians had curly hair [laughs].

ASH: In other words, he had Italians working for him making furniture?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. And pieces of houses; then they put them together. Even in those days, they did what they're doing now in building buildings and houses: they made sections and put the sections together.

ASH: I'll be darned. You had three older brothers, then?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: How did that make you feel as a girl? You were the only girl and you were the youngest?

VAN DER VLUGT: I had an older sister, too.

ASH: Oh, you did.

VAN DER VLUGT: Oh, I always thought they were smarter than I was and I was lucky to be a little girl, one of them, because every day I learned something from them. My mother would tell me, “Now, every day you listen and watch, and then you’ll keep learning something, and pretty soon you’ll be as smart as they and maybe smarter” [laughs].

ASH: So you learned English.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: Pretty fast?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah, I learned English fast, in school, particularly. My brothers could speak English sooner than I could, and that made me feel good.

ASH: What was health care like back then? When you were growing up did you go to the doctor?

VAN DER VLUGT: I can’t remember that I needed to go to the doctor. I was very well—physically and mentally and spiritually. We were Methodists, and that suited us all very well. Now I’m an old Episcopalian, but Methodists were just a branch of the Episcopalians. But it just worked out that I was closest to an Episcopal church later on.

ASH: So you grew up in Illinois until—when did you leave?

VAN DER VLUGT: As soon as we got our citizenship, which was five years. We had to live in one place five years and be registered. Granite City, Illinois, and all that area was flat, you couldn’t see any mountains. It was hot in the summer and cold in the winter, and Dad didn’t like it. So he and two other Swiss fathers went out West, and they decided that Portland, Oregon, was most like Switzerland.

So we saved enough money and moved to Portland, Oregon.

ASH: All of you moved?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: You drove out there?

VAN DER VLUGT: We took the train.

ASH: Your parents and four children.

VAN DER VLUGT: Five children.

ASH: Five children. What a big move.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. He was so good at saving money. You know, he had to save a lot of money to do all that. But he worked very hard.

ASH: And what was his name?

VAN DER VLUGT: Rohner, John Rohner, and the German form of John is Johannes. And he believed in not giving long names, just one name and your family name, which was Rohner. No middle name. So we all just had a simple first name, and our last name, Rohner.

ASH: How old were you when you moved to Portland?

VAN DER VLUGT: About 11 or 12.

ASH: So you were still in elementary school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. My school here was Kennedy School, and Kennedy School was a nice little school. It was bought by an organization which made a bed and breakfast place out of it, and my picture is on the wall of the dining room.

ASH: As a famous alumna?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Laughter] Yes. So in 2002, which will be my sixty-fifth alumni medical school graduation, I'm going out there again. Carrie will go with me—she always goes with me everywhere—and we're going to stay there one night and enjoy this great school again.

ASH: Oh, how fun! So you graduated from grade school, and where did you go to high school?

VAN DER VLUGT: To Jefferson High School, which is still there. It was a good high school.

ASH: And what were your interests?

VAN DER VLUGT: I was always interested in music, and we had a little old organ at home—not a piano, but an organ. So I played on it every night some. And I was interested in sciences.

And then from Jefferson High School I went to Reed College. And there I was interested in science.

ASH: Were there many women at Reed then?

VAN DER VLUGT: Not very many, but there were a few. Reed was even then a good, highly scholastic school.

ASH: You must have done very well in high school, then?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, and I enjoyed high school. I had good teachers. They were interested in the fact that I could speak German and French and English, and that made me feel as if they had a special interest in me. Actually for a little while I took French, but I didn't keep it up. There wasn't any reason to. But I enjoyed talking in French.

ASH: Well, how did your interest in science develop—because girls were not drawn to science then.

VAN DER VLUGT: That's right. The teachers were interesting. There is so much in science that's fascinating; you can't help but be very much interested in it.

ASH: But you were a girl; you weren't supposed to be interested in it.

VAN DER VLUGT: [Laughs] Well, I had three brothers, you see, so it was easy for me to get along with guys because I had to get along with my brothers, and they weren't the easiest to get along with sometimes [laughs].

ASH: Well, how did the teachers feel about a girl interested in science?

VAN DER VLUGT: Oh, I don't think there was any difference. I didn't notice it; it didn't seem to me that there would be any difference. I was being educated, and that was an interest. So it was okay.

ASH: See, we're still trying to get girls interested in science and engineering and medicine, and so I'm trying to find out the right way to do that. What was it that encouraged you?

VAN DER VLUGT: The interest in science. There was so much information that still needed to be developed. So one was constantly interested in science.

ASH: Did you have any particular teachers you really liked? Not that I'm asking you if you remember their names, but just do you remember...

VAN DER VLUGT: No. The general science teacher was the one that was most interesting to me. She was so widely informative about everything.

ASH: And how was it that you went to Reed? How did all that happen that you even went to college?

VAN DER VLUGT: Because it was in Portland, and I could ride the streetcar and the bus. I got on a streetcar one block from our house and then transferred to a bus that took me right to Reed College.

ASH: And how did you even think about going to college? Had all your brothers and sister gone to college?

VAN DER VLUGT: My sister didn't, but both of my older brothers did. And the youngest one, he also went to college. Actually, they went to Central Wesleyan College, which was a Methodist college, but they had to live in the dormitory there. And none of us had a lot of money, so we all had to work always to earn money, all of us. The boys earned money at Central Wesleyan College.

And I eventually also went one year, and then—now, let me see—I think I went there one of the middle college years. I can't remember whether it was sophomore or junior year. Earned a bunch of credits there, and they accepted them at Reed.

