

Robert Morris University Oral History Center

Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Project



Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

Jared Dalton Hook

Reconnaissance, Marine Corps, Iraq War, Afghanistan War

Interviewed on April 23, 2015

IAMP 2

Hook, Jared D. (1985 –), Oral History Interview, April 23, 2015.

Audio and Video Recording (ca. ?? min.)

Biographical Sketch:

Jared Dalton Hook was a Reconnaissance Marine. He was born in San Jose, California in 1985 and served over five years in the military starting in January 2007 until March 2012. He did his basic training at Camp Pendleton and was also stationed at Camp Pendleton at the 1st Reconnaissance BN, 1st Marine Division. He was involved in both theaters of operation during the War on Terror. He was in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2008 covering the areas of Mosul and Ramadi. He was in Operation Enduring Freedom in 2010 in the areas of Trek Nawa and the Sangin River Valley in Helmand Province.

Topics Covered in Interview:

- Iraq
- Comradery
- Helmand Province, Afghanistan
- Sniper
- Marine Force Reconnaissance
- Communication with Family Members
- Media Portrayal and Misconceptions of War and Veterans
- Military Training
- Morale
- Reintegration
- Veterans Administration

Interviewed by Joshua Caskey

Transcribed by Joshua Caskey, Caleb Smith

Edited by

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 23, April 2015. I am joined by Jared Hook. Jared, could you please state your full name, and do I have your consent to interview you today?

JH: Jared Dalton Hook, and yes.

JC: Alright. So let's start off, we'll start with your date and place of birth.

JH: I was born November 11, 1985 in San Jose, California.

JC: Can you tell me where you enlisted out of and basically the reason why, and any history of family service?

JH: I enlisted in Rockford, Illinois. That's just west of Chicago. I reported January 4, 2007, and I do have a family history of enlistment. I had a grandfather that was a Sergeant Major in the Army, as well as other various members up through my family. The reason... there are actually a lot of reasons why I joined. Some of it was duty, some of it was I slacked off a lot in high school, so I understood that I probably not get into college, and I figured that the military was my best option for being able to pay for college, as well.

JC: So, that kind of answers... what attracted you to military service, other than, kind of the reasons you said, is there anything other, that you were attracted to?

JH: A big part was duty, feeling that I needed to do, at least, a part.

JC: What was your understanding about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, since you did both, upon entering service?

JH: When I joined I expected more to participate in Afghanistan... Afghanistan, at the time, was, if I could say a hotter zone, but in fact, I didn't really join knowing exactly what I was going to get into... I knew what I wanted to do in the military, but I didn't exactly know what was going on in

the wars at the time. I watched the news, but we all know that not everything that you see in the news is what's actually happening.

JC: Did any of that change in any way once you actually did go over there?

JH: In my perceptions?

JC: Yes.

JH: Yeah.

JC: Your understandings and perceptions.

JH: Absolutely. I learned quite a bit, not only from my peers in the military in the Marine Corps, but also from the locals. I learned a lot from the Iraqis and the Afghans, alike.

JC: Okay. Can you discuss, first off your branch of service, and then, basically, go into training and, you know, life on base and overall feeling of getting ready to deploy? We can go back over any of those questions. [00:02:59]

JH: Yeah sure... which one did you want me to start with?

JC: Let's start with branch and what you were doing and all of that.

JH: Well, I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. I enlisted under an O300 open contract which is to say... it's infantry... I was guaranteed an infantry position, but my position within the infantry was up for debate. It was my decision, it is as per the needs and requirements of the Marine Corps. My training, after boot camp, I went straight to a school of infantry. That was at Camp Pendleton, California, and I spent three months in school of infantry. After the three months there, I immediately jumped into reconnaissance training. That's a basic reconnaissance school, and basic reconnaissance course which is also at Camp Pendleton. That was an additional three months. After that, I was dropped to my unit, which was First Reconnaissance Battalion First Marine Division. That's also at Camp Pendleton...Camp Margarita, which is a smaller area in Camp Pendleton. Once I reached First Reconnaissance Battalion, the rest of the battalion, the bulk of the battalion was on return from a deployment in Iraq, so, I got a lot of time to do my own personal training, which was schools. So, after you initially end your pipeline schools, as we call it, you have these additional schools in reconnaissance where they send you to skills schools. So I... My first school following basic reconnaissance course was sniper school. And after that... that was about enough time to kind of work into a work up, which is where we ramp up our training as a unit so that we were ready for deployment to Iraq. And that was leading up to my first deployment.

