

OH-3259, Paul Irish, Laramie, WY 4-26-2017 WY In Flight

BOGART: [00:00:00] OK. This is Barbara Bogart. I am at First Interstate Bank in Laramie, Wyoming, with Paul Irish. The date is April 26, 2017, and we're going to talk about Paul's experience in the -- Air Force?

IRISH: Air Force, yes.

BOGART: And stationed at one of the missile bases near Cheyenne. So --

IRISH: Right. The Air Force base is called Francis E. Warren, and a lot of times it'll just say F.E. Warren, just to make it shorter, but --

BOGART: Right, right. But let's start out by talking about where you're from, where you grew up, and --

IRISH: I grew up in Portland, Maine. And a lot of people say, how the heck did you get to Wyoming from Portland, Maine? The way I got to Wyoming is through being stationed at F.E. Warren Air Force Base. And I was stationed there from 1988 -- no, 1985 to 1988, for three years. And [00:01:00] part of my job, I was in the -- oh, God, I [got to?] think back. I think it's the 2149th Communications Squadron. We can research that. The number may be close to that, or something a little off --

BOGART: That's OK.

IRISH: -- but, I mean, that's where I worked. And my job was to keep the communications gear in the launch control centers.

BOGART: OK. Let's back up right there and talk about the specific installations in Cheyenne, and I think Nebraska, too, that you [were talking about?].

IRISH: Yeah, it's actually in three states. It's in Wyoming, the southeast corner of Wyoming, near Cheyenne, and it also includes the northeast portion of Colorado. There's missile sites down by Sterling, Colorado, if you look at maps out there, [00:02:00] and as well as the, I guess it would be, southwest corner of Nebraska.

BOGART: OK. And these are the ICBMs?

IRISH: The ICBMs, yes. There is, or was at the time, 20 launch control centers, and they're designated A, B, C, D, all the way through, I believe, T, which is Tango. Alfa, Bravo, Charlie, you know, and so forth. And that's where we get to Quebec-One, Q-1. So, Quebec-One was one of the 20 launch control centers, OK?

BOGART: And all of those centers were in that three-state area?

IRISH: Yeah, all in --

BOGART: OK.

IRISH: And they are scattered -- actually, a statistic that I -- very clear on is, they're scattered over ten thousand square miles, which sounds like a lot, but a hundred mile by a hundred mile is the ten thousand square miles. And the reason for that is to [00:03:00] -- if the enemy was ever to try to take out those missiles, it would be near impossible.

BOGART: OK. Because they're so spread out.

IRISH: Because they're so spread out. And each one of those -- I mean, it's a redundancy system, so each one of those launch control centers, such as Quebec-One, was tied to ten ICBMs, intercontinental ballistic missiles, OK? And they were all on fiber optic cable, scattered about the countryside. If you drive up there, around the -- you typically see a fenced-in area that says, "US Air Force, use of deadly force is authorized," because you're not supposed to be up there. And they do have sensors.

BOGART: OK. So, you were there in the mid '80s.

IRISH: Eighty-five to '88.

BOGART: How long -- do you know approximately when they were installed? It seemed to me they were there for a long time, but --

IRISH: Yeah, they were [00:04:00] -- and I think we could go back and Google that. I don't recall back, but -- and

there was a series of different upgrades. It's almost like, OK, you have a Ford F-150, and it's getting old, so you get a new F-150. You might get a F-250 next time, or something to that effect. But, you know, the launch control center is basically a launch control center. They do upgrade the communications gear and stuff.

BOGART: And that's where you -- you were in charge of the communications.

IRISH: Yes.

BOGART: OK.

IRISH: And it was always a two-man policy, a two-person policy, if I'm correct. (laughs)

BOGART: Probably a two-man policy then.

IRISH: Yeah.

BOGART: Pretty much.

