

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:10,460

Good morning, we're recording the interview of Jim Saunders. This interview is being conducted by Eric Witty from the Wright State University Veterans Voices Project.

2

00:00:10,460 --> 00:00:16,660

This interview is being recorded at the Greene County Ohio Means Jobs Center in Xenia, Ohio.

3

00:00:16,660 --> 00:00:24,280

It is 9:30 A.M. on April 7th, 2015.

4

00:00:24,280 --> 00:00:29,380

Okay Jim, so let's start at the beginning. Where and when were you born?

5

00:00:29,380 --> 00:00:35,260

I was born at Fort McPherson Army Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia.

6

00:00:35,260 --> 00:00:40,660

I am an Army brat. That was in 1957.

7

00:00:40,660 --> 00:00:44,360

Okay, so one of your parents was in the military, which one?

8

00:00:44,360 --> 00:00:59,180

Both of them were actually in the military. My mother was Women's Army Corps and my father at that time was in 77th special forces at Fort Mac and yeah.

9

00:00:59,180 --> 00:01:04,380

Okay, so what did your mother do in the Women's Army Corps?

10

00:01:04,380 --> 00:01:10,760

She was actually a clerk typist, but she was assigned to 3rd Army headquarters.

11

00:01:10,760 --> 00:01:14,500

Okay, and your dad was special operations?

12

00:01:14,500 --> 00:01:15,000
Yes.

13
00:01:15,000 --> 00:01:16,840
Had he fought in World War II?

14
00:01:16,840 --> 00:01:21,960
No, he was actually a Korean vet and did a number of tours in Vietnam.

15
00:01:21,960 --> 00:01:27,860
Interesting. Okay, any siblings?

16
00:01:27,860 --> 00:01:33,560
[Laughing] yes I have five brothers and sisters.

17
00:01:33,560 --> 00:01:34,940
Older, younger?

18
00:01:34,940 --> 00:01:37,520
Three older sisters, two younger brothers.

19
00:01:37,520 --> 00:01:41,900
Okay, did any of them end up serving in the military?

20
00:01:41,900 --> 00:01:49,980
Yes indeed, both my brothers. One of my brothers I was actually a
squad leader in Germany

21
00:01:49,980 --> 00:01:56,440
and the other served forth infantry division, I think.

22
00:01:56,440 --> 00:01:57,620
Okay, so both Army?

23
00:01:57,620 --> 00:01:58,120
Yes.

24
00:01:58,120 --> 00:01:59,380
Any of your sisters enlist?

25

00:01:59,380 --> 00:01:59,880

No.

26

00:01:59,880 --> 00:02:06,440

Okay. So what were you doing before you enlisted?

27

00:02:06,440 --> 00:02:11,600

I was a high school student. I enlisted when I was 17.

28

00:02:11,600 --> 00:02:13,240

Okay, and what year was that?

29

00:02:13,240 --> 00:02:14,600

1975.

30

00:02:14,600 --> 00:02:18,580

So you enlisted as soon as you graduated from high school or?

31

00:02:18,580 --> 00:02:30,180

Actually while I was still in high school I was - let's see, I enlisted in April and I went in August, delayed entry.

32

00:02:30,180 --> 00:02:33,760

And you enlisted in the Army?

33

00:02:33,760 --> 00:02:35,500

Yes.

34

00:02:35,500 --> 00:02:41,500

So why did you choose to enlist in 1975?

35

00:02:41,500 --> 00:02:49,460

I have five brothers and sisters and that meant money for college was a little bit tight.

36

00:02:49,460 --> 00:02:55,480

I knew that I could enlist and there would be a G.I. Bill available.

37

00:02:55,480 --> 00:02:59,180

So 1975 was a rough time for the Army?

38

00:02:59,180 --> 00:03:01,180

Indeed it was. [laughing]

39

00:03:01,180 --> 00:03:04,020

Was that a consideration, did you?...

40

00:03:04,020 --> 00:03:14,880

No I if you talk to my siblings or any of my family, they'll say "oh we knew when you were little that you were going to be military".

41

00:03:14,880 --> 00:03:25,140

I wasn't quite as apparent to me, but it was that jeez I'm up to here with school, it's time to go out and see the world, see what's going on

42

00:03:25,140 --> 00:03:28,960

and the Army was the opportunity for me, yep.