JC: Can you explain a little more in depth, maybe some of your training going into the School of Infantry, as well as your Basic Reconnaissance course?

JH: Yes, absolutely. So, the School of Infantry is typically... it's basic combat training where, you get marksmanship classes boot camp, but in School of Infantry you get applicable shooting training. So, you are shooting at man sized targets. It kind of more getting into the mindset of an Infantry Combat Marine. So, you spend a lot of time out in the bushes, we call it, you spend a lot of time hiking, building up your body, you spend a lot of time doing drills, which is to say, firing at advance, firing from concealed positions and bunkered building defensive positions, basic tactics. After three months in School of Infantry, basic Reconnaissance Course is kind of like one of those skills courses that I mentioned, where, we did a lot of land navigation, a lot more physical training to build up your body, a lot of nautical navigation... let's see what else? A lot of patrolling, which is... it was mostly clandestine patrolling, and a lot of reconnaissance, as you might understand as gathering information and transferring it up the chain of command to be passed down as intelligence.

JC: And did you find any of the training was specifically geared for the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan?

JH: Most of the training that I received at the basic reconnaissance course was not really applicable to Iraq. I got there pretty late in the game, as we could say. We didn't use much of that. We did mostly patrolling, vehicle mounted patrols, in Iraq, but Afghanistan I definitely used a lot of the reconnaissance skills and the clandestine movement... night movements... a lot of the small unit stuff that... operating in small teams where you know that you can't fight in a pitched battle. Where, if you are compromised, you have to have an egress route and everything like that... it's... it was small unit tactics.

JC: If you could, just talk a little bit about your life on base... even leading up to deploying. Either before you got to your unit or after you got to your unit. [00:07:25]

JH: Before I got to my unit ... it was a very regimented day. They plan everything for you; you really have no free time until the weekend...and... even if you do get the weekend off. Once I got to my unit...we... you get a little bit of time off at the end of the day, but it's mostly, since you're a new guy, you come in and you have a senior guy appointed over you, which is usually your team leader or your squad leader. For me it was the team leader that was directly in charge of me, and he's responsible for, not only physical training... your physical fitness, but also your knowledge. He'll impart knowledge to you and expect you to remember that and be able to apply it in the future training events, as well as combat.

JC: And then, how'd you feel about... before you deployed for the first time... how'd you feel about that? Were you scared? Were you excited?

JH: I feel like I was pretty ready. As you go along there is a big psychological factor in the training. They... I don't want to call it numbing... but they do... they do kind of... even if it's not meant to happen... you kind of... you're working towards deploying, and you understand that that's coming so... the fear isn't really a big factor, but it's the readiness; it's how ready you feel, and I did feel ready for both of my deployments.

JC: So let's talk a little bit about getting to Iraq, because that was your first deployment... basically, discuss the process of getting over there, and where were you at?