IRISH: And so the way we would go about it is, if we were called to do a job, if the launch control officers called and said, this piece of equipment is not working. They would set up a job. They would go through [00:05:00] KCCC, which is Keys and Codes Command Center. They would communicate, you know, between us. We would get these codes that we would have on our body, in a little red pouch to keep them under our shirt. And when you get out there, you would have to authenticate to the security police. So

the launch control centers, such as Quebec-One, or Alfa-One, or Bravo-One, they would have a team of security police officers stay there. They were up top, OK, in the facility. They had sleeping quarters there. They would be there from three days to five or seven days. And they had a facility manager that took care of the building. OK? And then the launch control crew is down underground, approximately 90 feet underground. And it's amazing. You could probably go online and see a lot of this stuff. The launch control center is suspended. [00:06:00] It hangs in the silo, kind of in midair, in these huge shock absorbers. I hope you get a chance to go out there and visit. I mean, if I recall, they're 8 or 10 feet tall, these big shock absorbers. And it's kind of held like a pendulum suspended in midair, so even if, just above ground, (hits the table) boom, a nuclear strike, it's supposed to shock absorb and, you know, be [able to?] sustain quite a direct hit. But the fact is that all those fiber optic cables that connected to the underground, to the missiles themselves, so it would be virtually impossible to take out everything. So I think over the years, they might have -- it might be on the third or fourth different generation of missiles right now. But these are missiles that -- and if you look in the news today, they said they launched one from

Vandenberg Air Force Base. It was in the news today.

[00:07:00] And what they do is they practice on them. They [send it?] -- which is right on the coast of California. They'll send it about five thousand miles down in the Pacific Ocean and hit some target. And if anything was ever to steer off course, they could always blow it up in midair, so...

BOGART: OK. So you would go out, and the police are standing there waiting for you to authenticate.

IRISH: Yep. So, we would -- before they'd even open up the gate, they would authenticate. They would have the same paper we have, and they said, we give you Alfa, and they'd say, we give you Bravo, we give you Charlie, we give you Delta, we give you Echo, we give you Foxtrot. And if it all matched up, they would open the gate. And so, you're in. And then we would unload all the equipment, because you don't want to go up and down. You want to minimize the access. There was an elevator that could take you about 90 feet below ground.

BOGART: [00:08:00] What size of elevator? It had to be pretty good size to carry your equipment (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

IRISH: Yeah. We would have them on carts with wheels and covers. So, we would carry them in the back of trucks.

The hard part is, you never knew what you needed, so you had to take everything, you know? (laughter) You may go out for a two-minute job, and you load up a truck. It'd take an hour to load the truck up, (laughs) but you need a two-minute job. So anyway, we would get down there, and once we got on site, we would do the same thing. We would authenticate to the launch control crew. There's a two-man crew down there, and those are officers, commissioned officers. And if you've seen the movies, it takes two people. They're six or eight feet apart, so one person could not launch a missile. It takes two.

BOGART: Oh, OK. So that was the setup, physical setup.

IRISH: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And there's all sorts of communication gear that is [00:09:00] very unusual. In communications, there is different frequency waves, so you'd have -- UHF is ultra high frequency, VHF is very high frequency, HF is high frequency, and then there's a low frequency range, whereas the antennas that send the signal propagate these very low frequency waves that actually go through the earth's crust. So even in case all the antennas are blown away, they could communicate back to the main base, and to the commanders, that way.

BOGART: And this is all -- is this all radio, or is this through those fiber optics you were talking about?

IRISH: It's radio. Radio, yep. So, anyway.

BOGART: So, you'd get down there and authenticate to the launch officers.

IRISH: Get down there -- well, you'd authenticate before they even let you -- if (laughs) you messed up, they would say, pass the phone to the security police. (laughter)

[00:10:00] You never wanted to hear that. So they would jack you up, security -- you know, you're already sitting there in front of the police, and they would jack you up before -- you know, typically just a human error, a misreading, something. We all have done things like that before, and it can be very embarrassing in a situation like that, but they just had to be absolutely sure. And so to get on, it's always prearranged. You can't just show up and honk the horn, and say, hey, let me in. (laughter) It's, you know -- and they have response teams, and the security police that were stationed there for days on end. They would have sensors at the 10 different missile sites. If a human being was walking on there, they would know it, and they would send a response team. You may have seen on *60 Minutes* where people go up and bash in the sides of these fences. They really can't get in and get very far, because there's -- if I recall, like, the lid [00:11:00] that covers the missile itself may be 10 tons or something.