43

00:03:28,960 --> 00:03:33,380

Okay, I'm assuming both of your parents understood having been in the Army?

44

00:03:33,380 --> 00:03:42,880

Well they separated when I was a teenager so, but I was living with my mother at the time and

45

00:03:42,880 --> 00:03:50,580

being 17, she had to sign the papers, but we had a long discussion about that and she supported me on it.

46

00:03:50,580 --> 00:03:54,840

Was your father still in when you enlisted?

47

00:03:54,840 --> 00:04:01,740

Yes... no actually he retired I think the year before I enlisted.

48

00:04:01,740 --> 00:04:08,080

So why did you pick the Army specifically?

49

00:04:08,080 --> 00:04:12,900

Oh.

50

00:04:12,900 --> 00:04:23,460

I wanted to airborne, I wanted to infantry, and I wanted to be in Germany. Like I said, my father spent most of his time either in

51

00:04:23,460 --> 00:04:32,720

the 82nd or one of the special forces groups. So of course I already had that orientation.

52

00:04:32,720 --> 00:04:39,040

Yeah, that was my desire for my initial enlistment.

53

00:04:39,040 --> 00:04:46,420

So I'm assuming you grew up around a lot of veterans, a lot to people who were still in the Army?

54

00:04:46,420 --> 00:04:54,220

Yes there's uncles, family, friends, all that stuff, yeah.

55

00:04:54,220 --> 00:04:59,860

Did they push you in one direction or the other or try to talk you out of it or?

56

00:04:59,860 --> 00:05:09,060

No you have to remember the 40's, 50's, and 60's were a draft and age

57

00:05:09,060 --> 00:05:18,200

and everybody was expected to go do your time. Some people liked it and made it a career.

58

00:05:18,200 --> 00:05:28,560

When I first stepped into it, my intention was to do my initial enlistment and then go to school,

59

00:05:28,560 --> 00:05:37,980

but I found out real quick that I enjoyed it, so yeah.

60

00:05:37,980 --> 00:05:45,760

Okay, so you enlisted, finished high school, and then where did you get sent?

61

00:05:45,760 --> 00:05:56,040

I did basic training at Fort Jackson, North Carolina and following that I went to infantry school at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Yeah, tiger land

62

00:05:56,040 --> 00:06:02,200

and from there off to Germany.

63

00:06:02,200 --> 00:06:07,980

So leaving for boot-camp, what was that like?

64

00:06:07,980 --> 00:06:09,640

High adventure.

65

00:06:09,640 --> 00:06:10,940

Okay, so you were excited about it?

66

00:06:10,940 --> 00:06:12,020

Oh yes.

67

00:06:12,020 --> 00:06:15,180

Any apprehension at all?

68

00:06:15,180 --> 00:06:23,580

Didn't want to disappoint myself, didn't want to disappoint my family.

69

00:06:23,580 --> 00:06:29,200

I'm going to guess it's a yes, but you probably had a good feeling of what you were getting into?

70

00:06:29,200 --> 00:06:33,480

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

71

00:06:33,480 --> 00:06:39,740

Okay, so in basic training what were your instructors like?

72

00:06:39,740 --> 00:06:51,040

Hard, demanding, I had no problem with it. [Laughing]

73

00:06:51,040 --> 00:06:56,240

Did they know that you had kind of grown up in the Army? Did they give you a hard time about that?

74

00:06:56,240 --> 00:07:07,080

No not really, because you know, they're focused on turning trainees over and you know they, like basic was an eight or nine week window. Bam, bam, bam,

75

00:07:07,080 --> 00:07:18,800

get them through. Same way with infantry training, although infantry training was a little bit better, just because you did spend more time with the drill sergeants and

76

00:07:18,800 --> 00:07:33,640

they were at least in the infantry school, much more interested in what kind of product was coming out. So you know.

77

00:07:33,640 --> 00:07:45,620

So the adaptation to military life, you know physical training, the routine, was that easy for you or difficult or?

78

00:07:45,620 --> 00:08:07,100

To me it was a natural. It was great, because it helped discipline me, made me a little bit more responsible than what I had been before, so yeah.

79

00:08:07,100 --> 00:08:10,340

Okay, so after basic training you went to..?

80

00:08:10,340 --> 00:08:11,100

Fort Polk, Louisiana.

81

00:08:11,100 --> 00:08:14,120

Fort Polk or tiger land. What was that like?

