

Robert Morris University Oral History Center

Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Project



Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

Adam Dwayne Scott

Communications, Marine Corps, Iraq War (Two tours)

September 23, 2015

Scott, Adam (1978 –), Oral History Interview, September 23, 2015.

Biographical Sketch: Adam Scott was a Communications Marine with 3rd Battalion 4th Marines. Scott served two tours of duty in Iraq. The first deployment was in the Invasion of Iraq during OIF I and the second tour was in OIF II.

Topics Covered in Interview:

Communications Equipment

Saddam Hussein

Camp Ripper

Kuwait

Dalton Trumbo's: *Johnny got his gun*

Safwan Hill

Scud missiles

Basra, Iraq

General Mattis

Haditha Dam

Al Rawah

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Transcribed by John Cummings

Edited by Joshua Caskey and Dr. John McCarthy

GD: This interview is part of the Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Project undertaken by the Oral History Center at Robert Morris University. I am Gabe Dachille and today is September 23, 2015. I am joined by Adam Scott and Adam if you could please state your full name and whether or not I have your consent to interview you today.

AS: Adam Dwayne Scott and you have my consent.

GD: We're gonna start with your date and place of birth.

AS: I was born in Rochester, PA on 29th of May, 1978.

GD: Your branch of service, years of service, and your highest rank attained.

AS: United States Marine Corps from April 8th 2001 until April 8th 2005.

GD: And where was your place of enlistment?

AS: Where I signed up or where I ended up stationed?

GD: Where you signed up.

AS: Actually at the Beaver Valley Mall. (laughter) Sergeant Batisto was my recruiter.

GD: What was your reason for enlisting?

AS: There were several. I was going through fairly rough period of time in my life. Like ... I didn't know what I wanted to do, I didn't know where I wanted to go, I just ... I had no direction. I was a fairly irresponsible kid (laughter) um ... usual angst (inaudible) rebellion type stuff you know just didn't really ... a rebel without a cause type of thing. I kind of uh ... I left home two weeks after I graduated high school you know. I decided me and my parents just didn't get along, we just didn't get along so I just left. I packed up some stuff, I gave them both a hug and said I'll see ya later and moved three hours away to uh ... north central Pennsylvania (inaudible) county. I worked a part time job there for a little while at a grocery store stocking shelves at night you know, made ... less a week than I had to pay a month in rent so, you know what I mean? (laughter) It was one and a half weeks' worth of pay that had to go to rent so ... I didn't, I didn't have a car or nothing cause I only had to walk like three or four blocks to work and it was nothing, you know what I mean, around town. I mean it was a classy city so you know there was like a city center, everything's within half a mile so, what I'd need to do you know? (laughter) I had everything from bookstores to you know ... clothing. It was just no need for me to have a car and um ... and I didn't want to drive anyways because all the responsibility came with it. I just ... I was trying to buck the system everyway I possibly could. I was ... a rebel just basically ... didn't care you know? And uh ... later on now I see why I took that direction. I understand it but it was just incredibly foolish. My life would be so much further along had I not done stuff, but I just didn't see it that way. I saw my parents wanted me to do that and you know then uh ... when my parents didn't want me to go to the military so that kind of spurred me on a little bit

too. The reason is because I lost my job, I came back home and I just had a series of crap jobs like working at goodwill and um ... like temp jobs for (inaudible) a lot of the time you know just seasonal helping out at American Eagle over Christmas and whatnot and it just came down to ... I was like I need a job. I need to start a career. I was like I can't afford to go to school so I gotta do something. Gain a skill, come out you know after I get out of the military gain a skill and come out and uh, apply that skill to life or something you know. I was thinking at the worst I could end up going to college. You know what I mean?

[0:04:20]

GD: Right. Do you have any history of family service?

AS: My grandfather was a soldier, a tanker, in Korea. I have supposedly a couple of great uncles on my grandmothers side, his wife, um that were Marines that served in uh ... it was Korea and Vietnam and ... that's as far as I can tell. I have an uncle too by marriage that served in Vietnam as a soldier.

GD: Did that have any influence on, on what branch you chose?

AS: Not really, no. I just uh ... I knew that the Marines did everything and I am a, you know, one of those people that's either all on or all off and that type of personality kinda fits in with the Marines and so I found my home (laughter) before I even got there.

GD: Let's talk about 9/11. Um ... do you remember where you were on 9/11?

AS: I remember exactly where I was. I was actually coming back from the town that I had moved to away from my parents uh, just after getting out of boot camp. I graduated September 7th of 2001 so four days later I was on highway 80 headed south back home and uh ... well it would have been west technically but I was headed back uh, back to Rochester. I remember listening to the radio and I just stared getting uh, 105.9 and because every other station was country or classic rock and I was, you know listening to a lot of Led Zeppelin back then but not enough of like, the Doobie Brothers and everybody else for me to tolerate that stuff you know what I mean? (laughter) So uh ... I kept rolling through the channels finding at least a halfway decent classic rock song that I liked or you know, then they were the oldies which I listened to a lot because of St. Mary's the town that I moved to, you know that's the only station you could get clear in town was the oldies station or the country music station. I'm just not a country fan. So ... I finally got to the exit and probably about three or four songs in there was this news report that came on. I was like I don't wanna listen to the news, you know what I mean? And it didn't occur to me that it interrupted the middle of a song I just was observing the morning, you know, just wasn't focused on it, just talking to my ex-wife, she was my wife at the time, but um ... I was talking to her and uh I was like what is this news report crap? You know something about something going on in New York. So I rolled over to the next radio station which would've been DVE [local radio station WDVE] and I got them in and they got taken over like a couple minutes

later and I was like , I've about had enough of this. So I rolled over and I think I got like uh WNCD, like the wolf or something like that. So I'm just barely, just barely enough to satisfy my need for music and they got taken over and I decided "okay, I need to listen to this because it's important". Because it was the same, same theme that's happened in New York, something bad was going on and uh, then we heard that ... we've got word that a plane just struck tower two and I was like, what? A plane struck what tower? In New York? I was like there's only a couple of towers I know of, you know that could get hit by a plane. I was like what's going on? Then they reported that they thought Al Qaeda was involved and looked at my wife and I was like, I'm going to combat. I wasn't even in MOS school yet and I knew I was going to combat. It's just what the Marines do.

[0:07:55]

GD: So what was the ... when you went to your MOS school ... what was the overarching feeling knowing that the planes just hit the towers and knowing that you were going to go over there. Was there more of a sense of urgency, more of a ... more of a ... I really need to learn this stuff, you know? Did you grow up a lot more?

AS: No. The Marines, they just ... it's always go, go, go. It's always run. You get somewhere by running. You don't get somewhere by walking. Unless you're ordered to and that's almost never. You are expected to put out 110% at all times you know it's just ... the way they work. And they weren't really talking about us going to Iraq. Or anywhere. I mean they didn't know because it was Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda's in Afghanistan. So they were talking about going to Afghanistan and it was like, Afghanistan's been going on for I think at the time it was almost 10 years by then. I think from when Russia just started with them I think?

