

Robert Morris University Oral History Center
Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Project



Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
ADAM LANDRY SALINAS
Interior Communications, US Navy & Mortuary Affairs, US Army
February 21, 2017

Salinas, Adam (1983 –), Oral History Interview, February 21, 2017.

Biographical Sketch: Adam served in both the US Navy & then in the US Army. During his Naval enlistment Adam would serve onboard the USS Constellation, USS O'Brien, & the USS Nimitz as an Interior Communications Specialist. Afterwards, Adam would reenlist into the US Army where he was assigned to the 54th Mortuary Company as a mortuary affairs specialist. Adam deployed with each ship to Persian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, where he developed a curiosity. Later, after reenlisting into the Army Adam would deploy to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Topics Covered in Interview:

9/11

US Navy

US Army

Mortuary Affairs

Balad, Iraq

Bagram, Afghanistan

US Service Member Casualties

Civilian Casualties

Enemy casualties

Mortars

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Transcribed by Adam Salinas

Edited by Adam Salinas and John McCarthy

[00:00:00]

JC: This interview is part of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Project. Undertaken by the Oral History Center at Robert Morris University. I am Joshua Caskey and today is 21 February 2017. I am joined by Adam. Adam can you please state your full name.

AS: Adam Landry Salinas,

JC: And do I have your consent to interview you today?

AS: Yes,

JC: Excellent. So, you have an interesting background. So, you served in 2 branches of the military. Is that correct.

AS: Correct.

JC: Awesome. So, let's just start off with a little bit of background. So where were you born and when were you born?

AS: I was born in Baltimore Maryland, January 10th of 83.

JC: Ok, so that makes you 34, So you served in both, so which branch did you serve in first? What years were you in that branch?

AS: Yeah, I was in the navy from 01 to 06, and so 9/11 went down and that was the day after my enlistment began. So, I didn't go in with the notion of there was a war. I kind of just ended up in a war. Pretty interesting, neat. I remember, I was asleep on the couch and my dad had come in to the living room and was like hey turn on the TV watch the news and I hadn't told him that I had joined the military but I didn't want to say anything either. Cause I knew like the navy I felt safe.

JC: So, did you end up deploying with the navy, then?

AS: I was on the USS Constellation from well we decommissioned her I think in 02 or 03. Then I went to the O'Brien which we decommissioned her as well, and I ended up on the Nimitz.

JC: Ok,

AS: So that's 2 carriers and 1 DDG.

JC: Ok, and what did you do while, I would say, what was your job on the ship and then where did you find yourself outside of the United States?

AS: I was Interior Communication Specialist, I fixed TV's and Telephones. In regard to deployments these were all west coast-based ships. So, we went on what was called West Pac's and basically, we touched in places such as Hawaii, China, Australia, Through the Strait of Hormuz, and into the Persian Gulf.

JC: Ok, so you were hitting waters that were considered part of the Global War on Terror?

AS: Absolutely,

JC: Ok, so you did that until 2006, and then what happened after you got out of the navy?

AS: Yea, I went to school finished my associate degree and went to the army. Now I had always wanted to go put my boots on ground. Since 2004-2003. When, it was like the height I would say of the war. We had news cameras on our ship, and I was responsible for setting up the news cameras and the film crew would shoot footage of the planes leaving. And we loaded up massive amounts of ammunition on to these jet planes. And they would return with no ammunition, so that was just day in and day out of missions of these planes going and coming and going and coming. And the camera crews were all about it so I, my curiosity was getting the best of me and I knew one day I wanted to into the army. So, that chance came after, in 2006 I had graduated with my associate degree and I found myself with nothing better to do, so I went back into the military. And this time I went into the army just so I can go and see what it was like on ground. In Iraq and Afghanistan.

JC: Ok, so what did you. You ended up joining the army, what was that process like? Well first off what did you go in as a certain MOS or did you find that out later?

AS: Yeah, So I was able to choose the MOS. Prior to enlisting, and I had chosen Mortuary Affairs. I figured I wanted to go into a smaller community, and I figured that was a pretty small community, cause none of the recruiters had ever heard of it before. Or knew anybody that was associated with that branch.