JH: Okay. The process of getting over there was a...for a military term, it was a goat rope haha... it was... you bring... we woke up at 4:00 AM, bring the whole battalion down to the meeting area in the middle of the barracks area, and on a basketball court. We have to bring all of our gear which is like 300 pounds of gear for each guy. We jumped on a bus to [March Airforce Base] where, after we spend a few hours at [March Airforce Base] weighing in our gear, making sure that we will not overload the bird, or overload the airplane. Everybody has a unit; we get on the airplane, flew over... let's see if I remember where we stopped... we definitely stopped... Bangor, Maine was the first stop, then we flew into Stuttgart, Germany, then Kuwait. We spent 24 hours... 24-36 hours in Kuwait, at which point we jumped on a C-130 and flew into Al-Assad. At Al-Assad there is a mandatory wait time before you can exit the wire. I can't remember why they had us doing it. There was a reasoning behind it. I think it was just to acclimate to the environment and so that you're not getting... it so that you're not going down because of the heat or something like that. But, you have this acclimation period, at which point we pushed out from Al-Assad to South [Sinjar], which is a little bit west of Mosul in northern Iraq. We spent about three months there. We did vehicular patrols around the area, we patrolled the Iraqi/Syrian border to, kind of keep down the smuggling of weapons in and out of Iraq. Mostly we only caught people only smuggling, like, cigarettes and stuff like that, but it was just trying to keep weapons from flowing in and out of the country so that we didn't have future guys to fight. After we were finished up there, South [Sinjar] was kind of winding down by the time we left. We drove back down to Ramadi and spent the remainder of my deployment in Ramadi doing helo-born operations, which is to say, we would... our command... we worked for [RCT-7], it's a regimental combat team made up of mixed units around a regiment, and we worked for them for the remainder of the deployment. Once they would receive information on an actionable target, we would get on a helicopter, fly to that area, and action the target.

JC: And then, basically... can you talk just a little bit more about your time in country? I know you were telling me about the type of operations and patrols you were doing. [00:12:08]

JH: Do want me to talk about like daily...?

JC: Yeah, just a little more of what you did on a daily basis. If you want to talk at all about the combat... maybe something that sticks out, or a certain situation.

JH: Mmhmm

JC: As well as the comradery.

JH: Yeah... I only saw one instance of combat in Iraq for all seven months that I was there. It was a... we were working with... it was a Special Forces Unit, we were working alongside Special Forces Unit. We were acting upon their intelligence, or their information, and we were helping them search a village for two high value targets and one of them was hiding in a small area, and he

shot out of a hole dug in the ground while I was in the room. We basically all filed out of the room, and the Special Forces guys took over. But, that was my only instance of combat in Iraq. As for the daily... the daily occurrences, it was pretty much wake up normal time, 6:00AM, go to breakfast, go back, take a nap, work out for a couple hours, go to lunch, go back, do some training with the Iraqis that we had assigned to us. We were assigned an Iraqi platoon that we were supposed to train, or that we did train, to become an Iraqi S.W.A.T. Team, and those guys... we would train them about four to five hours a day in the afternoons, and after that, we were free to go to work out again, eat dinner, and go to sleep... repeat. That was pretty much whenever we were not... when we were not outside the wire, that was what we were doing. It's a lot of physical fitness, a lot of eating, and a lot of down time.

JC: And how was, like, the comradery? How'd you get along with your guys?

JH: You have to get along with them. If you... there are, obviously some guys that you don't always see eye to eye with, but some of the guys that I deployed with, to Iraq and Afghanistan, I haven't talked to some of them in two years, but I can pick up the phone and call one of them and it would be like we just talked yesterday.

JC: If you could, talk a little bit about the morale of you, or your guys while you were over there. And, did that change at all, and did it become an issue? [00:14:28]

JH: It changes daily. It's all dependent on what's going on that day. A lot of the... some of the guys, of course, they're openly pessimistic, but it, largely it is what you make of it. Some of the guys, the worst time we had the closer we got to each other, and we... you have this saying, "you can't stop time", and some of the days, yeah, they just crawled by, but when you have a group of guys, sometimes all we did was laugh all day long, just laugh about things that should have bothered us, but it wasn't so bad because we were all experiencing it together.

JC: Do you feel that you were used effectively over there?

JH: In Iraq?

JC: In Iraq.

JH: No.

JC: What sticks out?

JH: Vehicle mounted patrols. The IED threat was always a problem. And I felt that we were being misused in the... it's just you have these highly trained, highly specialized marines, in vehicles... that... we're just driving around at night, doing the same thing that, and I don't want to degrade other Marines by saying that they're normal, but it's something that we shouldn't have been doing. We could have been doing a lot more, I think. The helo-borne operations kind of made up for it, but that was... it felt like they were just throwing us a bone by that point.