GD: It was like the 80s.

AS: Oh, no. So yeah that woulda been 20 years or so. Then the U.S. involvement was around 10 years cause they were saying Afghanistan's been going on. They didn't settle down they just, you know not really been sending a lot of people over there, you know yearlong rotations. So hearing about people going to Afghanistan was like, you know, a once a year opportunity when they rotated back so it wasn't really a big thing, you know. Wasn't a hot button issue. It was going on but it was becoming irrelevant, basically in the mind of the U.S. because no one really concentrates on a conflict that's not ... you know close enough to home or isn't dealing with economics and whatnot, or our job market. It wasn't, you know, like we were ramping up production like we did with Iraq because that was an invasion. Afghanistan was more of a nuisance (laughter) at that point in time.

GD: Now, knowing all that we pretty much covered what your ... your understanding of the war was, of the Afghan and Iraq war upon entering service. Obviously Iraq wasn't going on yet. Um ... can you discuss the Marines and your training, life on base, and your overall feelings of deploying?

[0:10:18]

AS: Well um ... I remember when I graduated from MOS school ... I was told that I was going to be attached to a Scout Sniper Platoon. And I don't know if you have read the book *Shooter*, but gunners aren't Jack Coughlin, well he was a Staff Sergeant at the time. I got attached to rear echelon for 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines and he was the one I checked into and his email address for regiment was Chief Sniper, Scout Snipers for all the regiment so (laughter) I figured alright, well this is going to be either a really good experience or a really bad experience cause snipers do insane amounts of PT and they don't take weakness, you know. So I actually wandered around base like a total boot. I was a super boot at that point in time um ... trying to figure out where 4th Marines was. And I'm on 7th Marine Regiment's base in 29 Palms California. It's also known as (inaudible) and uh ... which is the largest training base in uh ... pretty much the whole country. I mean it's even bigger than Lejeune, the main side is actually small but the training area is like, like they said uh ... 100,000 square acres of ground or whatever. It's a big, big patch of desert rocks and uh sand and rattlesnakes and scorpions and whatnot that um ... that are attached to them via ... 7th Marine regiment headquarters. I actually stumbled in to their building upon direction of one of my former instructors and tried to explain to me that 3/4 rotated to Okinawa. There is no element there that has, there's no battalion CP or anything. So they weren't there technically. It was just a little small platoon, more like a detachment of less than 30 guys you know. So I checked in uh with their corporal for S-3. He was on duty over the weekend and um ... so I got sent to um 7th Marine Regiment's duty NCO. I got sent to their duty hut at their barracks and this Sergeant, I forget his name he's a little Mexican guy, and uh ... I sat there for probably about an hour and just with my sea bag, I'm in my chucks, I mean I'm uncomfortable you know what I mean? I just wanted to get out of these trousers and my shirt and everything. I just was done with it all you know. He's like look Devil [short for Marine nickname Devil dog] I'm gonna hook you up right, give you a place to stay for the night and I'll talk to uh ... to S-3 and see what they come up with. Maybe Police Sergeant will have something for you, you know cause he was actually the Police Sergeant for the building ... but uh he didn't have the authority to actually give me a room. That had to come from regiment headquarters battalion so ... um ... he let me stay there. I stayed there for probably like two weeks or whatever and then I finally got a room and uh I found out later on it was his barracks room. But there was nothing in it because he was a Sergeant he raided a trailer up on a grinder behind the building. So he took the trailer. Well the NCO in the trailer next door, the adjoining trailer because it was these looked like (inaudible) almost, or not (inaudible) but uh (inaudible) up on stilts and it had like a small ... adjoining bathroom. That's where the head was. And uh, so he took over both trailers. I got more room than I could ever need, what do I need a barracks room for? So um ... I think it was the next day ... this huge Marine (laughter) he had these like these small spectacles on but he was huge. He was 6'3". He's pushing like 260 pounds or whatever ... had this uh, southern drawl and kinda a soft way of speaking about him, you know just a southern gentleman. The uh ... Duty NCO, he was the Sergeant the next day. He was actually coming off duty and he said uh ... he said, "Hey Millsap why don't you take care of your 3/4 brother right there?" and he came over and he shook my hand and said who are you? I said I'm

PFC Scott and he's like so uh ... who do you belong to? I said Communications Platoon. He's like I'm Lance Corporal Millsap and I'm a Machine Gunner for Kilo Company and he's like come on buddy I'll take care of ya and he took me around, got me checked in for the most part you know and that was my buddy, you know what I mean? We stayed good friends and still talk even today. But um ... after ¾ came back um ... I remember meeting my Staff NCO. He was called a TASSO, Terminal Area Security Officer and Staff Sergeant (inaudible) he had the foulest mouth and he called everybody retard or a fucker or whatever. Now if he didn't call you a name, he didn't like you. But, I mean he called me retard from the moment he shook my hand so I figured he was kind of fond of me (laughter). Yeah when the elements started coming back uh ... like I kinda got an introduction to you know grunt communications platoons and uh ... we'd PT a lot. Run a lot. That's basically the mainstay of Marine Corps PT is running (laughter). Running and getting yelled at. That's basically our PT and uh ... so we weren't in the deployment mode of things. The deployment mode kind of actually simplifies problems because you only have one objective and when you're in training mode you just do what you've gotta do until combat comes around. There's a lot of ... lot of questions to answer, lot of problems to solve like ... you know what's the training rotation going to look like or up tempo ... overall for the next quarter because then that's how they judge their spending, you know what were gonna need to do, how many radios we're gonna need to have stood up when everyone else uh because the 119 Alpha [type of radio] was still king in the platoons right then and there. My part was relatively small as far as communications goes, but my involvement with the battalion was extensive. Like I was always outside of my cage, like I was always out in the battalion area, like walking up to the CPE to fix something. Whenever you fix one thing there's always someone else with a problem and I basically did desk side tech support for all the guys. Made sure their emails were working and getting their uh ... files that they had deleted to show them it's in their recycle bin and whatever. Let me tell you what ... I love my grunts but some of them, when they are dumb they're just dumb, know what I mean? Even the grunt officer. I don't know how they graduated college but they just do not use technology. Their job is picking up a rifle and taking a platoon and you know ... teaching them what it is to get their job done, you know. And that's where they live. They're not at their desk where they have to do personnel records and whatnot. So, it was rather interesting learning how to speak to people who were educated but not ... you know specifically in the area that I was. So as far as like the training I had to go through, I had um ... you know school gave me my MOS training, but battalion life uh, the training for me to deal with what the battalion does as an Infantry Battalion was going out into the field. It was actually considered a deployment, the hazard (inaudible) and stuff like that wasn't involved. So what I would do was I would pack up whatever gear I needed to take and make sure that I had who I was issuing my gear to already ... you know everybody was already pretty much on a list and they would just come pick up their stuff. I would make them sign their forms and whatever else and uh ... and at the time we were starting to field this uh, data system called EPLARS and we had the small (inaudible) computers that hooked up to them and they were basically a UHF radio that served as um ... a uh ... relay a beacon relay and uh a router. You know just routed information between radios and used them as the network to get them back to what was called the EPLARS network manager which I was the administrator of as well. [0:19:07] so we were ...