JC: Ok, Oh, wow. That's interesting.

AS: Or job title.

JC: So, let's rewind just a little bit and we will get back into what you did over sea's as mortuary affairs. So, you did talk a little about 9/11. So, can you talk a little more about the impact of you joining the navy and then eventually the army.

AS: As far as what...

JC: Yeah did it have any bearing on your decision, how did you feel, things of that nature.

AS: Well, being in the navy I felt comfortable, it was an exciting experience and I got to travel. I got to work; I gained a lot of valuable work experience. In regard to telephones and communications, and then the different ports we got to visit, were just once in a lifetime type thing. For the army the deployments were far different I'm sure you can relate as to being on ground the atmosphere is a lot different and more serious and more intense. My experience in country was in larger base and I didn't leave that base very often. So, I felt relatively safe. There was always a threat of mortars coming over the wall or in intrusion like a break in, but those were maybe once the entire time I was there. As far as intrusions. Now, mortars came over the wall a couple times. But I never felt scared. On a day to day basis.

JC: So, this was, so when did you leave for your deployment overseas?

AS: For the army?

JC: Yeah for the army. Basic Time frame. I know it's hard to remember the exact,

AS: 2008 and 9, and then 2011 and 12.

JC: And both were they Iraq, Afghanistan?

AS: The first one was Balad and that's Iraq.

JC: Ok,

AS: And the second was Bagram, Afghanistan.

JC: OK, so bigger forward operating bases, but both theaters.

AS: Both theaters, correct and bigger bases. Yeah.

JC: Ok, so we'll kind of break those down individually because I know they are different environments, a lot of different things going on and I just want to get your take on that. So as far as, so since Iraq was your first deployment in, on boots on the ground we'll say. Cause you had already been in the Persian Gulf in the navy. What was your understanding of the Iraq war by time 2008 came around? Obviously, we have been at war for 5 years, what did you know about the war and what were your thoughts about going over there?

AS: I was a little apprehensive. You know nervous, excited. Wasn't quite sure what to expect I just kind of took it in stride, I think. I felt. I knew that I would preoccupy myself with certain activities and I knew I had a job. So, if I stuck to the job and filled in the free time with something productive, then I'd be alright. Now when I got there, I realized we were next to an airstrip both times. We needed to fly in and out with the remains. On a timely basis. And so, we were next to an airport consistently. The whole time.

JC: So, you said you actually flew with service members who were killed?

AS: I, no we would provide the transportation for the remains.

JC: Ok, Alright. Let's talk about that then during your time in Iraq, Balad. Just tell us what was like a day to day, you know what, I know it probably varied depending on what was going on but talk a little bit about what your day to day life was like over there and what you were doing.

AS: Well on a day to day basis for our job we received remains maybe 3 to 4 times a week. And that would be anywhere between 2 to 5 remains at a time. We have experienced a couple of mass casualties, where the vehicle would be brought in and part of the process is cleaning out the vehicle.

JC: Whats that like?

AS: Cleaning out a vehicle?

JC: Yeah,

AS: I mean you get past whatever initial emotion you might have. In regard to it. But and it just becomes another job, I think.

JC: Ok, were you able to dehumanize it or get to a point where it was, you just looked at it as this is what I must do.

AS: Yeah, definitely.

JC: How long did that take? Take your time, so obviously it's a very raw emotion still. Cause it's very personal and it's something that's not ordinary what's so ever.

AS: Yea it was different, and well I guess what I walked away with was deeper of understanding of life and how much I appreciate it.

JC: Absolutely. You found value in what life has to offer.

AS: Absolutely.

JC: So, and we don't have to, we can get as little into the details I don't and if you want to tell details that is totally up to you. We can keep things as vague as you're comfortable with or as detailed as you're comfortable with. So, don't feel like you need to get deep into anything that you don't feel comfortable talking about

AS: Absolutely,

JC: So as far as, so you were receiving casualties. And vehicles. How else did they come in?

AS: A lot of times they came to us in bags, the units were responsible for transporting them to us. Very rarely did we have to go out and retrieve from these incidences.