ASH: Was that because it was less expensive than Reed? Why did you make that change?

VAN DER VLUGT: Because it also had a religious element to it. It was a Methodist school. Three mornings a week we had breakfast and it was a prayer breakfast—or maybe it was even four mornings. I always enjoyed that breakfast.

ASH: But you went back to Reed to graduate?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: So tell me about Reed and what there was about Reed that you liked.

VAN DER VLUGT: It was educationally stimulating. You really had to work hard to get by, and you had to study hard. I was lucky in that I never had anything to worry about at home because my mother took care of everything: she did all the laundry, she mended all the clothes, she did a lot of sewing. And she always had good food for me, and I enjoyed her company. She was just nice to have around, to be around. I was very lucky. She lived into her eighties, and finally she stayed with us her last few years till she died of a stroke, somewhere in her eighties. She was no problem to us, and I think we took good care of her.

ASH: Did you work when you were in college?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Coughs] Yes.

ASH: What did you do?

VAN DER VLUGT: Let's see. I had a job as—[coughs]. Like a secretarial type of work. I was writing various news articles, and I'm sorry I didn't keep any of those—but I never considered the thought of keeping any of that stuff that I did. It wasn't worth the effort.

ASH: You wrote. Do you mean you wrote as part of your course work, or you wrote in another capacity? In your work?

VAN DER VLUGT: I wrote all sorts of little articles. While I was at Reed, I also got a job and earned some money in the lab, in the science lab.

ASH: Chemistry, or biology?

VAN DER VLUGT: Biology. And that's where I became interested in the healing and the medical side of biology, in the basic biology that we learned.

ASH: Did you have a particular teacher that you worked for?

VAN DER VLUGT: The teacher that was the head of the biology department is the one I worked for, and I don't even remember her name, but there were just a group of good, good teachers at Reed. They had you do something, and you did it.

ASH: And it was a woman, though?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah, they were all women, come to think of it, that were in the biology department.

ASH: That's interesting.

VAN DER VLUGT: There still were a lot of men around, but the biology teachers were all women.

ASH: At what point did you really decide you wanted to go to medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: It was when I got a job in the bacteriology department.

ASH: At Reed?

VAN DER VLUGT: At Reed. And then that department was also part of the labs at the Medical School. It was all sort of interrelated before I even got to the Medical School.

ASH: Oh. So there was collaboration?

VAN DER VLUGT: Uh-huh. And I could never have gotten into medical school unless I had a real good job. I didn't graduate from Reed because I had to work, and it was the real good job I had in bacteriology that got me from Reed College to the Medical School.

ASH: You didn't have a college degree; those were the days, then, when you could go to medical school directly from college?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah, I really don't know how I did it, but I got into medical school without having a degree from Reed, but I had enough credits that were good enough, for premedicine.

ASH: I know I've interviewed some people who went to the University of Oregon for three years and then went to medical school, and after their first year of medical school they got their undergraduate degree. Did you get your degree from Reed, then, after?

VAN DER VLUGT: Then I got my degree from the University of Oregon.

ASH: Oh, you got your degree from the University of Oregon? I see.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, and then they also gave me a master's degree in bacteriology from the University of Oregon. And then of course later on I got my M.D. degree from the University of Oregon.

ASH: How interesting.

VAN DER VLUGT: But I wasn't so excited about all that stuff then; I just wanted to keep going [laughs].

ASH: Well, you obviously enjoyed the bacteriology job, but then you had to apply to medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: And were you interviewed?

VAN DER VLUGT: I must have been. I can't remember precisely anymore.

ASH: Do you remember who the Dean was then? Let's see, what year was that? Nineteen thirty-five?

VAN DER VLUGT: I graduated—about '35. I don't know who was the Dean. I'd have to look it up. But I knew a lot of the profs at Medical School somehow because I worked full time for a whole year in the bacteriology lab.

And then in order to make enough money, I became the assistant to Dr. Sears, the bacteriology professor, and he gave me the room right beside his office as my bacteriology lab. You went into the door from the hallway, and one side of the room, and clear across the window, was all bacteriology equipment and, oh, laboratory stuff, incubators. Just full of

equipment.

ASH: And this was when you were a medical student?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, that was. And they were already getting ready to put me in there a year before I was even admitted as a student. The last year should have been at Reed, and I worked full time as a bacteriology technician. I can't quite remember—

ASH: Were you working at Reed or at the Medical School?

VAN DER VLUGT: At the Medical School.

ASH: Oh, you were. No wonder you knew people then.

What made you decide to apply for medical school? You could have continued in the bacteriology lab; it sounds like you were happy.

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, that's a part of medicine, you know, bacteriology. It's a great part of diagnosis of disease, and they were always finding new bacteria, and we were finding new bacteria, too. I should go back—no, I'm not going to, but I could have gone back and checked on what new things we had discovered in our lab because we had found some new organisms.

ASH: Brand new ones, huh? So why didn't you just continue doing that instead of going to all the trouble of going to medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: You could make more money being a doctor. Being a professor, you—it's not boring, but you're too limited in what you can do, I think.

Now, Dr. Sears, he was Head of the Department, but he never could do something that had excitement to it, I didn't think.

ASH: Well, what was it that made you—I mean, at some point you must have filled out an application for medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: Why did you do that?

VAN DER VLUGT: I really don't know, except that my mother was always stimulating me to go ahead and go on—because Dad had died by then.

When we first came to Portland, Oregon, Dad bought a five-acre place with lots of trees, cherry trees and apple trees and pear trees and all kinds of fruit trees, and about an acre of berries that he made more productive. We were on the other side of the street, across

Columbia Boulevard, and on the other side of the street was a great big dairy. One of the girls in the dairy...