82

00:08:14,120 --> 00:08:29,180

[Laughing] Hot, sweaty, lots of bugs, lots of creepy crawlies, but at the same time it was all these wonderful toys. So yeah.

83

00:08:29,180 --> 00:08:34,500

So by the time you were there, it was certain you weren't going to go to Vietnam, right?

84

00:08:34,500 --> 00:08:48,860

Oh yeah they actually -- oh god, about the time, right after I enlisted, I think was the evacuation of Saigon. So that as pretty much over and done, yeah.

85

00:08:48,860 --> 00:08:53,100

So were you expecting to ever have to do that for real somewhere?

86

00:08:53,100 --> 00:09:01,620

I was prepared. [laughing]

87

00:09:01,620 --> 00:09:04,600

Okay, so where did you go after Fort Polk?

88

00:09:04,600 --> 00:09:13,140

I was assigned to 8th infantry division, 2nd battalion, 87th infantry. That was in Mainz, Germany.

89

00:09:13,140 --> 00:09:19,820

It was a mechanized infantry unit. That was my big disappointment. I wanted to be in an airborne unit, but

90

00:09:19,820 --> 00:09:30,040

at the same time it was great. It was you know, I speak German so it was right there,

91

00:09:30,040 --> 00:09:42,120

an opportunity to see everything, do everything. The military portion of it was fantastic. We had intensive maneuvers

92

00:09:42,120 --> 00:09:50,160

and yes it was not a good time. If you could breathe, you were enlistable, if you had half a brain you moved very quick

93

00:09:50,160 --> 00:10:01,800

and I did. I was a sergeant in about 20 months and

94

00:10:01,800 --> 00:10:13,460

it was a mechanized division, but at the same time we did other things like air assault operations and dismounted operations and things like that.

95

00:10:13,460 --> 00:10:24,640

And I just ate it up, I loved it. I went to Penacht in Baumholder and then Bindlach at Bat Tolz.

96

00:10:24,640 --> 00:10:30,020

And yeah at the end of a three year tour tour I came out pretty good.

97

00:10:30,020 --> 00:10:41,360

So being in Germany in the height of the Cold War, where you realistically expecting to fight there or?

98

00:10:41,360 --> 00:10:54,020

It was always in the back of your mind. Of course at that time it was the Carter administration. There were so many hings with the military, you know typical cyclic.

99

00:10:54,020 --> 00:11:03,380

A lot of officers were being rifted a lot of senior NCOs were QMPed. Everything was getting smaller. There was no money for this, that, or the other.

100

00:11:03,380 --> 00:11:14,140

The things we did for inspections you wouldn't believe. Like a lot of it seemed to be a paper check where you know,

101

00:11:14,140 --> 00:11:24,480

I have 100% of all my equipment. Well bullshit, because you went over and you borrowed two radios from the next company so when the inspectors came through, all your stuff was there.

102

00:11:24,480 --> 00:11:34,420

I remember being in the barracks, we probably had close to 170 people i the company

103

00:11:34,420 --> 00:11:44,400

and in the barracks there was one washer and two dryers that were functional. [laughing]

104

00:11:44,400 --> 00:11:51,220

We bought stuff to maintain the barracks you know, to paint things and things like that.

105

00:11:51,220 --> 00:12:04,060

The Russians, everybody said were twelve feet tall. They were doing this, they were, you know... And they were actually fielding new equipment at that time. Things like sagger missiles and the BMPs, things like that.

106

00:12:04,060 --> 00:12:18,160

And we were you know, "how are we going to do this, how are we going to do this?" But I had an opportunity to go to Berlin for the Torgal Conference - that was the Russians and the Americans having a little

107

00:12:18,160 --> 00:12:29,520

celebration to celebrate the end of World War II - and had the opportunity to see some Russians and after that it was "eh, maybe they're not so tough". [laughing]

108

00:12:29,520 --> 00:12:39,360

But yeah, I wrapped up the tour there. I actually got married

109

00:12:39,360 --> 00:12:49,040

most of the way through my tour. Married my high school sweetheart kind of deal and was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas

110

00:12:49,040 --> 00:12:59,700

and that was interesting as well. I was assigned to 2nd armored division,

111

00:12:59,700 --> 00:13:13,680

2nd Regime, 1st calvary, the blues platoon, which at that time was a visual reconnaissance platoon, it's like a little platoon today.