JC: OK,

AS: So, a lot of times they would just come to us.

JC: But either way you're dealing with casualties. These are human or human beings. Living human beings that were American service members.

AS: Yea, we've had, kids come through that were local nationals and civilians who were contractors. The military people, they were there. They were there as well.

JC: Ok, so you were dealing with everything.

AS: Yeah,

JC: Not just American soldiers, marines, airmen,

AS: ... There were times when local nationals would come to the gate to receive their loved ones. Now, like I mentioned kids, we would, in the field we are responsible for retrieving wounded casualties and so, little girls, little boys were casualties and we would care for them through our medical systems, and if they didn't make it well the mortuary team we would receive remains process it any other and return it to the families. And so, I got to see some of the local nationals and some of their losses in the war on a personal basis. And then there was also, enemies that we had in our possession that would die and we would receive them as well and we would also have to return them to their families which was, you know another experience where their grieving and feeling different emotions as well. You know.

JC: So, you're probably seeing a lot of different types of casualties. What I mean by that is different style of attack being used. So, do you want to talk a little bit about the variations of, if you're comfortable talking about that.

AS: Yeah, I mean

JC: What were some of the casualties that were going on at that time frame in Iraq that you personally dealt with.

AS: So, I mean wounds varied, some people would come through in pieces, and some people would come through whole. A lot of people died just off a bullet would or an explosion.

JC: So, it's definitely all variations.

AS: Yeah

JC: Any that stick out in your mind and you don't have to go into graphic detail, unless you feel lead to.

AS: You know the hardest ones to deal with, I think the hardest ones to accept are the ones that

JC: It's alright. If you need to stop, we can stop.

AS: Yeah, I just never understood why, why they decided to take themselves. Our, those are the hardest ones, the ones that chose to take their own lives.

JC: Choose to take their, ok I see what you are saying.

AS: Yeah,

JC: So, people that choose to take their own lives. Which happens.

AS: And it happens

JC: And it happens, a lot. A lot more that the average American has any idea about. Ok, no I totally understand what you are saying. And I understand the thought process as well. So, did you, let's talk a little bit on a lighter note, let's talk a little bit about your environment. Did you work as a team, were your kind of an individual? What was the kind of the unit that you fell under how did that work?

AS: I was in 54th Quarter Master Company, out of Fort Lee, Virginia. And we were split by 111th and 54th two active duty mortuary units out of the entire united states. And then in Puerto Rico is the 1 reserve unit.

JC: Ok,

AS: So, the three of us, we rotate 6-month rotations down range and so when we are back in the states, we are pretty much mechanics or maintenance crew.

JC: What were you working on?

AS: What every vehicle are in our...

JC: Oh, so actual vehicles ok. So, you're mortuary affairs, yet you're back in the states and you are doing something totally different. Yea, That's interesting.

AS: You didn't experience the same thing?

JC: I didn't know that, as far as, for mortuary I think you are the first mortuary person that I ever met in my life. To tell you the truth.

AS: Well that means that you had good days over there.

JC: I've been around them, but I mean had a long conversation with. Yeah unfortunately I've seen them, but never really had in-depth conversation so. So, your kind of were sent over there in very small numbers and it sounds like you were sent over there by yourself?

AS: So 54th Quarter Master Company is comprised of 4 platoons, now two platoons will go out for 6 months and the other two will rotate out. So, with two deploying we broke down into teams and we each covered a certain area. The teams were maybe 5-6 people per team.

JC: Ok

AS: So, like a squad. You go out in a squad.

JC: And what was the relationship with like, you're working with these people,

AS: Every day, And you're on a 24-hour rotation. When I said mortuary is a small field, it's a small field it was nice. I was a really nice experience for myself. Not only were we in like a larger base, but we were secluded in that larger base and it made things a lot nicer. We had our own facilities. As far as like sleeping arrangements, and shower arrangements. Where I know most people had general facilities, like nobody could use ours we didn't travel outside of our facility unless we went to eat or to the gym.

JC: So, what was your moral like? You're obviously dealing with very difficult situations; would you say on a semi regular basis?