[End Tape 1, Side 1/Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

ASH: ... as soon as you moved to Portland?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, soon afterwards she became my best friend and stayed my best friend. Her name was Margaret [Schneider?]. And now that dairy is a lovely golf course, and if we would have hung onto the five-acre place we had, which was just beautiful—my Dad always made everything so lovely, but we all helped with the work. And he died, and so Mother had to figure out a way to earn a living, so she exchanged the five-acre place for [Leona?] Apartments. So she was able to buy the place and rent out the apartments and make enough money to live on.

ASH: I see. And that was before you went to medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: But then you as children all had to earn your own way?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah. We had five cows, and every morning my brother and I—I'd milk three cows, and he'd milk two, and take care of them, and we'd bring the milk to Mother, and she'd put it in bottles and we'd deliver them to our customers. That's the way we earned our living from the five-acre place, but it was nice that we didn't have to do that anymore when she bought the apartment house.

But I was a good cow person. I liked Bessie; she was my pet cow. She knew her name, and as I milked her she would turn around and her great big eyes would just about talk to me. I just loved her, and she was nice and warm when I put my head against her. She was a Jersey, and she'd give a lot of rich milk. And then the Holstein, she'd give thin milk, but when we mixed all the milk together, it made a good milk to sell to all the neighbors. And they loved that milk.

ASH: Did you pasteurize it or anything?

VAN DER VLUGT: No, it was fresh, fresh. We milked, and then we cleaned up and had breakfast while Mother bottled it. And then on our two bicycles with a thing on each handlebar that held the milk, we gave it to all of the people that bought it.

ASH: So, it was awfully fresh.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, it was really fresh.

And Mother was so careful. As I look back, she was more careful than she would

have had to be. I was lucky; I admire her for always being so extra careful about everything.

ASH: Clean, you mean?

VAN DER VLUGT: Clean, yes. All day long she would boil all the bottles in great big things, like these oil—[laughs] pasteurize clothes in sometimes, you know. So the bottles were all sterile. And she was always proud of her—it was not a basement, but it was kind of a half story below the main floor.

So that went on until we bought the apartments. And we were lucky to make that change.

ASH: In medical school, then, were you still living at home?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: Tell me about medical school. Tell me about the social life and the courses.

VAN DER VLUGT: Being a very active member of the Methodist church, we had lots of good friends in that church. We were good Methodists. [Coughs.] So we didn't need a lot more friends than from that church.

ASH: What about the people you went to medical school with?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Pause] Well, I was so busy. It's all one memory, all that area. I was too busy. I didn't have time to even think about anything else but—[coughs] get school done and get work done and take care of myself.

ASH: Did you continue working in the lab throughout medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. And Dr. Sears, the Head of Bacteriology, he became almost like a father figure to me because my father then had died. He gave me more and more to do.

I remember particularly one day when we were grading finals—I was grading a bunch of final exams, and Dr. Sears charged through the door, which he never did without knocking at the door, and said, "This man is not going to graduate from medical school. He can't spell." The last word on the paragraph was insulin. It was misspelled. It had two ns instead of one. Anyway, he found several other misspelled words. And that was my Jerry, and I didn't know that he misspelled stuff, you know.

ASH: You already knew him?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. He was a year ahead of me. And even before I was registered as a medical student, I was working in the bacteriology lab. It was a lot of work, in terms of bacteriology. One day I'm going to find out whether they still do it, but we had—

every student had a certain bacteria that he worked with in his little compartment where they made cultures and transferred cultures and all that sort of thing; and I was the assistant in the lab. And then before very long I was not only the assistant in the lab, but I ran the darn lab. Dr. Sears hardly ever showed up. And that was a lot of work.

ASH: And you were a medical student.

VAN DER VLUGT: And I was still a medical student. And so every other medical student knew me and had to get along with me and had to show some respect of me in order to get a good grade in bacteriology [laughs].

ASH: So that's how you met your husband?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: You were sort of teaching him, or helping him?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. And he had to take bacteriology twice because he misspelled those words on the final exam. So I gave him an extra set of bacteria to work with because he'd already had the same thing set all the rest of them had. And he thought that was pretty nice of me to take the extra time, you know, and he knew that I didn't think that he should take bacteriology twice because—I told Dr. Sears, “He has the information there in the exam. He shouldn't have to take bacteriology again.” But he was so disgusted; he had never seen anybody spell so badly.

Later on we learned that he had a gene in his family that he inherited and that he passed on. Now Carrie has a terrible time with spelling, and she has that gene. You know, you can make allowances for it, you can always have somebody correct what you spell, instead of having to write stuff that shows up with misspellings. But it's hard on her.

So I learned to know my Jerry very well, having him twice in bacteriology lab. I remember he sat on the end seat, so I always walked next to him very often. He was very a very blonde Hollander. He was really blonde. He was the Northwest wrestling champion, so he was very well developed, and he was good looking. So we very soon became very much acquainted. Then we got married the day before I graduated from medical school so that all my papers would be in my married name, so I didn't have to redo them.

ASH: They did allow you to get married?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: They allowed women to get married while they were in medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, it was the day before graduation [laughter]. But I think I was a little special in that I was always an assistant to the teacher. All the time I was in

medical school I was like part of the instructor staff, and I went to many of the meetings that the profs had, you know.

ASH: You did?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, because they affected our department, too, and Dr. Sears wanted me to understand what was going on.

ASH: Did you do any lecturing?