JC: In regards to the media, did you feel, or do you feel that the media gave Americans an accurate portrayal of Iraq? Or even still today, are they giving an accurate portrayal?

JH: Whether you watch FOX or MSNBC you are always getting a spin. I don't... I don't think that the media accurately portrays anything nowadays. Its... there's a serious problem in it and I think that the media is largely made... I don't want to blame media for Americans losing interest in the wars, but it definitely, when you see something that doesn't look like it has an end, and the media is questioning leadership, both sides of the leadership, both sides of the media are questioning the leadership, it kind of disenfranchises the American people from the war. I mean, we were attacked, and it kind of fades, I understand that memories fade and the pain kind of decreases as it goes away, but it's something whether we started and the media didn't see it, as I felt... the media doesn't really see it as something that we have to finish.

JC: So, we're going to actually jump right into your Afghanistan deployment.

JH: Okay.

JC: And then we will go back through and just discuss a little bit about how you felt for both Iraq and Afghanistan. You can discuss each one separately. [00:17:26]

JH: Mmhmm.

JC: So, leading up to deploying to Afghanistan, can you basically just tell me how you felt about deploying, and then what did you do leading up, and how was it any different?

JH: Afghanistan was a little bit, I don't want to say scary, but we were kind of always in limbo on where we were going to go next. At some points we didn't even know if our unit was going to deploy again. So, leading up to Afghanistan it was, "well, we're training for this but we don't know if we're going to get it." So it kind of... the morale was at a pretty low point in my unit because we understood that we had to do these things but we didn't... we weren't sure if we were going to be able to apply the training later... so, a lot of us, when we went to schools it was kind of a break. I did a lot of schools between Iraq and Afghanistan, I can cover that in a minute if you'd like, but yeah, we... I think it was two months before we went to Afghanistan... that's when we got our final word that we were indeed going to Afghanistan. We had worked the entire time without knowing for sure.

JC: So, let's talk a little more about that training, and first off, just tell a little bit about what type of training you did and, basically what it is tailored for...the mission Afghanistan.

JH: That's where we got... we got a new... we didn't get a new commander for the battalion, but we got a new company commander that wanted to tailor our training towards Afghanistan. He definitely sent us to a lot of good schools. That was, I'd like to say, it was the fun training. I did mountain sniper, which is high angle shooting. It was up in Bridgeport California. Immediately following that I did an urban sniper course. That was basically shooting from different platforms, different positions, point shooting... it's like multiple range without adjusting the scope on your

rifle. I did laying sideways, shooting off of rests, shooting off of other marine's shoulders, helicopter shooting...its basically... the name of the school doesn't really accurately depict it. It's more, I wanted to rename it actually, and I submitted a request to rename it combat sniper. Because we were wearing helmets rather than wearing ghilly suits, it's less sneaking around and more of an active sniper in a combat situation. That was one of my favorite schools. Immediately following my return to my unit, after urban sniper, I went to an Army jump school at Fort Benning. That was leading right up into our work up.

JC: So, how did you feel for this deployment coming up in Afghanistan? Was there any different feeling than when you deployed to Iraq?

JH: We knew that Afghanistan was going to be a hotter zone when we went in there, so we did [privilege] of training a lot. We took it very seriously. We were harder on our younger guys...the senior guys were held more accountable for their actions. We had team leaders that were being fired for things that we would have let go a long time ago. But, yeah we definitely tailored our training and made sure that we were prepared for the increase in hostility of our enemy.