AS: I guess during those times its, you're desensitized. And you are really working hand in hand with the people next to you who are over coming these emotions at the same time. And so, I mean in theater, I don't think we thought or stopped to think about it very much. And we were just, I don't know, I don't know we were just excited. Excited to be there, excited to be part of and to be doing our thing.

JC: Ok, so did you see the moral change with the guys that you were, in your small unit. Did you see the moral change for anybody, or change for you specifically? During this, during the deployment?

AS: You know I didn't see the signs. And I know that there 2 members of my team who aren't here no more. They choose, you know... path.

JC: Ok, wow. So, they, ok, I see what you are saying.

AS: I never seen the signs and I thought the moral stayed decent the whole time.

JC: But sometimes when you come home. Things change

AS: Things change, I guess people interpret their experiences differently. Or there, they are presented with new conflicts new challenges.

JC: Absolutely, So I want to talk a little bit about your deployment in Afghanistan as well. So, if we can always touch back if somethings come to your mind. So, feel free to go either direction, so you deployed to Afghanistan. When did you deploy and was it with the same unit?

AS: Same unit, this was 2011-2012.

JC: Ok, and where were you at in Afghanistan?

AS: Bagram.

JC: You did say that, so in Bagram. And which is how far, you know the capital correct? Near Kabul maybe 30 miles, am I right.

AS: Yeah, you're right.

JC: So, you get to Kabul, you are with the same unit. What about your immediate mortuary affairs guys, are the same people or are they different now?

AS: The teams changed. And same mission, same objective, support the fallen.

JC: Any differences that you notice right from the get-go, given the time frame? Or is it a similar mission?

AS: It felt similar, I know we were in two different locations within the region. But the land scape didn't seem to change much. It seemed to be the same. I was surprised when we landed. There was snow. That was one thing that threw me off. But it was much higher in the, because this is the Kush Mountain Range.

JC: Ok,

AS: It was much higher in elevation. So that's why we got the snow, but

JC: So, what about as far as like Afghanistan. During that time, with casualties. And what was going on in that region that you were supporting? What were the differences and what was it like?

AS: You know I think that was where I experienced the first Mass Casualty clean up, with the vehicles. Coming in.

JC: Was it from a roadside bomb or...

AS: Vehicle borne.

JC: Vehicle borne, ok.

AS: Yea, the vehicle was running into by another vehicle which was carrying explosives.

JC: So, when you guys, as mortuary affairs do you get a whole lot of background information when something happens or is it kind of like, this is. We got this many casualty and you need to get to work? What happens, how does that work?

AS: We get a lot of spotted information. We will get the report there is an incoming. We assemble the team and we prepare the bags, and we prepare the floors. As soon as we get the remains there is usually other information that filters in as far as like the incident, time frame, and so while we are there assessing and doing our inventories. We are assessing the wounds and taking notes. And so, we come to our own conclusions as well.

JC: yeah, and as far as working conditions, what are you working out of, is it a warehouse building is it like Conex boxes put together. Whats the, what were you, in this, the question would be for Iraq and Afghanistan.

AS: Both locations where I would say warehouse type facilities. The doors would open like huge warehouse doors with rollers and our trucks would back up and we would basically have like refrigerator trucks.

JC: Ok, refrigerator, they are big. The inside space.

AS: yeah

JC: Ok, so you kind of operating between these refrigerator trucks and the warehouses? Are you moving the remains as well? Just before I ask the question, what is the proper terminology?

AS: Remains.

JC: Remains, ok. Is that the...

AS: Yeah, absolutely.

JC: Ok.

AS: So, when dealing with the remains we get a phone call saying there incoming. And that can be either on ground or through the plane. If it's through the plane, we make arrangements to pick the remains off the airfield. Once we have the remains in our possession, we usually secure the parameters or close it off. No visitors can come in. And we must then open up the bags and begin processing the remains. Which means recording wounds, any visible markings. We must record and then we just search make sure that there is no explosives and we search for any personal identifications, and everything is being recorded. We have one dirty hand and one clean hands. So, one person is going through the pockets doing all the touching or rolling the remains over to check the undersides. And one person is recording the entire event.