112

00:13:13,680 --> 00:13:23,820

It was fun, it was fun. [laughing] I wasn't crazy about Texas, but the job was exciting and I got to air assault school while I was there.

113

00:13:23,820 --> 00:13:30,920

I as captain of the division rifle team there and we took first place at Hood.

114

00:13:30,920 --> 00:13:46,760

And that combat rifle team is no the standard lay down and shoot kind thing, you actually had military tasks leading up to the competition and everything like that. You did the...

115

00:13:46,760 --> 00:13:48,400

So it's almost like ranger challenge?

116

00:13:48,400 --> 00:13:57,600

Yeah something like that. So yeah. And I spent a year down there.

117

00:13:57,600 --> 00:14:02,280

Okay, so what did you do after Fort Hood?

118

00:14:02,280 --> 00:14:15,220

Well I came up on ETS and decided that yes I was going to college and no I didn't want to leave the military alone.

119

00:14:15,220 --> 00:14:22,680

So they asked me if I wanted to be in a reserve unit and I said yes what's available? And they said

120

00:14:22,680 --> 00:14:35,380

these are the selections and I said I wanted to go to 2nd battalion, 11th special forces. So they assigned me to them. They were actually based in Columbus, Ohio

121

00:14:35,380 --> 00:14:43,360

and since I was going to Ohio State at the time, prefect fit.

122

00:14:43,360 --> 00:14:51,000

And I was assigned to HHC 2nd 11th. They sent me to airborne school -- thank you, thank you --

123

00:14:51,000 --> 00:14:58,460

at for Evans Massachusetts with 10th special forces.

124

00:14:58,460 --> 00:15:06,580

I spent a year and a half in the S3 shop and then they pushed me down to charlie company on one of the ODAs.

125

00:15:06,580 --> 00:15:13,440

And of course I was trying to push through school at the same time. That was rough. [laughing]

126

00:15:13,440 --> 00:15:22,400

Full time student, married, new parent -my oldest son-, and holding down two jobs plus the reservist.

127

00:15:22,400 --> 00:15:34,100

It was you know, do it, do it, do it. What it did end up eventually was

128

00:15:34,100 --> 00:15:46,080

a divorce. [laughing] I also got into ROTC at that time and they had a program where they had SMP simultaneous membership.

129

00:15:46,080 --> 00:15:55,240

You were an ROTC cadet at the university, you were an E5 in your unit. Well I was already E5 anyway, so it was no big change.

130

00:15:55,240 --> 00:16:04,700

And I was commissioned, distinguished military graduate commissioned in 1982 as a 2nd lieutenant.

131

00:16:04,700 --> 00:16:11,940

So I'm curious, what was ROTC like having already been a sergeant?

132

00:16:11,940 --> 00:16:24,800

Uh yeah. I remember one of the initial... you know they wave the first two years because you're prior service. You don't don't have to do the basic courses, but the initial

133

00:16:24,800 --> 00:16:35,400

formation was in class-As and you know I'm wearing my active duty ribbons. [laughing]

134

00:16:35,400 --> 00:16:48,160

Of course all of the other cadets, they don't have anything and the inspecting cadet got up in front of me and he's looking at me and he said "what are those?"

135

00:16:48,160 --> 00:16:55,620

I said 'well that's an arc-om, that's a good conduct metal, that's a national..' "oh those are real metals"

136

00:16:55,620 --> 00:17:04,880

"yeah". [laughing] And you know I was already stacked in. I was airborne, air assault, had an EIB and all that crap so yeah.

137

00:17:04,880 --> 00:17:11,380

I did not have any problems in ROTC. That's one of the reasons why I was a distinguished military graduate.

138

00:17:11,380 --> 00:17:20,860

I even was even given the leadership at the advance camp out at Fort Lewis

139

00:17:20,860 --> 00:17:26,180

for the entire cycle, so yeah did okay.

140

00:17:26,180 --> 00:17:28,420

And what were you studying?

141

00:17:28,420 --> 00:17:33,560

Like I said, political science and European history.

142

00:17:33,560 --> 00:17:42,980

Did you feel like having already been in Germany with the Army, did that help with your outlook studying political science and history?

143

00:17:42,980 --> 00:17:50,140

It made for some interesting conversations in the classroom.