JC: So, let's talk a little bit about going to Afghanistan. So, just give us an overview, like you did with Iraq... what was the process of getting there, and where did you end up? [00:21:03]

JH: The beginning was the same thing, bus to March Airforce Base...4:00AM... just keep it dark so that... there are a number of security issues why we leave when we do. We'd... March Airforce Base and instead of stopping in Frankfurt, I believe we flew through Ireland. After that, we flew into [Monas] Airforce base, in I think is Kyrgyzstan. So, we spent about two days there, and we flew from there into Camp Leatherneck. We spent two or three weeks on Camp Leatherneck before the regiment decided they knew what to do with us... we.... We actually received a battle zone, which is actually unheard of for a reconnaissance unit. We're supposed to be a support asset, but we received our own area of operation, which was called Trek Nawa its south of Marjah, and our purpose there was to create a buffer. The battle of Marjah was kind of... it was in full swing when I went over there, and we were basically on a southern border... supposed to create a buffer, where, all of these guys leaving Marjah, running away from the Marines invading Marjah... they were supposed run into us, and have to fight us. So, then... that happened. After our experience in Trek Nawa... we did pretty well in Trek Nawa so they wanted to send us up to a different area, which this is all in Helmand Province, but we went up to Sangin River Valley. It's just south of the Kajaki Dam. We did a lot of, basically, patrolling, but without very much support. We were... basically take a helicopter into the area with enough food and water for about a week, and we put our [RUCKS] on and we'd take over a facility... a site, and we would create a patrol base from there and push out patrols on a daily basis... sometimes not so daily, but enough to keep the enemy on their toes and... bad way of saying it... but, basically, pick fights with the enemy. Because... since they saw that we were a smaller units, they had figured that we were less men... but we were also heavily armed.

JC: So these were contact patrols?

JH: Absolutely.

JC: So, let's talk about... you've already started to talk about your time in country, let's talk more in depth about, you know, your deployment over there and any combat situations, scenarios, things that stick out in your mind.

JH: It's... not very many stick out more than any others...we... we counted at one point we had 67 days straight of contact, which is to say, usually they like to shoot at us at a certain time, especially if a patrols walking out in the middle of the day. But, in our patrol base, we could expect contact anywhere between 5:00 AM and 8:00AM and then again, sometime between 4:00PM and 6:00PM. So, as the sun comes up and as the sun goes down. If you're out on patrol... it was expected anytime. So, that 67 days was where our unit... pretty much every part of our unit received contact everyday... that was... it was just normal occurrence, really nothing sticks out except for some of the more... some of the more hellacious battles, I mean...there's... they were... just were what they were.

JC: And, how was the comradery during this time? Was it similar to Iraq? Was the comradery any better? Any worse? [00:25:15]

JH: Tensions were a little bit higher sometimes...we were kind of high strung as it was so it was... I mean, fights did break out occasionally. Thank goodness nobody... nothing came of them. I mean, we were close, we were like brothers, I mean, brothers fight. And you have to spend 24 hours a day sleeping next to this guy, being on post with this guy, eating with him, going to the bathroom next to him, it's... you do everything with these guys, so, of course you, not only develop this close bond, but you develop the bond that, like... you kind of know each other past what blood would know. You are with him every day... you see fear in each other's eyes and it's... yeah, it's pretty close.

JC: So, you kind of did talk about what your average day was like on deployment. As far as like... did you have less free time, more free time, and if so, what did you do when you had time off?

JH: We had less free time in Afghanistan... if you weren't on post you were on patrol; if you weren't on patrol you were on Quick Reaction Force... it's where... basically you sit in full gear ready to rescue a patrol if they get into contact and can't get out of it. Really, if there was any down time from that you were limited to either cleaning your weapon, maintaining your gear, or I liked to read books. I read a lot of books over there.

JC: Did you feel like you were used effectively in Afghanistan?

JH: Absolutely. It was night and day from Iraq.

JC: As far as the media goes for the war in Afghanistan... any differences in the way that they portrayed Afghanistan compared to Iraq, do you feel that they were lumped together, and...

JH: I'm sorry. Can you repeat the question?

JC: With the media attention on Afghanistan, was it similar to the media attention for Iraq, that you've seen; do you have any different thoughts of it compared to Iraq?