JC: So very detailed of what you are doing?

AS: Absolutely.

JC: As far as so the personal effect, possessions. Who handles that? And how does that?

AS: That gets put, stored into a specific bag with their name their identification and everything pretty much travels with them. From there on.

JC: Ok, with the remains of the individual. That passed.

AS: Correct.

JC: And that goes all the way to Delaware?

AS: Yes,

JC: Ok,

AS: Dover,

JC: Dover, Delaware. Ok.

AS: and so in Dover, that's where, there's another team on standby who have received information of the incoming personal or remains and by this time all the relevant information; name, rank, date of birth, awards, decorations, things that Dover will need to dress this individual. Branch of service so everything that Dover will need to dress the individual properly for burial. Because from Dover the parents are notified and or family members are notified and transportation from there is arranged.

JC: Ok, so you are on the front end and they are on the receiving end of, so it's a transfer. Ok. So, you talked a little bit about as far as some memorable, not great memories, but memorable none the less casualties. Anything else stick out about your time in Afghanistan. It can be anything, it can be a specific casualty it can be something from that deployment that sticks out in your brain. It could be a good thing as well.

AS: You know deployments were rough in dealing with the casualties but there were so many times where I had opportunities to meet people from different cultures. In the navy there was community outreach programs, and we would go to like Kuala Lumpur, and visiting for like two or three days and during those 2 or 3 days. There would be a special project that went out into the community and cleaned of just networked built relations.

JC: Hold that thought for one second. I apologize. Aright we are going to start again. Alright so you are talking about Kuala Lumpur, and

AS: and the community outreach programs that were available throughout the different deployments. Deployments were also filled with; I think as you know education. There were always teachers available, so that if you had time you could take classes.

JC: Ok, so you got to take classes over there.

AS: That was one thing I tried to push all my soldiers,

JC: That's good, see I don't, I'm not familiar with it. Cause I was in the infantry and I was usually in areas where we didn't have much of anything.

AS: The farthest outpost. You guys were having it rough. Well I was very fortunate, on the ships they sent instructors out to teach classes and so that's where I started taking a lot of my classes and just filling in the hole with general education.

JC: Ok,

AS: Every deployment, education or community project. I found deployments can be very beneficial. Just to who I was, coming back to the states after these deployments. I found myself just minimizing what I really needed and just living modestly. I realize all the extra stuff I really wasn't needing.

JC: So, it gives you a different perspective on life. Would it be safe to say that?

AS: Yeah,

JC: As far, so you talked about education would you consider that as an outlet for you? To, that may sound weird to some people. I don't know, was that your way of blowing off steam or focusing your energy elsewhere?

AS: I think the education part was a such a goal of mine and at the same time served the purpose of a release. Just having extra time was a blessing, and then utilizing it productively was just the way to do it. It did take my mind what was going on. A lot of the time I was able to focus.

JC: What else did you do in your free time, in Iraq and Afghanistan? What were some other things that, you know, some people like physical fitness, some people watch movies? What were some of the things that you did?

AS: Iraq was neat and so. Yea, Iraq was cool because they had a pool. It was a warm enough season that the pool was open and a lot of the time we would go swimming.

JC: Oh cool. What about in Afghanistan? Well beside education and we know you did community service type activities. Did you work out or?

AS: Yeah, we worked out, there was always the gym.

JC: Was that a good release for you as well?

AS: Absolutely,

JC: Ok, so let's talk a little bit, we haven't talked about, did you have a family? Meaning where you married, kids any of that stuff during these deployments?

AS: Yea I was I was married,

JC: When did you get married, just for context of your time in service.

AS: Prior to leaving for the army. So, while I was in school the first time. I had gotten married and we had a child. And so, I went into the army with this relationship and during deployment things just changed so I came out of the army not married.

JC: So, you went into deployment married and came out of that deployment or out of the army completely?

AS: Because we have tried to make it work through the, and towards the end of the military contract we just decided to go our separate ways.