VAN DER VLUGT: In the lab. Not a whole lecture, but telling them what to do and how to do it.

ASH: You instructed. Were there any other women in medical school with you?

VAN DER VLUGT: One. Her name was Elizabeth [Bishop], and she died a few months after graduation in an accident. It was real sad.

ASH: Oh, how awful.

VAN DER VLUGT: So I was the only woman that finished up. And I was lucky that I got married, you know. It was a dandy thing to do.

ASH: Why?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, a woman alone, you'd have a hard time practicing medicine, I think. I really think you would, unless you were with somebody or working for somebody. But being married to Jerry, I was already okay; I was settled.

ASH: Did it make any difference in medical school that you were a woman and not a man?

VAN DER VLUGT: Because I was an instructor, all the guys had to be nice to me. And anyway, I was too busy to do anything else but have them be nice to me.

I remember the first time that Jerry asked me to go to lunch, it was in the springtime, and the weather was nice, so we rode down the Hill in an open car. The guys were all nice to me, and they knew I was going out to lunch with Jerry, and they kidded me a little bit about it, you know.

And then they stopped in front of a funeral parlor. Well, apparently that's where Jerry lived, upstairs. He took night calls and helped in other ways, too.

This was at the funeral parlor, and I wasn't going to get off there. I was going to lunch, I wasn't going to a funeral parlor [laughs], and I wouldn't get out of the car. Finally, the guys,

finally, told me that Jerry lived upstairs. And another student, Val [Vladimir] Chronovski, he was a Russian, a very intelligent fellow, a real nice guy. He also lived upstairs with Jerry, and they did some of these night calls for the funeral parlor. And I said, “I don’t want to get off,” because I was going to lunch, I wasn’t going to go to a funeral parlor.

ASH: Were they going to serve you lunch in the apartment? Why did they stop there?

VAN DER VLUGT: Because Jerry had to leave his books there, and I think kind of change his clothes and take a different jacket, and then we were going to walk to a restaurant. But in the meantime, I finally got upstairs to where they lived. They had a nice apartment, real nice apartment. There was no person, no dead person, in the place. But it was the fellas that finally said, “It’s okay now for you to get out. He’s just going to change his clothes”—or whatever, leave his books. “And Val Chronovski is probably already up there, and then you’re going to have lunch.” And Jerry said, “Yes, I’m going to take you to lunch.” He didn’t have any extra money then, either, you know.

So I got out, and I wouldn’t have gotten out unless the guys kind of made me get out. And finally a beautiful old gentleman with white hair came to the door, must have been in his seventies, and he was so cordial and nice to me. He invited me in and said, “It will just take Jerry a few minutes to change his jacket, and he’ll be ready to go out.”

I wouldn’t have gone in if that old fellow hadn’t come to the door. So I was okay, and we had lunch.

ASH: You had a nice lunch?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. I don’t remember what we had, but I know it was our first nice lunch.

ASH: And it was your first date?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: And what year was that? Was that your last year of medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: It was your last year of medical school. Had you had any dates before that with anyone?

VAN DER VLUGT: No.

ASH: You were always too busy?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. That’s really the only reason. I wasn’t interested in dates. I

was interested in getting educated, not in dates.

ASH: Well, you had already applied for an internship at that point?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: And so where did you go for that?

VAN DER VLUGT: San Francisco. Women's and Children's, and it was in the [indiscernible] District of San Francisco.

ASH: That must have been 1940, 1939?

VAN DER VLUGT: Nineteen thirty-nine.

ASH: And did Jerry have an internship in San Francisco, also?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Coughs] He had an internship close by but not actually in San Francisco. I can't remember the name of it, but it was close by. He already had one year of internship, and he had another year. In those days he was doing real surgery work the whole time and very busy.

ASH: As a resident? Sort of like a resident?

VAN DER VLUGT: A resident, yes. And then I actually had one year, and I was going to have another year, but things worked out that—[pauses]. I have to think a minute.

Then, we were married, so we were living together, and it was—we had a house and an office in the front of the house, general offices. And they supplied us with equipment. And this was on the way from Eastern Oregon to Portland.

ASH: Not John Day? This was before John Day?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, this was before John Day. [Coughs] And it was—

ASH: How did you find that place and why did you go there?

VAN DER VLUGT: I think they gave it to us to, you know, work there.

ASH: Somebody must have recruited you? This was a good deal, they got two doctors, right? Together?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. A surgeon, and I did general practice and OB/GYN. I don't know how it worked out that we had all this extra training, but it was a good combination of things to do.

ASH: You were sort of a whole hospital staff yourselves.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: And so you ended up in Central Oregon? I take it in a town that really needed physicians.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. The whole county needed physicians. Who wanted to go way up there? There was nothing there except mountains and cows and—

ASH: Why did you go there? You two could have gone anywhere, probably.

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, we were needed. We knew we were needed. It was a challenge to go there. We didn't have any money, and this town—the town of Prairie City—there was John Day, Prairie City, Canyon City, Long Creek, all of them little towns. So it was Prairie City that had the hospital upstairs from the nursing home. So we found a place to live right close to the hospital, a house that they gave us to live in.

So we were busy from the very beginning. [Coughs.]

ASH: How many beds was the hospital?

VAN DER VLUGT: Oh, I can't remember. Twenty, twenty-five. There were plenty of beds. And when we were getting nice and settled, was when my oldest brother, John, and his wife were killed in an auto accident, and all four children were injured. So we took all four kids. And we'd only been there less than six months. So we all at once had a big houseful.