we barely had this system running because it really wasn't ... they weren't using a ... high end hardware to get it done. They reasoned the least amount they could possibly do and we were lucky that this thing could uh, run resident programs on the amdact, this small computer cause it was basically a 500 megahertz cellron, you know chipped laptop with the board cut into sections and four layers and stuffed on top of one another, small footprint and with a touch screen on top of it. It was running Windows MT4. It was bad. It was slow. Trying to send emails, it took ... I kid you not 11 seconds to process an email to send it. Just to get it out of the machine through the network and to its recipient. We timed it. It took 11 seconds. It was insane. But um ... this would all start the basis for what I would do on deployment. I basically did a lot of the same things except for my job became a lot more dangerous. So um, being in a Comm. Platoon is similar to being in a grunt platoon except for there's a lot more office politics. Being a grunt you know, a lot of things got handled uh ... in the backyard as they call it. You got taken out back and roughed up a little bit and paperwork wasn't done, when on a Comm. Platoon they didn't do things that that way (laughter). Paperwork wasn't done but you still got messed with. You had to go uh ... go scrub heads all day all over the battalion area or you know, sweep parking lots that are half an acre square of asphalt out in the desert sun, you know? (laughter) It was no good when you messed up or whatnot. What else was on that question?

[0:20:58]

GD: I think you uh ... you pretty much hit it. I wanna fast forward to ... when George Bush made the decision that we were going to go into Iraq after Saddam Hussein.

AS: At that point in time um, I had already been in Kuwait for about three weeks when that happened. So, battalion area known as Camp Ripper was already set up. We were already stationed in the northern desert in Kuwait. We were just waiting, we were marking time. Yeah it was about, well now ... it was four weeks. Yeah I was there for a month, that's right.

GD: Alright let's digress real quick. When you found out that you were going to Kuwait and that you were potentially gonna invade Iraq ... what were your feelings on ... what was about to happen?

AS: A lot of my feelings were uh ... based on the ... what I perceived as the cohesiveness or the lack thereof of my platoon, because our platoon was run by uh, the radio section because they were the biggest and a lot of their Staff NCO's ... in our platoon were old radio operators, you know what I mean. So they felt that radio should dictate the actions of the entire platoon and be damned if anything was different than their schedule, you know what I mean? Like we had to stay late in the shop if radio had to stay late, even if my job was all done. And that's only because my section didn't have a Staff Sergeant and even when I did he didn't care cause he was (inaudible) so he was just like, we're gonna stay here because (inaudible) said so and it's like ... "Okay, whatever." But um ... so it was like ... it was really unbalanced, you know what I mean? The radio dictated a lot of stuff and they had no idea what my job was so it was it was just like utter contempt for my MOS. So, going into a combat area with people that you didn't really trust was difficult, a little bit scary, you know what I mean. The battalion element as a whole um

... I was fairly confident that ... you know because of the way we trained and our attitude about what we would do ... when given the situation, it was not a question of whether you know, people would get hurt cause we knew that some of us wouldn't make it back and that was not the primary concern. It was getting the job done. Always getting the job done. That was our primary focus so, I knew that we would end up being fairly formidable if not, you know, downright terrifying, which we ended up becoming. So, there was some trepidation. I mean um ... like I put my experience down to first contact um ... after we rolled north to very similar to the descriptive scene in Dalton Trumbo's: *Johnny got his gun*. I don't know if you've ever read that.

[0:23:57]

GD: I haven't seen it.

AS: He mentioned the skyline being lit up by explosions and there just being this other den of violence and because it was dark as they were travelling towards the explosions and whatnot, it was about the same experience for me. You should read that book. It's pretty good even though it was written by a Communist (laughter). Other than that I mean, I really didn't have any concerns about um ... you know about the war. I didn't care what it was about. I didn't care why we were doing it. I just knew we were told to do it and I was gonna go do what I was told to do. I didn't really ... play politics, I didn't you know, play you know a game, a religion or anything like that. I didn't care. I just knew these people pissed with us and I was gonna go piss back. (laughter)

GD: Alright let's go uh ... so you were in Kuwait, Camp Ripper. Um ... now ... when you got the word to roll north, across the berm, go into Iraq um ... basically where did you go?

AS: We staged just south and east of Safwan Hill and we sent up a CP tent and it was all dark, kinda cold and whatnot so our (inaudible) suits were actually a comfort for once. I remember uh ... getting everything set up you know and being inside the uh ... the COC ... the Command Operations Center, listening to the radio squawk and whatnot so it was kind of a comfort because it was familiar from being in the field (inaudible). And then all of a sudden the uh, gas siren's going off and whatnot, having to dawn our masks and you know, basically just wait it out and whatnot. I remember uh ... going through that several times a night and actually having to sleep in my gas mask. You know, learning how to sleep ... (laughter) it's a weird sensation because I'm not a back sleeper but I had to learn how to sleep on my back and that was a good night of training let me tell ya. Because I didn't sleep probably at all cause the damn warning sirens going on because they were launching Scuds and whatnot all night long so it was kinda like pointless trying to sleep. But, I got my two hours (laughter). Well, I got to lay down for two hours. Yeah that's where we started or campaign was in that Pasha Desert, just south of Safwan Hill until uh ... 1st Recon went in and cleared it ... didn't even have any contact. It was empty. They said it was empty probably for hours so we didn't even have to stay there. I know armor from uh ... I believe it was "Big Red One" [U.S. Army's 1st Division] and uh ... Alpha tanks rolled forward before that, before us. They all went forward and just started running things over and

shooting them up and whatnot, just to soften everything up for us. Then after that it was on to Basra. It was the first city I ever saw in Iraq.

[0:27:10]

GD: What was your impressions of ... approaching Basra and actually ... what happened when you guys got there?