JC: Do you equate any of that to the extended time gone or

AS: Just being a part and growing apart, I think is what does it.

JC: So, you had a child together, was this a son or a daughter?

AS: Yea, my 7-year-old by. Who is living with me now?

JC: Oh, ok. So, do you have custody of your son. Or at least?

AS: Yeah, we share 50/50 custody and we, she is a fair player in the custody game so it makes things really nice.

JC: So how was it having a son. And obviously you were married at the time. How was it for them from what you know. And how they expressed obviously, if your relationship didn't work out, but what was it like for them and what was it like for you being apart? And dealing with a totally different environment with your job.

AS: So, when I'm gone, I like to be gone. And I think that's probably what lead to our distance our growing apart. I don't really turn around and communicate very well. So, if I was to couch myself in the future I would say, communicate would be a huge thing. But

JC: Why do you think that was? Just out of curiosity? Because I've heard this many time from people. I've heard both ends. I've heard people who want to communicate as much as possible and I hear other people. They want to separate, they kind of want to just disconnect.

AS: Yeah

JC: Explain your thought process at that time.

AS: Absolutely, so I just want to be focused where I am. And I don't want any distractions. I know that things happen family's separate, you know infidelity seems to set one way or another and so I did want to know if anything like that was happening back home. I didn't want any kind of distractions, so when I got on the plane, I just told myself I'm not contacting them until I come back.

JC: Ok, well let's switch gears a little bit and we are going to talk a little bit about the media. So, you served in Iraq and Afghanistan. And on top of that you've in support in the navy as well so you've kind of, you've been around. You're definitely a, you've done more than your part in the global war on terror. You can talk about them separately, because they are two separate wars, Iraq and Afghanistan. What was the portrayal from the media? Was its accurate portrayal? Inaccurate? For Iraq and Afghanistan, I know they are both separate, so we can talk about them individually, or is that just not on your radar?

AS: I guess it just wasn't really on my radar. I didn't really collect my information from through the media.

JC: What about when you came back.

AS: I still don't to this day,

JC: You still don't, That's fair. So, no the media what comes out of the media, you probably couldn't even tell me, cause it's not on your radar.

AS: I have no TV,

JC: Oh wow, Ok. But hey do you think that made the mission a little bit easier because you don't have anything extra to think about as far as politics or should we or shouldn't we be somewhere.

AS: In the doctors' offices and elsewhere there's always CNN playing. So, I mean I do pick up on media there is media playing around me, I'm sure everywhere I go. So, what I do hear and what I do see through the television, I don't think it's accurate and I think that it's short and brief as far as covering the war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

JC: So, both. You think

AS: Absolutely,

JC: Because there definitely were, we went in for different reasons. Apparently, and people have different thoughts on it. It's interesting to hear that, and we do hear. I've interviewed a lot of veterans and its very often similar where what was said in the media doesn't have any bearing especially during the ends. So,

AS: yeah, I don't think the media accurately portrays what is going on in the ground over there and it's hard to understand whats going on over there through 30 second clips of either a battle or a disaster. To fully understand would take educating one's self. And that just takes time, you can't just get that from the news.

JC: Yeah, we are going to switch gears one more time. Here and talk about coming back, coming back from multiple deployments and then getting out. How did it. First of all, how did your time in Iraq and Afghanistan, in the service over all but more focused on your time overseas. How did it change you or did it change you? And how did you adjust? How was that time period?

AS: Absolutely, I feel like I grew up overseas. I feel like I've deployed. Well I've deployed 5 times, most of that time is through the ship, a full year of army time.

JC: Ok, So three deployments with the navy, Ok? And then two deployments, wow.

AS: and I feel like I transitioned from being a teenager into being a young man through that time. So, I feel like I came out of the experience as a young professional seeking education. Just wanting to be educated now.

JC: So, you're looking at it from a positive perspective.

AS: Yeah, I went in due to family and economic reasons prior to 9/11 I had already made up my mind. I want to go into the military, whatever reasons my family and economics pushed me into seeking employment outside of the community, so I knew I was going into the military and I knew that I wanted to go in for the purposes of getting educated.