ASH: Were they serious injuries?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. Two of them were not serious, and two of them were very serious. [Jodie?]
—she was a sweetheart; she had wounds and was bedridden. And Anne had some broken bones. She had some ribs broken. Eventually both of them healed. And both Annie and Jodie lived with us until they were married.

Then the other two, Betty was getting ready to go to college, so she was already entered into her college. And Johnny had another year or two to do and wanted to go into the military. So they weren't with us so very long. However, they needed money. I don't know how we ever managed to earn enough money to take care of all those kids.

ASH: Did people pay you for your medical services? Did they pay you in money or in other things?

VAN DER VLUGT: They paid us in everything. They paid us mainly in money. Jerry was a good financier. I didn't pay much attention to the money part. I just worked.

But see, the girls were just about old enough that they could do some of the housework. We had a real nice bunch of people working together there. And here they'd lost their parents, which was very hard on everybody. And we had them buried in Portland, Oregon. We bought a big row of plots where my father and mother were buried, and so John and Grace were buried there. And everything kind of worked out.

So it smoothed out real well, but it was hard on the kids to lose their parents, because we were not sample parents. We tried to be pretty good, as good as we could to them, but—and of course we were always very close to the Methodist Church, and you know, that's a big help when something like that happens. No matter what they are in the years to come, what church or religion they finally decide to stay in, having a good church group that you can be with and get strength from, that helps.

[End Tape 1, Side 2/Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

VAN DER VLUGT: ...couple of girls that weren't nurses that were just assistants that we finally sent to nursing school to get their RNs because they were very intelligent and very good nurses.

ASH: Were there any other doctors at the hospital?

VAN DER VLUGT: Not in the beginning. After a few years, a few other doctors came in to some of the surrounding areas.

ASH: This was still in Prairie City?

VAN DER VLUGT: Mmm-hmm. And the lumbermen and the cattlemen, they were so good to us. We didn't have enough beds and enough room for kids to come right off the bat, you know. And so they brought some old beds for us, we didn't even have to buy any, they found some they gave to us. And then they started to look around for a place that had five bedrooms. Well, what had five bedrooms, you know?

So way down in Dayville there was this big house, and at that time—[pause]. We [lived?] and earned at this big house. It was a very strong sturdy house, and it had a lot of land around it. We had to hire some people to help take care of it. It used to be the overnight station for the stagecoach, but we didn't know that then.

ASH: It was historic, then?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah. So it was just perfect for all of us. And then I started having babies, too. I started having a pregnancy soon after I finished my internship.

ASH: And you were working while you were pregnant?

VAN DER VLUGT: Sure. Everybody did in those days. You couldn't tell you were pregnant until the last few months, anyway. You know, you could cover it up pretty well.

ASH: Who delivered your baby?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, I can't even remember, but I didn't have a lot of trouble. I think that the nurses did much of the delivery part.

ASH: Because you were the OB/GYN in town?

VAN DER VLUGT: Uh-huh. And they just helped to take care of everything, and I didn't have any complications. I was a healthy person. You know, I had to be healthy to be strong enough to do all the work I was always doing.

ASH: What sorts of work were you doing? What kinds of patients did you get a lot of back then?

VAN DER VLUGT: Everything.

ASH: This was just before the war? Well, about the same time.

VAN DER VLUGT: We had all sorts of a variety of things. We weren't bored with one kind of patient [laughs]. And we didn't have many neurotic types of people, at least I didn't recognize them.

ASH: Was that because of where you were located, do you think?

VAN DER VLUGT: I think part of it was due to that, because they were—you had to be strong to live there, to survive there. And I soon had to be good at being an anesthesiologist for my Jerry's surgery patients. I didn't like that particularly, but I knew I had to do a good job. We didn't have a lot of fancy equipment, either. We got along all right. But the cases were tough, I think. I think all of our patients were strong.

ASH: Most of them were from agricultural areas or small towns?

VAN DER VLUGT: And lumbering areas. They were cutting trees and building houses and [coughs] taking care of cows.

ASH: Did you have a lot of trauma cases?

VAN DER VLUGT: Quite a bit, mm-hmm.

ASH: They kept Jerry busy? How often would he do surgery?

VAN DER VLUGT: Oh, at least three or four times a week. We also were well acquainted with the other surgeons in the area. When he had a real complicated case, he'd ask one of the other surgeons to come up.

ASH: Were there other surgeons in the area? This is pretty remote. This is far away from Bend, isn't it?

VAN DER VLUGT: It's quite a little way to go from Bend.

ASH: But there were other surgeons around?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. In Hood River. We kept well acquainted with all the surgeons.

ASH: Would the surgeons come to your hospital, or would you send your patients to Hood River?

VAN DER VLUGT: Either way that happened to work out best. If they could be moved, we'd move them, but lots of times, cases can't be moved so well. And anyway, the doctors kind of liked to make the trip up.

ASH: [Laughs] And why was that?

VAN DER VLUGT: They liked to come to see us, come to our part of the country.

ASH: Did they stay with you?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. And we enjoyed their company, and the kids would enjoy their company.

ASH: So how many kids did you have around then?

VAN DER VLUGT: I pretty soon had two.

ASH: Of your own?

VAN DER VLUGT: Of my own, and four of the others. And then pretty soon Betty went to college, and Johnny went into the military after a couple of years.

ASH: You had your two?

VAN DER VLUGT: And my two girls, Annie and Jodie. They were wonderful girls. They're even wonderful now. They call me up every week or two. They never miss. I always know all about them.

ASH: Did they enjoy growing up in Eastern Oregon?