You could go up and beat on it all you want, and you're not really going to affect anything. The fact is, you should know that you shouldn't be there. (laughter) And some people purposely like to go out there, you know. (laughs)

BOGART: Just to provoke. All right. Now, each of these launch control centers is fenced off. And does each then have 10 missiles?

IRISH: Yes. So, there was 20 launch control centers, for a total of 200 ICBMs out there.

BOGART: OK, OK. I get it. So, the security police, then, are guarding the entire site?

IRISH: Well, each team would be guarding -- like there would be one team for Quebec-One, and one team for Alfa-One, one team for Bravo-One, because they could be up to a hundred miles apart, so you would have them at the very most critical area, which is the launch control center. And then [00:12:00] they would respond out if sensors went off, to the 10 different missiles that are connected to each launch control center.

BOGART: OK. What about -- was the fence animal-proof, so if there were deer or pronghorn out there walking around...?

IRISH: Oh, it's very -- yeah. (laughs) If you get a chance to -- if you go up to, like, Chugwater or Torrington or --

BOGART: Mm-hmm. Sometimes.

IRISH: You should see them. And it's very obvious. It'll say, "US Air Force installation, use of deadly force is authorized." And if I recall, there's concertina wire on the top, as well. So I suppose a rabbit could stray in there, or something like that, you know, or a smaller critter --

BOGART: But not a big animal.

IRISH: In general, I think a deer would not get in there.

BOGART: OK. All right. So, you're down under the ground. You've been authenticated. And then what happens?

IRISH: Then we fix the equipment. And [00:13:00], you know, at that point in time -- and if you think about this, a lot of the stuff was black box technology. And by that, what I mean is, if this device is broken, you quickly slap in a new one. You know, you disconnect the plugs, plug back in a new one, and we would take them back to F.E. Warren to do repair work, or order parts, or something. You wouldn't sit out there and have that down for 8 hours, 10 hours, while you're fixing it or troubleshooting it. You would just quickly slap in a new one, and go on. The quicker we could get in and out of their hair, the better.

BOGART: Mm-hmm. So that's what you mean by a two-minute job, but you have to take everything with you.

IRISH: There was times -- and I'm ashamed to say this [at part?] but you can do what you want with it -- we would get called out, and you know, this is at the end of an eight-hour day. You've already worked, and then you're [00:14:00] on call. And you go home, and your pager goes off, report to the base. And you have to go out to the site, and before you do that, you know, you put your uniform back on, and drive to the base, and then load up the truck, then go get the codes to go out there. Again, that was called KCCC, Keys and Codes Command Center, which would communicate -- you know, tie the repair people to the site people. And then possibly drive out as far as Sidney, Nebraska, or Sterling, Colorado, and it could be a snowstorm. Which there was times when -- incredible. You get out there, and there's 14-foot snowbanks, and you're looking at a map. And one night, I remember -- and when we're carrying classified gear, because some of the equipment was classified secret and top secret. If you're carrying classified gear, you had to call in, like, every ten minutes, and report your coordinates, so they could track you [00:15:00] in case something happened. If they lost communication, they would send a helicopter team out to that last site, and start looking for you from there. So I remember one time we were in a snowstorm, (laughs) and

the dome light in the truck went out, so we couldn't see the map. And then we had some matches, and we were (laughter) lighting matches trying to see the map. And then we ran out of matches, and so then we had to go out to the headlights, you know, in a snowstorm, and kind of look at the map so we could call in the coordinates. And then I recall getting lost one time, because the snowbanks were so darn large, you know. You'd get out there, and everything, all these -- farmland looks the same, you know? And oh, we should have taken a turn two miles back, or something like that. And so, it would (laughs)... But this could be -- you could be 12, 13, 14, 15 hours into a workday by the time you get to that point. Let me see if I can (inaudible).