AS: It's kind of funny because um ... from when we'd staged up just south of Safwan Hill we started tearing everything down and where I was stationed that got changed ... drastically because um ... they had to repurpose my Humvee. Which I was stationed, or I was staged with a bunch of radio operators and one of them was a corporal and you know, he was like ... I remember he had alerted me to get out of the vehicle and I was like, I can't I have to stay here with this, you know. He's like it doesn't matter get out of the vehicle I told you what to do and then he got his ass torn by my Lieutenant 30 minutes after that, and he's like "alright Scott you don't have to get out of the vehicle", and I was like "I tried to tell you this before, you know". So then they were like, "we're gonna eliminate the problems" and because they needed that vehicle to go do something else that was supposed to be um, a rolling relay for uh ... I believe it was tracks. We had Alpha Tracks with us. Or AAVs you might know them as. We just called them Tracks. So, I got put into the back of a high back Humvee and my radio got moved out of their vehicle into that one and uh ... which the uh ... the FAC, or not FAC but um ... what do they call those guys for ...? it was almost like a Forward Observer but he's not, he was just the fire control for our element so he was artillery because, you know, if you want someone to do an artillery job you get an Artilleryman. So they pulled him from uh, 3/11 [Marine Artillery Unit] I believe and gave him to us so he could talk and tell Artillery what they needed to do instead of having to trying to remember how to send a fire mission (inaudible) found someone who knows how to do it secondhand. So um, I actually got stuck in one of (inaudible) vehicles, which um ... so being in this high back Humvee, I don't know if you know what I'm talking about. It's a canvas tent on the back of a Humvee and uh, I was laying on top of gear so I had no idea. There was no window or nothing. It was a solid back door, no side windows, no side zips or nothing. When we approached Basra I found out because I could smell the town. I could smell like the garbage and the sewers and stuff like that you know so (laughter) my approach was very calm. But uh, other than that seeing Basra was weird seeing you know a third world city. I'd seen them on like TV. Like Mogadishu and whatever. But I'd never actually been to one, you know I'd never ... never been to TJ [most likely Tijuana, Mexico] or nothing like that. Didn't go to Mexico, so I didn't know what I was in for. The people that had been outside the U.S. like south of the border and whatnot kind of expected, you know they knew what to expect so it was um ... little bit of a culture shock but then again you know these people, they live ... they've lived in warlike tribes for how long? You know civilized government really isn't their thing. The fact that they built homes with solid walls and rows is kind of amazing so ...

GD: So did you in OIF I [Operation Iraqi Freedom I] in the invasion, did you push all the way to Baghdad?

[0:30:41]

AS: Yes.

GD: Can you briefly discuss after Basra, the push to Baghdad?

AS: Yes. It was a bunch of driving and stopping, and that's literally what it was and intermittent mortar fire, you know getting incoming and whatnot. Then the grunts just doing their job and quieting things in a matter of moments. I mean, when things got crazy they just went to work and the enemy didn't want that. You know they experienced a few seconds of uh ... you know very intense and skilled fighting and they just decided we're gonna go mess with somebody else because it's just not safe here.

GD: Throughout your time in country, cause obviously you made the push into Baghdad, um ... what was the comradery like throughout your trip from, from the berm to Baghdad?

AS: I found the uh, barrier and the gap between Staff NCOs and their NCOs and non-NCOs to virtually been eliminated except for in times of you know, need for good order and discipline to be effective. But other than that uh ... you'd see Gunnery Sergeants and Master Sergeants and Master Gunnery Sergeants, Sergeant Majors even um, kinda like, they would sit in their seat and they would lean forward and you know, kinda like I'm sitting right now, just very relaxed and they would talk candidly. It wasn't the whole stiff discipline and uh ... you know ... what do they call that, call and reply you know, when you're asked a question you answer formally. Well no, it was more like, you know, you guys get enough chow? You got enough water? How you sleeping? How you living? You know what I mean? You need a haircut? (laughter) You know that I mean, and of course laughter followed because there were no barbers nowhere. So um ... but I found, even the breakdown between what I call non rates, what we call ourselves E-3's and below um ... between us and officers sort of softened a bit. They became more of father figures than they were disciplinarians. Like the whole military disciplinarians, even though their orders were still followed and whatnot but um ... yeah they seemed to uh ... to really come to appreciate us for who we were at that point in time. We were no longer ... pieces of equipment. We were human beings that they had to rely on.

GD: Now you obviously didn't have a lot of free time. Or you had too much free time in OIF 1?

AS: No, I had no free time.

GD: No free time. So your whole job was ... just doing your job your whole time?

AS: I had to monitor the damn computer. It was a laptop with a touchscreen on it. The Panasonic tough books, you remember? CF tough books. Yeah, I had to monitor the damn thing

constantly. So um ... it was like an anchor (laughter) and I really couldn't go too far away from it. I had to make sure it was always plugged in so that it was doing its job because if it went down, the whole EPLARS network went down. One thing that it did was uh ... it ran a system called C2PC n , which was a command and control PC. That basically translated into a big GPS system with localized maps um ... and it did overlays. Instead of laying maps out on a table needed you know, a huge table or large area and (inaudible) to go over top (inaudible) to go over top of map, pens, draw everything, you know draw your lines of advance and your elements by their icons and whatnot. Well, we took all that and put it onto a small computer screen and whenever one computer screen made a change to it, it had an authorization to do so um ... the common operational picture would change for everybody and they would push all the way to division and it would push down from division to the battalion level.

[0:34:52]

GD: So like the predecessor to the blue force tracker.

AS: Yeah we were running that concurrently.

GD: Okay.

AS: It was just a smaller, cheaper version um ... I was a bigger fan of the blue force tracker. One, because it was stable and it was fast and it had 3 meter CIB's at the time. The next, we have 2 meter CIB's as well I believe ... or towards the end. We were running 3 meter CIB's on the end of (inaudible). But um ... yeah it was uh ... it was basically just a smaller, it was almost like the Fisher Price version (laughter) of the Blue Force Tracker.

GD: So how long were you deployed in OIF 1?

AS: Total time spent OCONUS [military term for overseas] was around four and a half months, but I only spent ... in what they consider hazardous duty, I think it was around three and a half months or three months or something like that. I don't remember exactly when they started counting weeks but um ... yeah wasn't a very long time. My first deployment was rather short as far as that goes, as far as combat goes.

GD: How did your deployment effect your family back home? I know you said you were married at the time.

AS: My parents were a wreck, you know? My ex-wife, I really can't say to the veracity of her disposition. All I can say is she said she was concerned, I guess but I don't know. We didn't really get along too well towards the end so you know um ... but like she was at home on base and I was gone. That's basically, everybody was worried, you know what I mean. The news was a constant thing. Like it was always on.

GD: Let's jump to OIF II. Was there any difference in the training for OIF II than your all-encompassing training before OIF II?

[0:36:57]

AS: No, because the training really didn't change going to OIF I, it just kind of stepped up. Like they started doing certain things ... more frequently. Like we were going to the backyard more um ... and our backyard was you know the sand dunes this side of the ridge, because outside of the ridge you have to talk to (inaudible), arrange safety and get permission to go. So we were going to the rocky and sandy parts behind the barracks on the back half of main side. So we started doing that a lot more, so really it really didn't change, just frequency picked up. But OIF II, I mean we were basically outfitted. We did nothing but train. We didn't have to do any like, real requisition orders and whatnot to supply and refit or whatever. We just had to SL-3, which means that we make uh ... like radio sets complete, make sure they all have their handsets and all their parts so you can just put it in a box, go in country, take it out of the box and make it work. So really it was just more of a focus on um ... you know, keeping the up tempo high until we rotated, though there was a lot of questions whether we were gonna go because we actually uh ... we took off from March Air Force Base for Anchorage, Alaska. We were beginning our rotation to Okinawa as though it was normal, you know like we were gonna just go do warfare training like we're supposed to. So we got to Anchorage and spent like, I don't know 11 hours in the airport till we had to go and uh ... then we got over to uh ... to Okinawa and we started training there like we would. They were like well um ... we don't know if we're actually gonna go to Iraq. We're thinking we might just finish our rotation here in Okinawa. It's depends on what Division CO [Commanding Officer] wanted and at the time that was General Mattis still. So I'd say about a month into being in Okinawa there were like yeah, or three weeks in they were like, get ready to go and they put me on advanced parties, so after being on Okinawa for a little over 30 days I got on a plane and headed over to uh ... to Kuwait.