VAN DER VLUGT: I think so. There were always interesting and exciting things to do at our house. We had a nanna all the time. I have her picture on the wall around [demonstrates], with the rest of the people. And I always wondered why Nanna stayed so long. She had a daughter just about the same age as Annie that became good, good friends.

ASH: She lived with you?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, uh-huh. Had to live with us. And then Jerry—I didn't know this until about five years ago—Jerry paid all of her expenses to medical school.

ASH: Your Nanna?

VAN DER VLUGT: Nanna's daughter.

ASH: Oh, Nanna's daughter.

VAN DER VLUGT: Jodie, she promised Jerry she wouldn't ever tell me, but five years ago at our sixtieth medical school reunion, and Jodie took me to her bedroom and said, "You know, I think I should tell you something." Well, I thought something awful was coming. But it was that all the medical school expenses, living and tuition and books and everything, Jerry paid for Genevieve, Nanna's daughter.

ASH: Why do you think Jerry didn't tell you?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, he was afraid that—we really couldn't afford it, you know. And I would think that this was a pretty big deal, and it was a big deal, and it's a good thing I didn't know [laughs]. She's a smart girl, and she was an anesthesiologist. She became blind and is blind now so she can't work. She had macular degeneration on both sides, and that they can't do anything about. She calls me up a couple times a year, and she lives in Portland.

ASH: Does she?

VAN DER VLUGT: And my Annie sees her every Monday, all day Monday, and they do all of the—go to the stores and do everything they have to, to get done what she needs to do as a blind person, and sometimes it takes [two?] people. But they're good friends, and they manage together.

ASH: Now, I heard that when you were practicing in Eastern Oregon you used to drive around in a convertible? I was told that you and your husband drove around in a convertible.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. We had a couple of kinds of cars. But the convertible was handy.

ASH: [Laughs] What do you mean handy?

VAN DER VLUGT: It would get around the curves. Well, you know, it was smallest.

ASH: And did you make house calls?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: Oh, you did.

VAN DER VLUGT: And then as we—when we got older, we each had a Cadillac; I had a red one, and he had a black one.

ASH: [Laughs] Were they exactly the same except for the color?

VAN DER VLUGT: Just about. You know, [coughs] Cadillacs aren't very different. And we could afford them, and Jerry decided they were safer than the little convertibles we had at first.

ASH: So I'm trying to get a picture of your practicing together. You did things together, like you were an anesthesiologist when he did surgery. But then when you did house calls, did you each go different places?

VAN DER VLUGT: Um-hmm.

ASH: You did.

VAN DER VLUGT: We tried to make the patients come in. Sometimes they couldn't.

ASH: What was that like? The weather's pretty severe around there, isn't it?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah, sometimes. [Pauses] In the wintertime it's severe. Sometimes we couldn't get to their house. Sometimes they couldn't come in. So we just had to work out whatever way we could to see them.

One handy thing was that I was a good lab technician. I not only could do the bacteriology, but I could do the blood counts, [indiscernible] rates, all what you had to do in the laboratory work. And when the technicians got too busy, I would help the technicians.

We just made things work out for the best interest of the patients. Sometimes we had a tough time making a diagnosis. But with both of us, it would help.

ASH: The patients who couldn't come in, then, did you have phone contact with them so that you could help over the phone?

VAN DER VLUGT: Oh, yes. We had lots of phone contact.

Eventually we built a new house for all of us; when the girls were grown up, and my kids were grown up, we built a house on the hill, just about a mile above the clinic. We built a new clinic and a new hospital, and we had a new house, and we had five bedrooms in this new house, two down below and three above.

It was a beautiful house, and we parked both cars, both Cadillacs right next to each other, right beside a big front glass door that slid open, and we'd plug the cars into the electric current to keep the motor warm, so we never had any trouble with starting the cars. I've never seen people do that much, and I don't see why they don't. It works fine.

ASH: I think they do in Canada. I've seen a lot of that in Canada, and maybe Minnesota, in that area, but not a whole lot in Oregon, and it can be cold; it can be pretty cold.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, and sometimes we needed it. We didn't make any more house calls than we had to. Most of the time the patients could come in. And we'd see a lot of people that didn't have any money—you know, that couldn't pay us. But that didn't matter. But the whole community knew that. They had all kinds of insurance and whatever was possible, but we'd take care of them no matter what. And sometimes they'd never get to pay us, but very often there would be something they could give.

ASH: Did they ever barter with you? Did they ever give you food and things like that?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, they sure did. They'd give us lots of things.

ASH: In exchange for medical services?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. I remember one lady, and I still do now, made—Quaker oats can make a good cookie, raisins and Quaker oats and a little bit of flour makes a good cookie. And she'd always bring a dozen cookies when she could.

ASH: Are there any particular cases that you remember that were really interesting?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Pauses]. I don't have any in my mind right now. I'd have to think back a little.

ASH: What happened when a lot of people got hurt at once? There were just two of you.

VAN DER VLUGT: The nurses did a lot of work. And our nurses were so well trained, they could do almost as much work as the doctor. And we knew that, and we knew the intelligent nurses; those were some that we sent on to school later. Many times there were

a number of people that had to be taken care of, but we managed ok.

We had a little trouble once in a while in getting blood donors, but we had some good technicians. Once in a while I'd even give them extra blood, when we needed the extra [laughs]. Didn't do me any harm. Every once in a while our Annie would give her blood. She was an A, and when we needed one in a hurry...

But we had lots of families; we had families—we knew what blood types they were, so we could always get some donors.

ASH: You'd call them and say, "Hey, we need this kind of blood"?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: Did it make any difference—well, was it an advantage or disadvantage, do you think, that you were a woman practicing medicine?