(pause)

BOGART: [00:16:00] So you're out in the middle of a snowstorm, and you're in a long -- it's a long day, is what you were saying.

IRISH: Yep. And I do recall one time going down, going through the motions, getting -- authenticating, getting on site, then authenticating to go down to the launch control center. And it's pretty fascinating when you get down there. You could get down about 90 feet below ground, and then you go through the blast door. And the blast door is

probably twice as thick, at least, as the bank vault door.
So we're talking steel doors this big.

BOGART: Like three, four feet thick?

IRISH: Probably close to three feet. (laughs) I mean, just so heavy duty, you just can't even imagine [them?]. So we got in, and asked the officers, you know, [00:17:00] "What seems to be the problem?" "Well, this piece of equipment does not work." And we went over, and I say, "Do you see this O-N/O-F-F switch?" "Yes." It was set to O-F-F. And they look at each other. They said, "This job is done." And we pack up our stuff and go back. And, I mean, it happens. There's a lot of human being interaction [without?] -- (laughs) I mean, you should have seen the look on their face. They were dumbfounded. You know, yes, the switch is turned off. It won't work when it's off. (laughter) We just spent eight hours packing up equipment, driving out here, and going through all this, because you dummies -- and choose your words wisely. (laughs)

BOGART: It would be hard to --

IRISH: Yeah. And, you know, thank you, sir. Have a nice day. [00:18:00] And so, they were human, too. But I do recall at least time going through something like that.

BOGART: (laughs) And you said, they're officers. And what was your rank?

IRISH: We were enlisted. OK? And the difference between that -- I'm not sure if you're well versed in that. In the Air Force, first you're an airman, and then you become a sergeant, then a staff sergeant, then a tech sergeant, then a master sergeant, chief master sergeant, and so forth. E-1 through E-9. Officers, you know, second lieutenant is an O-1, first lieutenant is an O-2, captain is an O-3, major's an O-4, lieutenant colonel is an O-5, a full bird colonel is an O-6, and then you have one, two, three, and four-star generals. All the branches have E-1 through E-9 and O-1 through O-10, but for some reason, they call them different ranks in -- [00:19:00] like, a captain in the Navy is an O-6, which is equivalent to a full bird colonel in the Air Force. Why that is, I don't know. It happened. (laughs) [A mystery?].

BOGART: So, what was your rank when you were doing this?

IRISH: I was a staff sergeant. I was an E-5. So, Staff Sergeant Irish is what they'd call me. And I'd say, "Yes, Lieutenant?" "Your job is done." (laughter) "Sir."

BOGART: I'm still -- I have this image of you out in this snowstorm. And there were always two of you that went on a job?

IRISH: You had to ha-- any time you're on any of those installations, you cannot be caught alone. If your partner

was not with you, the security police would jack you up and find out where the partner was. It was everyone's responsibility to have two people together at all times.

BOGART: Mm-hmm. That makes sense.

IRISH: Two or more.

BOGART: [00:20:00] So I'm thinking about you out in the snowstorm, and how handy GPS would have been at that point.
(laughs)

IRISH: Things have changed. That was before Al Gore invented the internet. (laughter) I think about that a lot. While I was stationed at F.E. Warren, I had two tours to Saudi Arabia at that time, once in '86 and then the second time in '87. I spent three months each time in Saudi Arabia, and I volunteered to go. It was during the Iran-Iraq War, and we were working with AWACS planes. Those are the ones that have the big disc like a flying saucer on the top, and they fly over, say, Saudi Arabia, and the radar goes out. So we were watching Iran and Iraq fighting, and making sure it didn't spill into Saudi Arabia. To make a phone call home, it was a hundred dollars, you know? And it's like 10 or 11 hours difference [00:21:00] difference in time zones. So typically, you had to get up in the middle of the night, or somehow make arrangements, you know. It was not easy. Every now and then we could get some free calls from the

base, but you'd have to get up at three in the morning, go in and try to use the phone call. And you'd go through all of that, and then the person not be on the other end, you know. (laughter) But if you did just try to place a collect call or something like that, it would be -- it could be easily over a hundred dollars. And today, when I watch the military, they all have email. They have Skype. So, it's a tremendous advantage to the people. I mean, I lived in Europe for five years, which was tremendous, but no email, no Skype, no internet at the time. So, it has changed tremendously. I mean, incredibly. I think the people that are in Afghanistan right now -- the gal that's in the office right here, her husband just got back after being gone almost a year, [00:22:00] but they could see each other and talk to each other, and it makes a huge difference.