JH: I think... I think it was a little bit different, in that, a lot of Americans blamed... I mean it's... a lot of Americans think that the war in Iraq was over oil or it was over President Bush finishing his father's work... there were a number of reasons that Americans like to speculate on why we went into Iraq; I never really wrapped myself around Iraq so much as why we were in Afghanistan. Because that was the... for me, when I was in... when 9/11 happened I understood that it was Osama Bin Laden, he was the target, and when I was in Afghanistan he still was not dead... it was entirely possible that we could run into something like that. I mean, it's... there was no chance now that I look back on it but it...still, you think about those things... that "I'm here because, not only do I have to find him, but I also have to eliminate the regime that allowed him to come to power and allowed him to create this sphere of influence, big enough to where he could reach out and touch America. So, I really actually believe in what we were doing in Afghanistan. Still to this day too.

JC: I don't think we covered it yet, but when were you in Afghanistan? Years or months years?
[00:28:40]

JH: Oh Iraq? Do you want me to give Iraq first?

JC: Iraq and Afghanistan.

JH: Well, in Iraq I was in... it was a winter deployment. We left in November of 2008 and came back around mid-summer of 2009. Afghanistan was... we spent... it was a summer deployment so we spent the entire summer there. We kind of understood, too, that a summer deployment you are more likely to receive contact, and that was the other reason that we trained for... trained pretty hard for it. And, yeah, it was a summer deployment we returned... I don't remember my go date, but I remember... I do remember we were... we got back December 19th, just in time for us all to get kicked home for Christmas, which our families loved.

JC: We'll go one by one here, as far as Iraq and Afghanistan, but...

JH: December 19, 2010. I'm sorry I didn't give you the year.

JC: No, that... that's fine. So, how did the wars change you personally? You can talk as a whole or individually.

JH [Inaudible] It did... my family tells me that it changed me. I really didn't notice any of the change... I noticed that I'm a little bit less patient now with certain things. Especially other people. I'm more curt, I don't really accept much nonsense anymore. That's probably the military thing, in general. I don't like people wasting my time... so I don't waste other people's time, so I expect them to treat me the same. I got a pottymouth now. I'm pretty sure I haven't showed it, but I definitely... definitely swear a lot more... and a little bit of the... they say it's associated with PTSD, but you got like a little hypervigilance when you come back. Really... I

listen more, I look more, or I do more observing than I do talking. I did a lot of talking when I was a kid and... I kind of let other people do the talking now, and I... except for now... right now. Yeah... I like to watch things happen and watch them develop rather than be a part of it now.

JC: Let's talk about the adjustment period coming back to civilian life. Can you explain what that is like, maybe the challenges upon return and what was the climate, was there anything going on as far as, like the way you were treated?

JH: I was treated quite well on my return. California, in general, I know that it's supposed to be a liberal state, but there are a lot of people out there that, even just around the military base, you'll get thanked for your service. And that's becoming a really big American thing, thanking service members, and as much as we get it, I do appreciate it. That they take the time to thank me...hey... I mean, I appreciate their thanks. Yes, I do prepare a statement like "It's my pleasure.", but I do appreciate the appreciation that... it's not... I don't want to say we tout our military members higher than others but it is nice to know that we are appreciated. What else?

JC: Basically, how did you adjust? Any problems dealing with the stress that you may have had? Did you have a lot of extra stress you felt after you came back from either deployment or both?
[00:32:13]

JH: Not so much Iraq. I mean there was only one instance in Iraq, but the sustained combat in Afghanistan... it kind of wears on you... it kind of ages... it ages your mind. So when I came back it was kind of reintegrating into a civilized society. We were over there and you see things and do things that, over here, it would not be considered okay. But it's war. So, you definitely come back and there is a culture shock when you come back. It's only... it wasn't as long as I expected. I mean, I was... we're supposed to have a certain amount of time, but... when we got out, we receive a lot of... what's the word...when we're getting out we go through classes and everything, trying to reintegrate us into society, trying to make us understand that some of the things that we had to do or may have had to do are not acceptable anymore, and there are just certain ways that you just do not talk to civilians that you can talk to another member of the military. Other than that, I had a few episodes of drinking... where, looking back on it, yeah its excessive drinking, but it's kind of part of the culture in the Marine Corps. You got to transfer back into society.