GD: Now were your feelings any different going over there your second time?

AS: Um ... no. I'd have to say that my intolerance towards the whole ordeal was a lot you know, higher, a lot more pronounced. Like I just wanted the whole damn thing to be over with cause uh ... my time in OIF I, just being at Camp Ripper for some reason, the platoon took on this uh ... sadist disposition as far as leadership goes. They felt that giving the Corporals and above the ability to abuse their, their uh ... their subordinates was a good idea until you know, one guy got a black eye and the other guy got stabbed in the chest with a K-bar. It's like, okay, you give people that you know, were supposed to have discipline the ability to demonstrate that and they fail at it so, going over there the second time was like now I'm pretty much sure I'm gonna be stuck with more elements in my platoon and I just wanted nothing to do with that. The first time I skated out. I was mostly with Arty [Artillery] and uh ... or I ended up getting stuck in the relay vehicle as well, like in between, but I was in between armored battalion, I was in between Alpha Tracks and Bravo Tanks. So, for all intents and purposes a soft skinned Humvee was

considered armored (laughter). But I was only stuck with a few people, like two guys from my platoon, Sergeant Coute and Lance Corporal Braumbocker who's a good friend of my still, and Staff Sergeant Tellus, he was a really cool Staff Sergeant, first half NCO. He said look I'm not gonna screw with you guys and uh ... he was just too good to be true as far as far as a Staff NCO. He's like, I'm not gonna make you do stupid crap like get out of the vehicle when you're not supposed to. You know I'm not gonna make you dive headfirst into piles of manure or whatever. He's like, you guys just be cool and I'll be cool. He was awesome (laughter). So I knew that wasn't gonna happen again. You know I just, I was right. So uh ... going over there held a little more anxiety a little more you know, anger towards the whole situation. Like, you know, you have a situation that should have been handled to begin with ... if we didn't actually finish a job then why did we go home? You know what I mean? I was more like, aggravated by it than anything else.

[0:41:50]

GD: Did you have any interactions on your second tour over there with ... with soldiers that hadn't been there yet?

AS: Um ... yeah members of my platoon, like we actually increased in size. We actually did what they called um ... we hit um ... what do they call that, where they fill a personnel roster ... but we hit top end for personnel roster. Like uh ... the first time I went over I was pretty much running my whole shop. I was the only Marine doing the Communications Platoon data end of it. My two senior Marines who I was billeted over, one got FAPPed [military term for being assigned to a different job] out doing machine gun work. He was a Machine Gunner for um ... Staff Sergeant Coughlin's little attack section of uh ... of the battalion and um ... the other one, he was kind of doing the job but he had a lot of mental problems. He actually had multiple personality disorder, 22 personalities that he had integrated himself through boot camp. So um ... he was kind of like just off onto the sidelines cause he was unreliable as far as tech work went at that point in time. Smart kid, good guy, but it just wasn't, he wasn't with it enough. So the next time we were over uh ... the newest members of my platoon, or my section, and a lot of new radio guys went over so yeah, it was organic. Those guys that I had experienced contact with them and they just had no idea.

GD: Did you feel that you had to look out for them?

AS: Yeah. At first more of the battalion did that than anything else, but I felt the need to ... relay to them as much information as I possibly could. Starting from, you know, I knew we were going the next time, like it started stateside and then from our deployment to Okinawa and then you know, I kind of had to lead them and go on advance party and do my thing over there in Kuwait, Camp Udari, actually. So yeah, I felt more like a father figure cause I was the oldest guy in that section. I was older than most of my Staff NCO's (laughter). I enlisted old. I was 22 when I went to boot camp. So it was um ... I felt like I had to do as much as I could and mostly that was just training them to do their job well and passing on information, what I know about it cause my

time outside the wire was mostly in vehicle convoys and setting up fire bases and whatnot. I really didn't do any patrolling or anything, though I did end up in cities and you know, running along with grunt patrols in vehicles and whatnot. I kinda know a little bit about it and what it's like and uh ... I got my OJT [On the Job Training] for grunt work actually in um ... Haditha City.

GD: Was that on the first one or the second one?

[0:45:05]

AS: Second one.

GD: Second one. So you guys were stationed in Haditha?

AS: No. We actually had to go down there because Viking um ... it was the Lieutenant for 1st Platoon and Lima company I believe ... he needed ... he needed something from Haditha Dam, but he needed someone to come down and look at some of his M-Dacs as well so I ended up doing part of a foot patrol/run down this side street and alley to get to the police station because we couldn't get the vehicles back in there without the chance of them getting you know, bombed and uh, or turned into a barrier so that no one could get out. So yeah, I kinda know what it's like to sit and wait in the back of a Humvee, just where there's nothing around you but enemies, you know what I mean? It's just a city, an open desert city and just sitting right here on this street (inaudible) somewhere where back home a drug dealer or a gang hit might go down you know what I mean (laughter) it's basically what it reminded me of. I was talking to Corporal Braumbaucker, he'd been picked up. At the time we were both sitting in the back of the Humvee and I was like, you know it'd really suck if we died here (laughter). I was always the macabre and dark humored one (laughter). He's like dude stop it (laughter) you're gonna get us killed just stop it. It was an interesting time over there the second time around.

GD: So where else were you stationed besides Haditha the second time?

AS: I was everywhere. I was like Johnny Cash. I went from uh ... Al Asad Air Base, or the Iraqi air force base to um ... Haditha Dam and I spent a couple hours to sleep and eat and to clean my weapon. Jump back in a Humvee and drive from Haditha dam all the way up to Al Rawah in the north and west of Anbar Province. There we set up a fire base and I spent around 45 days getting mortared at a forward operating base there at the outside of the town and they got frisky those guys up there. Started getting a little more accurate with their mortars too so that's when our 3/4 element left and actually handed over 2/7. I had to stay there with a reinforced platoon and we had one company of Marines there. The reinforced platoon was just to take over the patrol route and then egress, you know what I mean? Because two seven was doing rotation in place but they were taking from Rawah west all the way to Al Kut I believe and uh ... so we were giving up that AO [Area of Operations] to them. Well, um they started mortaring us more because three four has an aggressive, zero tolerance policy with the enemy. Like they do not get time to establish a mortar position so they were relegated to using technical to mount