BOGART: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. So, let's get back to you at Quebec-One. So, you were stationed at F.E. Warren. Did you live on base?

IRISH: No, I lived off base. I had a house in Sun Valley, on Hillcrest Road. (laughs) It's fun to go back and look at that now. That was 32 years ago when I bought that house. If I kept it, it would have been paid off by now, (laughs) but it's rare that that happens. I do go back from time to

time and just kind of glance at it, and then all these flood of memories come through. Unlike a lot of people, I came from outside of Wyoming and stayed. A lot of people, even young kids that go to college, they get a degree, and they leave. [00:23:00] There's many people that say, "here are you from?" I say, "Maine." "How the heck did you get here?" That's how I got here. And after I got out of the Air Force -- I got out in '92. I left F.E. Warren. I went back to Europe for another tour. I worked with the ground launch cruise missiles. You see those missiles that they used last week, the 59 missiles? I used to work on them at the time. And we would go out and hide in the woods in Germany for up to 15 days at a time. We would dig foxholes and sleep in tents. No flashlights, no -- 15 days at a time. No showers. That was horrible. But I survived. We had them pointed at the former Soviet Union, and East Germany, and the Warsaw Pact. And then it was -- I think, if I recall, it was 1989, [00:24:00] when I was stationed there that time, the Berlin Wall came down. We had a peace treaty with the Russians where we deactivated our nuclear weapons toward them, and they did likewise. And it was really strange, because the peace treaty was, I believe, August 1, 1989, and the Gulf War started August 2, 1989. And our treaty had a higher priority to our squadron at

that time. You couldn't just say, well, I know we have a treaty with the Russians, but we got to go to the mid-east. So, I probably would have gone there a third or fourth time, had I not been involved with that. So that was an exciting time to be in Europe, when the Berlin Wall came down. The funny thing is, we get old (laughs) so fast that it doesn't seem like it, but we were hosting a bunch of Junior Rotarians from different countries. They'd come and live with host families from [00:25:00] all over the world, Australia, Kenya, Germany, Iceland, you know, everywhere. And we took -- you know the guy from this bank took two 14, 15 passenger vans, and took a bunch of them skiing.

BOGART: This is here, you're talking about?

IRISH: Mm-hmm. Two years ago. And we had them all down in the break room downstairs, and we're gathering, and we're talking. And I was talking French to one girl from France, and talking German to another girl. I speak three languages. I speak French and German quite fluently. And I was talking to the girl in Germany, and she was like, but that was so long ago. That was -- and I started looking at her. I thought of her age, because she was, like, in twelfth grade, so she was 18, but then it happened before she was even born. And she's like, you're talking about ancient history. And I'm like, but it just (laughter)

seemed like yesterday, you know. I was, like, wait a minute. I guess that's not a big thing anymore, [00:26:00] the Berlin Wall coming down.

BOGART: Well, yeah, I think it's 27 years, right? Is that right?

IRISH: Twenty-seven, twenty-eight. Yeah, it's -- I mean, it just -- I have vivid memories. I loved living in Europe. I loved it. And Germany's the very center of Europe, so you could, you know -- I've been to Switzerland probably 10 times, and Scotland, England, Luxembourg, France, Belgium, Liechtenstein, Austria, Italy, Greece, Crete, Denmark, Scotland -- I probably forgot a few, but I mean, it's nice to have traveled, you know.

BOGART: Absolutely. And that --

IRISH: I would not recommend Saudi Arabia. I've been there twice. (laughter)

BOGART: I've not heard good things from people who've been there, but --

IRISH: I don't recommend that one. I recommend all the rest. (laughs)

BOGART: And what is it that [00:27:00] -- what was your experience there that makes that not a favorite place of yours?