JC: Ok,

AS: I knew that it was going to pay me a monthly paycheck and give me a place to sleep. The navy recruiter was like look man we are going to give you a place to sleep some food, clothes, and we are going to pay you, we are going to train you, we are going to give you money for school. And I remember telling him well sign me up for 20 years man that sounds great.

JC: (laughing)

AS: Who would pass that up, you know. So,

JC: Sounds too good to be true.

AS: And so, he set me up with my first contract. And it was great, it was awesome as soon as I got out, I felt myself wanting to get back in and so I hurried up with a little bit of education and went right back in. Did some education while I was there got out, finished some more education and to be frank I want to get right back in it again.

JC: Is that a possibility, for you?

AS: I mean, it's truly an opportunity. I can always enlist, reenlist.

JC: Ok, so that's something that may be on your radar?

AS: I find the military life to be exciting. All politics aside, I find that military life is structure and it provides positive reinforcements across the board.

JC: Ok, so as far as dealing with very difficult things that the average American would have no clue, dealing with casualties on a regular to a semi regular basis. How has that affected you, how do you get through that type of stuff? Do you struggle with that?

AS: Absolutely,

JC: And you don't have to get into any details because I know you know that you still have aspirations. But you know how you deal with it.

AS: I think just setting goals and just accepting our lives as learning lessons. So, I learned a couple of valuable lessons about life. I've learned a lot about myself, through the military through those hard times, I guess. And I want to apply those to the future. One day I hope to be able to come along somebody and provide them with support and guidance that others showed me. And I feel like the experiences that I'm going through will only help when it comes time for that.

JC: Sure, so as far as being out. Do you utilize, are you currently using the Gi Bill through the VA.

AS: Yea, I depleted that last semester

JC: Depleted it. Ok, and what about medical services. Do you use the VA at all?

AS: no,

JC: You haven't, ok. So, you don't have any experience with the VA to talk about?

AS: They have been great. I was hit last year by a bus, I was walking across the street Just, you know those little flashing green things came on and I started walking across the street. I made it halfway and the bus got me. So, I walked straight to the VA from there,

JC: You walked to the VA, wow.

AS: yeah, this bus didn't knock me over, but I feel bad for the bus.

JC: Geez, so you have been to the VA.

AS: And they treated me on the spot.

JC: And was it a good experience?

AS: Yep.

JC: Good. Wow well that's intense. How are you healing up?

AS: I've had one surgery of two, and I about ready for the second one.

JC: Ok, but you're generally hanging in their health wise?

AS: Yeah, other than a speech impediment. I'm like I'm slow sometimes. And I find myself like losing track of mind sometimes. I had gotten hit in the head. This thing ran 15 miles an hour, ran into me. I got to see the footage, and on the footage, it shows how fast these guys are going,

JC: Ok, wow. That's intense.

AS: It was.

JC: So, you make it through Iraq and Afghanistan basically at least physically intact. And then you come home and get hit by a bus. That's strange.

AS: I got more PTSD from...

JC: Out of the ordinary, I will say. But I am glad to see that you are up and about and continuing education.

AS: Absolutely,

JC: Last question, as far as the way that your country has treated you. As far as the veteran of 2 wars and multiple deployments, how do you feel you have been treated, personally?

AS: I feel like I have been treated fairly. Like any other American.

JC: Good, I'm glad to hear that. And in the future if you have any pictures photography, journals, poetry, whatever, feel free to forward that to me and we would love to attach that to your story that we are getting out there.

AS: There was an article you can find online that was written while I was in Bagram. And it has a picture of the mortuary team attached to it.

JC: Cool, very cool.

AS: If you typed in Salinas Bagram, you'll come across the article and I'm pretty sure you'd be able to utilize that one way or another.

JC: Ok, I'd appreciate that. And same thing with picture if you have any picture that you like or picture that you'd like for us to have, we'll figure out, maybe in the future if we want to put them up for people to see who they were reading about or watching or listening to. Well thank you so much for the interview. Thank you for your service, and the interview will end now.

[00:46:49]

Support for the Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Project provided by the Jacob Ferree Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