mortar platoons, or mortar tubes and whatnot and they would drive around with those cruise like, two or three guys with those real short Russian 82 millimeter mortar tubes and um ... they would you know, pull up where they think they could hit us and whatever primitive methods of shooting and (inaudible) they had, thank God (laughter). They would shoot their (inaudible) and then shoot their rounds and they would hurry up and drive off. Well, they had very little time to do that because the pressure was always on. Like they always had a squad out doing a foot patrol and a vehicle a CAAT [Combined Anti-armor Team] 2anti-armor running through town, shooting up place, you know what I mean? It was just, there was always something going on. We kept the enemy suppressed to the point where they figured that just living daily life was the best course of action or going somewhere else where they could find a softer target. So, climate changed drastically when the 2/7 platoon took over. Everything was Hotel that took over. They had a sniper and a 60 millimeter mortar crew, one gun. One or two guns with them and uh ... they were going to start doing an exchange program with them. I remember the one day they were going to do one for one whenever they fired a mortar at us we would fire a mortar at them and uh ... to show them that you know, it's gonna be a little bit harder to just keep doing that and I'm like, you're not gonna do anything to you know, go okay so that's how we do our job you know what I mean? Because you gotta keep pressure on them, but they didn't have enough guys, three squads worth of men and then some, it's just like ... run a 24 hour patrol nobody would sleep. You're down time would be four hours and your stand by time is four hours and then you're up time is eight. It's just no way to live life (laughter).

[0:50:17]

GD: What do you think your biggest difference is between OIF I and OIF II were?

AS: As far as life?

GD: As far as life.

AS: Well, the whole ... hoopla about us not having gear, stuff like that. Like not having body armor, that was just the guys who got hit by shrapnel or bullets or whatever and (inaudible). Everybody was issued body armor. I mean, if it was really that much of a shortage for the grunts they would've never gave it to the non-combat elements and every single one of the Marines in my platoon had a SAPI plate in the front and back so, you know I'd just like to dispel that rumor. Oh, and yes we did find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. We had found 6 ICBM's in Diwaniyah in a warehouse there. Warheads were empty but they were fully capable. All they needed was to be weaponized and launched. So, just to dispel the myth that we didn't go over there for exactly no reason.

GD: And that deployment was how long?

AS: Seven and a half months. Something like that.

GD: Seven and a half. And um ... doesn't sound like you had a lot of free time.

AS: That one I had a little bit more actually. When I was in Al Rawah, I remember my Gunny telling me because he didn't like my job he actually despised my job because I wasn't a radio operator. So everybody else was useless, you know. Tech fixes our radios so they have a use but otherwise they're useless, you know. So uh ... we got there and we set everything up and Gunny pulled me aside. He's like, you're not gonna be spending any damn time in that friggin' damn air conditioned tent all day long you're gonna be sitting with us out in the sun. And I'm like, whatever you say and then when something broke and the Lieutenant's like why aren't you doing your job? And I'm like well I'm following orders from the Gunny he said not to do your job. And he said get the Gunny on the hook so I got the Gunny on the hook and then the guy was all pissed off at me and was like do whatever the hell you want now. You're on your own, he was all butt hurt and whatnot. so uh ... I did spend a lot of time sitting in the tent and that's where I read Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun* you know and uh ... I figured for a guy that had never served in the military he did a pretty good job writing a military based book. So I think he had probably a lot of authentic input. I'd have to say uh ... yeah I had a lot more down time, got a lot more sleep. I remember OIF I basically being a run and gun show. When I was even in Camp Ripper I got like one and a half, two hours of sleep a night and that was just based because my Staff NCO was incompetent but that's neither here nor there.

[053:12]

GD: Was there ... as far as ... what did you family think about your second deployment?

AS: It was a lot easier for them because they kind of knew what to expect. I got to call home a lot more, like i.e. the down time (laughter). But I had access to uh ... the government telephone system that they set up, you know you have to dial, wait for the tone. Our wait for the guy to pick up on the other end said where can I connect you to, tell him hit the switch for international call and uh ... so whenever I got time, whenever I couldn't sleep or whatever I'd just get up, jump in the Humvee and dial up and use my phone card and uh ... call home. They kinda knew that from experience that my battalion was, you know, good to go as far as combat goes. They didn't lose very many people and we didn't. I think a total of six people between both deployments so um ... and not all of them were combat deaths they were just accident related injuries. It's not too bad. But other than that like ... they were still worried but it just wasn't a constant fear like the first one was.

GD: I want to talk about reintegration from your deployments. How was the reintegration transition back to garrison from your deployments?

AS: The first time was rough because for the first week I would wake up in the middle of the night searching for my rifle, cause uh starting from boot camp whenever we'd do like, we would rotate to the field and do training in the field we had to sleep with our rifles which we do in combat. Part of the training to make sure that you had maintained positive control of your rifle

is if you fall asleep and it's not wrapped around part of your body. Like if the sling's not wrapped around your arm or your leg or whatever, the weapon gets taken and then you get woken up for fire watch. You stay up for that fire watch and then you stay up for your own fire watch. So you lose roughly four hours of sleep a night and you learn the first time not to do that. But it becomes dire in combat. Your weapon doesn't get taken by someone friendly, it gets taken by someone bad and it gets used on you. So you kind of develop this psychosis. So like, I would wake up in the middle of the night looking for my rifle and I would wake up my wife at the time looking for it. Trying to move her out of the way to search to look for it and like I'm half-awake so it lasted for about half a week and then it finally quit. But um ... I don't know life was maintained like, the kind of the same order of things like how things worked. That sameness between being in garrison and being in combat. I mean the only other element was we had enemies. The only enemy of us garrison side was time and boredom. When Marines get bored we do stupid things, you know. So ... that's one of the qualities of professionalism with a battalion like that. They maintain sanity for us and it was just a ... the best policy you know. Now, I had more of a problem integrating to civilian life from military than I did coming back from combat to garrison.

[0:56:46]

GD: Tell me about it. (laughter)

AS: Well, my reintegration to civilian life was um ... rather smooth at first. I mean, I kind of, I found a job my last day of terminal leave. So I was collecting government paychecks plus another eight hours for work and for Seven Oaks Country Club, I was cutting grass for them. Mowing greens and tees and whatnot and replacing irrigation and so, it kept myself busy. It kind of delayed the onset of my uh ... symptoms of combat stress. I found my tolerance for civilians to still be at an all-time low (laughter) I had to live with these guys and um ... I became very agitated with them easily because they showed like, no respect for each other or anybody else. No discipline you know, it was always them and what they wanted to do. It was just like, I'm not used to this whole individualistic outlook on life you know. I kinda forgotten that I was just like them at one time. So that was kinda rough. But then, having to deal with trying to hold a job and dealing with PTSD was not easy, you know what I mean? At the time I actually had an ailment that I was diagnosed with too and it added to the problems. I don't know if you know what GERD is? Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disorder. It's acid reflux on steroids. Lasts for days instead of just hours and um ... a lot of that I blame on MRE's because eating constantly and whatnot changed the way your digestive system works. Not eating right, like ... we didn't have proper nutrition during garrison life because our platoon had to do this whole: we're harder than the grunts thing so letting us out to eat chow every day during lunchtime was not ... you didn't know when you were going to eat, you know what I mean? You could uh ... go to PT and told to be at the shop in 15 minutes, so you didn't have time for morning chow. You got showered, shaved, in uniform and showed up at the shop with nothing to eat, you know what I mean? And then not getting let off for afternoon chow and your day is like, 22 hours long so you're getting let out at