IRISH: The culture. They have customs that are so different than us, and I think, you know, what a shame, what happened during the Gulf War, I mean, it's not going to change anything. They're set in their ways, and they've been doing this -- you know, having these beliefs for thousands of years. We're not going to change their beliefs. There's some ancient customs still. I mean, they still stone people. They still cut hands off. They still cut heads off. I was asked if I wanted to go see that. I had no desire whatsoever to go to chop-chop square, you know. I don't want to ever see it. I don't want to remember that in my own mind. I just -- you know, it's very different. For women, it was even harder. [00:28:00] Is it fair? No. But that's where it's very different. If you, and I, and another guy were driving in a car, and the religious police pulled us over, if you weren't married to one of us, they could whip you or stone you. And I just -- like, but they're doing nothing wrong, you know what I mean? It's against their culture, so it was very tough.

BOGART: Well, let's go back to -- your last tour of duty was in Europe, and then when did you separate from the Air Force? How did that happen?

IRISH: Well, when the treaty went off and we deactivated the base -- they closed the base in '91, and so what -- I had

one year left in my term of service. So, they stationed me at Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, Arizona. Say Phoenix. And, boy oh boy, is it hot in Phoenix. My daughter was born [00:29:00] in May of '92, just a few months before I got out in August of '92. And everything was great. Because I owned a house in Cheyenne, I was a Wyoming resident. Having gone back to Europe, I had maintained all my bank accounts and had my paycheck deposited in a bank in Cheyenne. And so when I came back here, I was married at the time. I'm no longer married. That's (laughs) ancient history now, but we did raise two kids, two beautiful kids here. Our daughter was born in May of '92, and so she was only three months old when I got out. And the ambition was to come back here and go to the University of Wyoming, and get in-state tuition, because it made a huge difference. And our daughter was the first grandchild of my ex-in-laws [who lived?] in Cheyenne, and so [00:30:00] we found a place here in Laramie. I went and I got a bachelor's degree in finance, and graduated with high honors, and won a graduate assistantship, and went and got a master's degree, an MS, master in science and finance. And now it's paying off. Then I went to -- after graduating, I started in a bank in Jackson, at Jackson State Bank, for a few years, and then I went to Saratoga for three years and

worked in Rawlins Central Bank. I'm on my twelfth year here at this (inaudible). And the success story is, my daughter graduated from the University of Wyoming last May. Yes. And guess where she moved to? Maine. Of all places.

BOGART: Did she really?

IRISH: Yes. She said, "Well, OK, so I've spent the first 24 years of my life here, which is not a bad place," and she wanted to go venture out. And she said, [00:31:00] "I want to see the other side of my family." (inaudible) with all the longevity and all the kids, there's a hundred cousins, probably, or a hundred family members, and many of them she's never, ever met before, so she's getting to meet them at family reunions and so forth. And she's doing good. Now I got to get my second child. He's 19 and doesn't know what he wants to do yet.

BOGART: OK. Well, (laughter) some of us are like that. Late bloomers.

IRISH: You know, you expect all of them -- the kids to be the same, and they're not. They're not.

BOGART: They're not. OK. So when you were in the Air Force, then, you -- of course, when people say Air Force, they think flying, but you were never a pilot. Is that right?

IRISH: No. I basically worked on the equipment, like in the air traffic control towers. So, if you think of the

equipment that they had to talk to the planes. So, someone has to work on that. I mean, people work on planes, people fly planes, people fuel planes, people work on the equipment that [00:32:00] powers them up and air conditions them. The equipment is used for different things across the world. I mean, when I was working with the ICBMs at F.E. Warren, that's the launch control center, down in the ground. After I got that special identifier, they had me working with cruise missiles, where we would go out, and the launch control centers would be in the shape of a semi truck, and all the equipment would be in there, and it would be mobile. We would keep them in hardened shelters in Germany, but if we were ever called up, the whole convoy would go out. And there was, like, 70 of us. And so you would have security police, which would circle the perimeter. You would have two launch control centers, and each one of those hooked to, I believe, 16 different missiles, five rocket cables [00:33:00] that were just kind of on the ground and quickly mobile. But it would do the same thing. And I think it was Gaddafi's house. They said, which -- when they hit his house -- which window would you like us to put the missile in? You know, they're very precise, and they go up over -- unlike our traditional

weapon, those missiles can go up over, like, say that computer, and then down over, like, up over a mountain --

BOGART: Not in a straight line.