JC: What do you think the average American understands or does not understand about veterans?

JH: Does not understand... so I'm trying to get into a civilian's mindset. I think a lot of it has to do with the experience. You see... a civilian might see something on the news or in the media saying the military does this or whatever they do, but all they are doing are catching a glimpse of what actually happens. So... they may, or may not, judge based on that event or based on that picture, based on that short video, but there is a lot more behind the scenes that the civilians don't see that really... they have to understand that it's not... you are only catching a glimpse. You are not seeing the entire picture. I get civilians that say "why are we in Afghanistan? It's just oil"... well... if you do some research, there's not oil Afghanistan. There's these issues where

they don't get all of the information, but they still make that judgement call. So, to me it's a well-informed citizen should be able to... yes, they can argue with me about whatever their stance, whatever my stance. But, I don't... the only thing is I don't appreciate when they take minute amounts of information and apply it and make a judgement call on that.

JC: How do you think your war experience compares to those from past wars? Compared to, we'll say, Vietnam or Korea or World War Two?

JH: Oh... I think I can speak for almost every other Marine and service member that we look up to the WWII vets; we look up to the Vietnam vet and it seems like everybody that came before, paved the way for us. It's the way that I look at it, at least. There are... I think that when I talk to them, there is a mutual respect... Whether they're a draftee, whether they joined out of their own accord, everybody joined, everybody did their service, and those that fought, those that supported... it's... we're all trying to achieve the same goal. But, I definitely look up to the guys that came before me. It's actually humbling ... used to talk to some WWII vets around the area, in the American legion or in the VFW that, all they want to do is hear my story, and these are the guys that assaulted Iwo Jima or they... they charged up the beaches of Normandy... its quite amazing. So to hear them want to hear my story...it's a little bit humbling.

JC: We've touched on this a little bit, but how do you look at the war now, both wars, now that you have got some time away from the combat zones? [00:36:45]

JH: After...well I keep up with the information. Not as much as I probably should, but without getting too political, I do have issues with the way that the administration... I guess... ended the war in Iraq. There are a number of issues... a number of things that I do take issue with, in that, when we leave a place and not five years later, another major... another major enemy sprouts out of the... it's seemingly out of the ground. It's kind of painful to me to know that we were there only five years ago, and now all of that ground that we gained is just lost. It's... it is painful.

JC: What are you doing now? I obviously know that you are a student here at Robert Morris, but just a little... It could be... what are you doing for work, or... obviously you are a full time student. What do you do for leisure?

JH: I still do a lot of reading. I'm a history major so, I like to read. I work at a bar. Actually, today is my first day working there, for some spending money. Other than that, I'm just working as hard as I can to get my degree, and hopefully, once I'm completed with my undergrad, I'll work towards my post-baccalaureate.

JC: And, do you have any photographs, journals, maps, even maybe home movies, or something that you may have wrote, poetry, or a journal during your deployments that you would like to share?

JH: I can share some of the photos. I have like a... I have a little photo bank and a little video bank I kept. Just so that I can look back and remember all of my buddies. No poetry, no... we didn't

really have the time to write in a journal. You snap a picture, its quick and its done, but other than that the pictures and the videos... that's pretty much all I came home with. But, yeah I'd be willing to share some of it.

JC: And then, we should have done this at the beginning, but I never got your rank and the total years of service. From what year to what year did you serve in the Marine Corps or the Marine Corps Reserve if you did.

JH: I spent... after enlisting in January of 2007, I got out in March of 2012. So... no 2011, I'm sorry. So, I spent four years and three months on active duty, and then I spent some time in the reserve. I can't really remember how long. But, I recently... let's see what month is it? So... last December I finished my service in total, so I'm completely off contract now. Once I went off contract I was a Staff Sergeant, and that was a total of four years active and four years inactive, a total of eight years in the service.

JC: Alright, well thank you very much, Mr. Hook, for your service. And this concludes our interview.