0200 in the morning and you haven't had nothing to eat since the day before. So that's another thing kinda mimicked combat too is not having anything to eat. So I gained the ungodly habit of living off of uh ... like Monster energy drinks and power protein bars. You know it was just not good for you. Real bad for your health, but it kept me moving. Oh and triple espressos from the barista at the uh ... Exchange. I kinda carried that eating habit over to just incidental, if there was a vending machine nearby just grab something. Just forgot about you know, maintaining a certain level of health because I wasn't PT-ing all the time anymore and not as hard, not even near as hard as what it was. That kind of allows you to kinda live off of poorer quality food without much (inaudible) and now dealing with a lot of digestive problems. So, having to call off of work because you're sick for some reason, you don't know why. Or because you get sick and then because you can't pay all of your bills because your paycheck is too short and then you end up missing work because of uh ... you know depression and anxiety and then you end up suffering from that long enough. You start to want to get violent for no reason and whatnot. So yeah, it was um ... it was probably about I would want to say 2008, yeah August 2008 I remember I just started back um ... to work and uh ... I was working day shift at the time for Mine Safety Appliances, and this was when I was working for the temporary company so I was making pretty decent money for being off work for a little while and um ... I was just, one day I just lost it. I couldn't, couldn't rationally deal with life, you know? I called my friend up in tears like I don't know what to do and he's not even military. He's just my best friend. He's like you need to talk to somebody man, was like you need to go to the VA or whatever and talk to somebody is the only thing I know to tell you. So it took me about a month before I could see somebody which was actually pretty fast considering you know, all those other guys that had to wait a year, year and a half before they got processed or whatever. I remember that's when they just started having problems with processing the troops because the guys ... they say that there's usually a year or two lag after deployment comes back before people start to see treatment. Well, I waited four (laughter). You know, I coped with it usually through alcohol and whatnot and just keeping myself distracted you know. So yeah, I still kind of uh ... the occasion where I just get really angry for no reason and just ... just wanna take my vehicle and ram it into somebody you know, climb over it and pull them out of the wreck and beat them till I'm tired of it. It's just ... it didn't help that being a Marine, your life is about violence. I mean all of it. From boot camp till you're done. Then being in a grunt battalion, your life is really about violence you know what I mean? There was no lull in it. You were expected to act as a rifleman if need be. It wasn't your first job but it was one of your jobs. They put you in the situations where um ... you did employ your weapon. I did. So it wasn't uh ... that was on the second deployment. So uh ... yeah it's just, it was uh ... a relatively hefty dose of reality that you know, life works a certain way in the military and it doesn't afterwards and you've got to learn how to handle that. I don't care ... what classes they give you. They give you this guy in glasses that's overweight and you know, has never been in the military to talk to you about transition back into civilian life. Mostly with they focus on is getting you a job so you don't cause any problems (laughter). And that's basically it. Or, giving you the crisis hotline or the uh ... behavioral health number so that you can schedule a psychiatric appointment but don't tell you that um ... this is going to take a while to show up. You might need help and whatnot and what exactly you're gonna experience it and

what it'll do to you. So civilians, they don't give a shit, you know what I mean? Your boss at work, you're calling and telling that you can't come in cause you're all jacked up and you can't explain to them why, you know what I mean? You lose your job over that and they don't care. They don't understand. So, having to try and balance between being not able to even think straight and having to go to work to follow you know, wiring and place diagrams for electronic circuit boards that I have to solder part onto or inspect or whatever. Something that takes a lot of attention to detail and uh ... more than just a little bit of skill because being that you make safety equipment you have a higher quality of inspection you know so your rejection rates and failure rates are a lot higher. So you have to maintain a level of dedication to it. When you ain't got it you ain't got it so, it was very difficult.

[1:04:33]

GD: Did you um ... did you get help from the VA?

AS: I did. Yeah I got seen regularly except for uh ... when I'd have to say ... after the third or fourth rotation like, you're looking around um ... 2006-2007 guys. When they were starting to come in to the VA ... the sheer number of 'em was so high that um, like my appointments would start to get stretched and um ... meaning that I was going once a week for a long time. You know, and then three years in to my therapy I'm starting to cope a little bit better but not as well as I needed to be to, oh well I have to push you back another week, oh I have to push you back another two weeks, and then not seeing my therapist for two months. That was rough. After getting to vent and you know, let somebody know how I was feeling and it may sound like complaining at first but hell, sometimes I just went there to talk to somebody who would understand that if I had to stop talking that couldn't talk at that point in time and to just let me you know, work my way back out or ask me the right questions that I could answer, you know what I mean? Having someone who understands the human mind is a ... invaluable benefit. So um ... yeah that was rough that I can see how a lot of guys had a lot of problems back in you know, like uh ... '06, the '06-'07 guys that were rotation out, coming out of the military and to the '09, '10, '11, those guys were getting to the VA at those points in time just ... it had to been a nightmare cause when your therapist has to call you last minute oh I have to take an emergency appointment, you know what I mean, you're getting ready to leave (laughter) so it's like, oh okay. You were planning on having your appointment and then you don't and I'll tell you what having that routine was nice. It was a structure you know, that was a benefit to me. It was a piece of sanity. So, dealing with everybody else just ... coming in like that was crazy but um ... yeah I found it a lot easier than most of the vets coming out after ... I don't even know if they started naming the rotation you know, OIF-5, OIF-6 I don't know about that. But all those guys that rotated out after 2005 and then came back to civilian life after that. They're the ones that have the real problems that weren't able to get seen or anything. The VA was throwing paperwork out because they couldn't process it because there was just too much of it you know? They would take what they could and put the rest under the rug, you know?

GD: Let's go on to, because you answered a lot of my questions, um ... let's go with ... alright, did or does the media give Americans an accurate portrayal of the wars?