IRISH: No, and they hug the ground. And they could be 20 feet above ground, so they're under radar. And they have these maps, called TERCOM maps. I can't recall what all that is, but they would have them preloaded in the memory or hard drive, or whatever. And so if it was pointed at Moscow at the time, or East Germany, Berlin or something, they would know where, [00:34:00] you know, it would fall on the ground, and the contours of the ground, and go up over this mountain and down. And if they were ever off target, they could destruct them. Like, say it started veering off target and heading towards a city. They can detonate it. But they're pretty sophisticated.

BOGART: OK. Now I'm going to back up again. How did you get into the Air Force, and how did you get into the communications field?

IRISH: Good question. I was 18, and no one in my family had ever gone to college. And I was in a family of four boys raised by a single mom. And I took all of the placement tests, and, you know, I had good grades my whole life, but no one really took my hand at the last -- you think you're bulletproof when you're 18, and you look back, and none of

us really are, you know. (laughs) It's funny how little we really knew by then. [00:35:00] I should have gone to college, but no one grabbed me by the hand and took that last step, because no one had ever been the first. And I took the ASVAB test, which is a placement test for the military, and they said, "You scored very high on electronics. How would you like a career in electronics?" I said, "Let's do it." Because at age 18, it was fun. I mean, I went from Portland, Maine, to San Antonio, Texas, to basic training at 18, and just fine. Then I went to Biloxi, Mississippi, for a 10-month tech school, and you learn more and more electronics. Then I got stationed in Austin, Texas, at Bergstrom Air Force Base. You progress. When you graduate from tech school, you're a three level, and then you do a series of take-home tests and study guides, you know, like a month at a time, and progress to a five level, and then a [00:36:00] seven level, which is what I was at that time. And, you know, after five, ten years of working equipment, you're very knowledgeable. After Austin, Texas, I went to Frankfurt, Germany, and then from Frankfurt, Germany, I went to F.E. Warren. From F.E. Warren, before I went back to Germany, I had to go back to Biloxi for another training, and then I went to Davis-Monthan in Tucson for survival school. And then back to

Germany for three years, and that's when the Berlin Wall came down, and all that period. I was supposed to be there for four years, but because of the peace treaty and stuff, they deactivated the whole air force base and shut it down, and I was stationed at Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix for the final year. And I said, I was ready for a change. And I said, I have a degree in electrical engineering, but I don't use that very much anymore.

BOGART: [00:37:00] (laughter) Well, how did you get interested in finance, then, and banking?

IRISH: My strong suit was always math, math and science. But I was always fascinated [by?] finance and compound interest, and how the numbers were [accumulated?], and stuff like that. So I was just ready for a cross-train, and got out. Moved back here with a three-month-old baby, and went and applied at the University of Wyoming, and graduated with high honors. It really boggles my mind that time has gone through enough for that three-month-old baby is now 24 going on 25, and has graduated herself. And so, I'm amazed. (laughter) And my son was born when I was in grad school here, getting my master's degree.

BOGART: Well, I think that about covers it, unless you've got something else you want to add.

IRISH: I can't think of [00:38:00] anything right now, but if
I do, I will certainly let you know.

BOGART: OK. Well, this is great. This is just great.

IRISH: I'm interested to hear. I'm happy. (laughs)

BOGART: Well, I'll tell you what. I'm double dipping here,
because --

IRISH: You make it easy.

BOGART: Well, thank you. I don't know if I mentioned last --
I'm going to turn this off.

END OF AUDIO FILE