VAN DER VLUGT: I never noticed anything at all, because we really had more women patients than we had men patients. I don't know whether that's still true or not, but I think it is. So Jerry would see the men as he could, and I'd always try to save Jerry's energy for his surgery because I always felt that it took more precise energy than all the stuff I was doing.

ASH: What made you decide to leave Eastern Oregon? How many years were you there?

VAN DER VLUGT: Until Jerry died. And then Carrie and I went to Switzerland for two years. She had her junior high school year in French in Lausanne, and I stayed in Geneva to practice my French a little bit, which I enjoyed doing. So we were gone for two years. Then I decided I'd better come back home and work again because I was beginning to run out of money.

So on the way back home, I stopped in Washington, D.C., and applied at the State Department for a foreign service medical officer job.

ASH: How old were you then?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Pauses] Oh, I was quite along in years. Let's see, Carrie was—I'd have to figure it out, but I don't know exactly now. But I was very mature.

I was going to stop at my brother's house in Evanston, Illinois. He taught—[pauses]. He was a musician and taught [pauses]—the word doesn't come to me. What's the word when they lead the orchestra or the band?

ASH: Conducting?

VAN DER VLUGT: Conducting, yeah. He taught conducting at Northwestern University.

ASH: Really?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah. So I stayed with him for a little while to visit, and the State Department called me there and said, “Pack up your things in Oregon, and we’ll have a two-bedroom apartment here in Washington for you, and we’ll assign you to overseas foreign service medical officer duty.”

So here I was going to—didn’t seem to be too bad, but now as I look at it, five bedrooms, I had to get a rid of a bunch of stuff, a lot of stuff. And we had a truck, a great big truck—Carrie remembers the name of the company; I should remember it, but I don’t—and we went right home and packed up and came back to Washington, D.C.

Then I went to—was assigned to that northernmost country, then Laos, and then Saigon, two years in each place.

ASH: Treating the military?

VAN DER VLUGT: As a foreign service medical officer. What we did was—like in Saigon, it was right in the middle of the war. You lived at the embassy. The nurse and I tried to go to lunch once, and we were called away before we even finished our lunch.

ASH: This was the middle of the Vietnam War?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. We saw all kinds of patients. And in Saigon, the head of the embassy would often wait until about four o’clock in the afternoon, when he thought I was finished seeing all the patients, and he’d have some character, he’d have even an interpreter—some of them were very ill, and we had to figure out what to do with them. In truth, it was lucky that I was a lab technician because we had to do—I had to take care of these people, and some of them were very important people, and some of them were just spies from other countries, and we had to be careful how we transported them. But it was kind of exciting [laughs]. Some of them were very ill.

ASH: So I didn’t quite follow. You had your regular job until about four o’clock?

VAN DER VLUGT: I had the regular job all the time, but he would wait until late in the afternoon, so I would be sure to have undivided attention for that person, because he was a very important spy or whatever he was.

ASH: I see.

VAN DER VLUGT: And it was often a spy—any country.

ASH: Spying on us? So they were prisoners?

VAN DER VLUGT: No, they were working for us.

ASH: For us, I see. That must have been exciting. Was your daughter with you at this time?

VAN DER VLUGT: Um-hmm.

ASH: So you had help.

VAN DER VLUGT: She was doing all kinds of things. Helping at home or whatever.

ASH: How long did you do that stint?

VAN DER VLUGT: Let's see. [Pauses] About ten years.

ASH: You were overseas for ten years?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Coughs] Just about.

ASH: My! You must have liked it.

VAN DER VLUGT: I was assigned to be a foreign service medical officer, so you do whatever they tell you to do [laughs].

ASH: You could have left, though, and you didn't?

VAN DER VLUGT: No, because there was so much work to do.

[End Tape 2, Side 1/BeginTape 2, Side 2]

VAN DER VLUGT: And we'd treat people and make a diagnosis.

ASH: Were you seeing the war injured?

VAN DER VLUGT: Not usually, because they had their own doctors. But sometimes when they couldn't be seen or something happened, then I'd see them.

ASH: I see. So it was general medical practice, but the same kinds of cases?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, the people that worked for the embassy, they'd get sick like anybody else, you know. It could be anything.

ASH: Didn't they get more tropical diseases there?

VAN DER VLUGT: They'd get a few, yes. Although, you know, when you live at the embassy or are protected by the embassy, you'd be protected from the tropical diseases, too.

ASH: So you didn't see a lot of that?

VAN DER VLUGT: No, we didn't.

ASH: Or intestinal parasites and such?

VAN DER VLUGT: We'd see some. And the only way you could make a diagnosis is through the laboratory. So it was a good thing I was a lab technician, too.

ASH: They didn't have any other lab techs around?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah, they had lab technicians in Saigon, but sometimes the lab technician would need help.

ASH: Were you the only doctor?

VAN DER VLUGT: In the embassy, yes.

ASH: Where did you live?

VAN DER VLUGT: In Saigon, we lived right at the embassy. In the other—in Laos, we had kind of a house right close to the embassy that had a passageway in between. You could hardly tell the difference between the embassy and it; but it was well guarded.

What's the country north of Laos?

ASH: Not Cambodia. Myanmar, it's called now?

VAN DER VLUGT: I'm sorry I'm so forgetful.

ASH: You were in three different locations, then?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: For ten years. Burma?

VAN DER VLUGT: I was in Burma for a while. But, it was at a later time.