AS: In a way yes, and in a way no. I mean, they focus so much on the reason why things are done and ... but then the report just on what was done not why it was done, not why it happened. I mean sometimes they'll, if they feel like it you know it seems like they kind of um ... they kind of like ... ask, almost just ask like incidentally or you know, just whatever, oh what made you guys do that? And then they get an answer from some guy that don't know his ass from a hole in the ground or you know, they don't go ask a senior officer because the officer's off doing his AAR's and everything else and you know, making sure his men are taken care of. He doesn't really have time to do reporting so they get you know ... Joe shit, the ragman PFC that don't know nothing, you know what I mean, willing to run his mouth off and give them as much information as they wanted from his point of view. But then they paint it as being the military's perspective or you know, what happened and happened because of this reason. It's just completely inaccurate so, no they um ... and they tend to outright deceive. Like uh, there was an incident where um ... for some reason I wanna say it was John Kutman but don't quote me on that because I don't wanna smear the guy's name cause I can't positively identify him. But there was a guy that sat with us when we were in Haditha Dam when I had actually come back from Rawah and was stationed there. He was asking us questions, but he didn't tell us it was an interview. He was just sitting there BSing with us. Well he had a tape recorder running ... and right then and there he uh ... when he broke the trust of Marines. He figured out real quick what loyalty was. You know, being a civilian you're kind of on the outside looking in and being that you're a reporter that broke trust and faith, he had no ... no shelter anywhere. No Marine in our battalion wanted to talk to him. At all. He could have been on fire and asked directions to the nearest fire extinguisher and would've got ignored, because um ... he had taken some of our comments and kind of ... he put them down but he didn't really you know, do it justice. But we were just ... we were having a conversation with the guy and we were kind of bitching you know. Bitching Marine's a happy Marine, you know what I mean it's just ... even the officers say that. Just some of the shit that went on, we kinda like, yeah this is bullshit. This is what we think is what's going on and whatnot but he kind of took it as you know ... this is how things were. We gave it from our perspective and I was a Lance Corporal at the time in a Comm. Platoon. In a battalion let alone you know what I mean, I had no competent operational view whatsoever and it was as wide as the maps I was given and there was a lot more to all the stories that came out of that. Yeah, I think that um ... the war reporters that were veterans ... they understand how things work a little bit just by seeing what went down, you know. They understand the content goes deeper than what you can capture with a camera lens. Or an interview from some random civilian that, you know, had their house destroyed by a tank. They're going to be pretty pissed off looking at us like we're assholes and that's not the perspective that should be portrayed. Should it be included? Yeah. But ... you know what I mean, shit happens. We are usually that shit (laughter).

[1:11:28]

GD: And one of my last questions here. How do you feel about the way that your country treated you in terms of your service?

AS: Personally, um ... I think at first I took a lot of it as being you know, like uh ... not treated as bad as the Vietnam War era veterans you know and the whole ... social sentiment and trust me, it was social conditioning to thank veteran for their service and what not. To be grateful and stuff. I mean ... and that's alright you know. Um ... but I think the opportunities to leave the military should we have needed to or desired to just weren't there. You know, I think whole system between leaving and finding success after being in the military um ... a lot of that died out after the Vietnam War. Like, from World War II or even World War I probably, on down to about Vietnam, if you walked up to and mill or plant or whatever and said I was a veteran you know what I mean, you ... as long as you could do the job and you weren't completely unstable throughout a very short and pointed interview and a little bit of background you know checking and what not you were hired, you know what I mean? They welcomed you back in that regard with open arms because you knew as a veteran you would be on time. You'd be dedicated, you know what I mean? You knew how the jobs and you would get it done at just about all costs. Now a days you try to get a job as a veteran you're like, you've got problems we're gonna put you at the bottom of the pile, you know. So, I was uh ... fairly resentful that ... a lot of my military schooling and whatnot was also discounted as being you know, second rate. When I had to learn how to do what a network admin took four years to do in college I had to learn how to do that in 12 weeks, you know what I mean? 10-12 weeks. And it's like, what? Just because I didn't learn how to write and MLA style paper doesn't mean that I couldn't do the job. Well, to them it doesn't matter, you know what I mean. Even though you gotta admit that the gap between the wars from uh ... Vietnam to Desert Storm was fairly large. So a lot of those people were now becoming management and they weren't war veterans. They were college graduates. So the only one of value to them is a college graduate. I feel that the government didn't sponsor enough uh ... sentiment that you know, when these guys are coming back they're gonna need to do something. In my honest opinion I don't think they wanted us to do anything. When it takes you how many weeks to process a claim for educational benefits, you know what I mean, you'd best be doing it in the term in spring over the summer if you want everything to be on time. So I think everything is set up to make it difficult for you to leave because um ... you know from the whole experience that you kind of get attached to that familiarity from the platoon and there's a level of security there. It's like your family no matter how messed up and shitty they are they're still your family you know what I mean. So it's basically designed to, to prevent ... that from happening so that max exoduses don't happen you know what I mean? I think is primarily based on that and ... you know, if my time in service was ... better and I don't consider my combat deployments a detraction from that. I figured that uh ... that I fully became a U.S. Marine after my second deployment I would say. I knew what it was to be a veteran of this nation and to serve and to watch you know um ... what happens to people. You know, over the course of combat and whatnot. I've seen a little bit with it with my first deployment cause I mean, my first deployment really didn't ... really didn't catch me real hard you know. I saw dead people you know I didn't see people die but I saw dead people you know what I mean so ... now

OIF II was different. I saw people die and I saw people that I knew die you know so that was uh ... a different experience you know what I mean? So uh ... yeah I'd have to say that there's just a lot missing. There's a lot of gratitude and that was nice you know the public being there for us and what not and that helped out a hell of a lot. They weren't spitting on us when we were coming back home you know, so um ... yeah just I don't believe they did it the right way. I don't believe they did the right thing you know. Encouraging us to go to school is a good idea. You know they did a lot of that even since before you even really got into boot camp you know they were like you should sign up for the GI Bill. Don't worry about that money getting taken out of your paycheck just sign for it. You'll regret it if you don't you know. And if you do it later you're going to have to wait that much longer to get access to it. So that was great, but there were really no more opportunities out there. The only opportunity you have is to reenlist and that's the one they pushed, that's what they wanted. You know, they wanted to retain their veterans because over time you know that experience, not having to train new guys to do the job you know and to put men through the meat grinders as many times as they could was cheaper that way you know what I mean cause you're starting costs have already been spent you know and you've got your return. You know so and then the older guys gave you know training and wisdom to the younger guys that brought them up faster you know and that's primarily what it's designed for so. Yeah, they handled it right in the tactical sense ... but you know what I mean the guys that had it good had a good experience you know, they made their promotions on time and whatnot. those guys stayed anyway. They retained the people that they wanted to retain through that but uh ... that was one of the reasons why I got out cause I missed my promotion. It was kind of uh ... kind of belligerent. I was a fairly confrontational person a lot more aggressive personality you know so uh I said the wrong things to the wrong people (laughter). I called bullshit when I really probably shouldn't have politically, you know it needed to be done but you know, practically speaking it wasn't the wisest move for my career and I wasn't going to be a politician I was going to be you know, a Marine (laughter). I acted like it. It doesn't fly in non-grunt platoons it just doesn't work that way. You kinda gotta follow the office politics which is another reason why I got out because it was like ... you know if I wanna work at an office I gotta work at an office. I get paid better (laughter), more time off. Better pay, better benefits. Less hassle and doing the same job just about you know.

[1:18:32]

GD: Alright. Do you have anything else you would like to add before we wrap this up?

AS: No I think we pretty much covered all the like, talking points like all the important events and whatnot. Yeah I think that's pretty much it.

GD: Alright then this interview is going to conclude ... now.

[1:19:01]