ASH: Well, what happened after the ten years? Did you come back to the United States?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah, I'd come back to the United States every so often. And then I got a job—there was the State Department, and then the next building down the line was OPM, Office of Personnel Management. So I served as much time as I needed to in the State Department and they got this job for me at OPM. So I could work there until I was eighty-two. And that was a desk job: we checked various diagnoses and did all sorts of things that were medical in nature. And then we also had various changes in medical diagnoses— [coughs] and medical...

[Pause]

ASH: I'm tiring you out here, aren't I?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Laughing] I guess maybe. I'm sorry I'm so forgetful.

ASH: It's just fascinating that you worked that many years. Were you living around here when you worked in the OPM job?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: So that's why you decided to retire here?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: And because you have family here?

VAN DER VLUGT: My family could come and see me here.

ASH: Easier than Oregon.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. And during the time I was in OPM, I started this, *The Federal Physician*, which is a magazine for federal physicians, and it's still going full blast, and it's bigger than it was when I started it, and it's doing real well.

ASH: So you saw a need for this and you got it started?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah. With another fellow, Dr. Smith, who worked for the government but left after a couple years, so I was by myself. So it's still going strong. And I used to be very active in the Pan American Medical Women's Organization. We had the world Pan American Medical Women's Organization conference here in Washington, D.C.; and Carrie and I went clear down to Peru, went all down the western coast of South America and stopped at every place and visited all of the women physicians and invited them to come to Washington. We had a few over one hundred doctors and [nurse?] physicians that were here. But that's the way to get doctors to come is to invite them, you know. Otherwise you send them letters, they're not so apt to come [laughs].

ASH: And this organization is still in existence?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes, mm-hmm, the Pan American Medical Women's Alliance. Of course, I don't do much anymore.

You probably might be interested in reading [my son] Jerry's obituary. You can have that. It isn't totally accurate, but it's accurate enough. He kept me busy, too.

ASH: [Pauses] Did you go to Antarctica with him?

VAN DER VLUGT: No, I didn't.

ASH: It says he "sailed to Antarctica aboard an icebreaker." He "trekked in the Himalayas and practiced preventive medicine in the war-ravaged Mekong Delta of Vietnam."

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah. That he did.

ASH: But that was when you were at home in Oregon, right?

VAN DER VLUGT: Well, I'm not sure. I'd have to kind of look that up—because he was in Vietnam after I was there.

ASH: Aha. This is your son who was also married to a physician, correct?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes.

ASH: And where did your son graduate from medical school?

VAN DER VLUGT: Jake graduated from University of Oregon Medical School.

ASH: He did?

VAN DER VLUGT: Sure.

ASH: And did his wife?

VAN DER VLUGT: No, she graduated from Louisiana State, I think.

ASH: So did they meet in residency?

VAN DER VLUGT: Let me see. I'll have to ask her these things [laughs].

ASH: But this is probably not that common an occurrence that a husband and wife physician team that graduated from our medical school had a son graduate from our medical

school, too?

VAN DER VLUGT: Right. I think they met in residency or something like that. Theresa could tell us. She was here Sunday, brought lunch.

ASH: [Pauses] It says here he was the son of two physicians. He rode horses as a child?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah. We lived—part of our life was on a great big ten thousand acre ranch, and we had a whole bunch of horses. You know, he wasn't very popular with the other kids. He was too domineering. So we encouraged his riding horses with the cowboys on the ranch.

ASH: So is this one of the places that had the five bedrooms?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah.

ASH: I see. Sounds like a great place to grow up.

VAN DER VLUGT: Yeah, you had to be pretty tough.

ASH: Well, I did want to ask you a couple more questions about being a woman in medicine. Is there any advice you would give to a female physician today?

VAN DER VLUGT: To be very busy and not pay attention to the men in any way, except medically to be very accurate and to be very busy in their work. Pay attention to their work. I think that's where some women get into trouble is they branch out to have other interests with the men.

ASH: You mean romantic interests?

VAN DER VLUGT: Just friendly interest that could become romantic [laughs].

ASH: But you don't mean interest like in the church or other—horseback riding or whatever?

VAN DER VLUGT: Oh, no. Any interests are all right, except you can't have many interests other than medical because there isn't that much time, and I think that's where they can get into trouble. Because, in the first place, a girl who goes into medicine has to be pretty smart to start with. So the fellows that she would be interested in are also—should be pretty smart, and they—you never know who might be interested in other things besides just the medical part of your life. And that's what you should stick to, I think.

ASH: Well, we've been going for almost two hours. Is there anything you think I may have left out that I should cover?

[Pause.]

VAN DER VLUGT: You need to have good contacts, wherever you're practicing, because you can't know all there is to know by yourself. You always need some help. And the help usually comes from the men in the profession, so you need to get acquainted with good contacts. [Coughs] And you soon will learn from them, the contacts, whether they are good contacts or not.

ASH: So what we call networking: your relationships with physicians in the area that you can call on. Is that what you mean?

VAN DER VLUGT: Yes. It was my husband who was always the one that could fill the need for extra consults. He was better at it than I was. I was too busy doing other things.

ASH: Doing other things like raising a family, you mean?

VAN DER VLUGT: [Laughter] Yes. And keeping him having time to have consultations beyond just our practice—because he was the one that was better at that than I was.

ASH: Did he go elsewhere and do surgery?

VAN DER VLUGT: A few times, mm-hmm.

[Pause.]

ASH: Well, I'm going to say thank you and turn this off.

VAN DER VLUGT: You know, I must say that never did I have any—whatever you call this business of having the men bother you about practicing medicine. I never encountered that at all. And I think part of it was because I was the assistant in bacteriology, and all the guys had to be good to me to get good grades [laughs].

[End of Interview]

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