144

00:17:50,140 --> 00:18:00,020

I did not always agree with some of the perspectives or analysis of some of my professors,

145

00:18:00,020 --> 00:18:03,840

but that's okay, I survived it.

146

00:18:03,840 --> 00:18:09,960

Did you encounter any kind of anti-military feelings on the college campus?

147

00:18:09,960 --> 00:18:17,180

Not so much from the students, but the faculty were not supportive.

148

00:18:17,180 --> 00:18:22,460

Neither at Ohio State nor Ohio University.

149

00:18:22,460 --> 00:18:27,240

There were probably still some lingering anti-military feelings on Ohio campuses.

150

00:18:27,240 --> 00:18:32,000

Yes, yes.

151

00:18:32,000 --> 00:18:36,740

Okay, so you got commissioned, then where did they send you?

152

00:18:36,740 --> 00:18:44,560

Okay, went to Fort Binning for my infantry officer basic course.

153

00:18:44,560 --> 00:18:57,760

I did very well in that. They gave me a couple choices on what follow on schools I wanted in. I wanted to go to pathfinder school.

154

00:18:57,760 --> 00:19:09,360

At the time it was changing over to the Reagan administration and everything and it's getting more and more pumped up.

155

00:19:09,360 --> 00:19:16,280

There was also a big push for light fighter, which I already had plenty of experience in.

156

00:19:16,280 --> 00:19:26,780

I was offered ranger school at that time, but I had already been in the infantry for like six or seven years and

157

00:19:26,780 --> 00:19:36,080

the gut check would have been fine, but I've pretty much have already done everything they do in ranger school. So I opted for a couple other things.

158

00:19:36,080 --> 00:19:43,720

Then I was reassigned to Germany and this is the strangest thing.

159

00:19:43,720 --> 00:19:54,880

I initially had orders for first of the tenth at Tolz, but was redirected to 56 built artillery command perching.

160

00:19:54,880 --> 00:20:02,800

He said "what the hell is an infantry offer doing in an FA missile regime?"

161

00:20:02,800 --> 00:20:12,800

It was actually an excellent assignment. Didn't realize it at the time when I first got a diversion and orders, I was really upset.

162

00:20:12,800 --> 00:20:19,940

But what it is, 56th built artillery command was P2 missiles

163

00:20:19,940 --> 00:20:29,520

and at that time just the fielding of those missiles caused an unbelievable uproar in Europe. You know, there were protests and

164

00:20:29,520 --> 00:20:37,440

this and that and the other. And the Russians, the Soviets were actually terrified of those things.

165

00:20:37,440 --> 00:20:42,940

So for the sake of the tape, were those able to be equipped with nuclear warheads?

166

00:20:42,940 --> 00:20:51,580

Oh yes, yes. The reason they had an infantry battalion and this was a strange infantry battalion...

167

00:20:51,580 --> 00:21:00,380

The fix sites for the missiles required security and that was an infantry company on each site.

168

00:21:00,380 --> 00:21:06,800

At there field locations they needed constant security and that was the infantry as well.

169

00:21:06,800 --> 00:21:15,220

I t was so strange because each rifle company had a scout platoon. Normally there's only a scout platoon at battalion headquarters.

170

00:21:15,220 --> 00:21:27,280

At battalion headquarters they had a security platoon which was an immediate reaction force for the entire command. If there's somebody messing with any nuclear missile anywhere

171

00:21:27,280 --> 00:21:35,420

those people were responsible for taking care of that. And we actually had live ammunition all the time.

172

00:21:35,420 --> 00:21:43,500

We rotated two weeks on security on a fix site and two weeks off.

173

00:21:43,500 --> 00:21:52,720

Whenever the missiles went to the field, we were with them and all this other stuff. I was initially a rifle platoon leader

174

00:21:52,720 --> 00:22:00,700

and then I had the security platoon, which was, you know a real feather. [laughing]

175

00:22:00,700 --> 00:22:10,720

And we had an aviation company in direct support, so we had Hueys fly us anywhere, anytime. It was great.

176

00:22:10,720 --> 00:22:22,480

Later from that I was assigned from battalion staff a the battalion S3 air assistant operations officer.

177

00:22:22,480 --> 00:22:30,580

I also had a bunch of additional duties, one of which was the German liaison since I spoke German. [laughing]

178

00:22:30,580 --> 00:22:34,060

But that was a really good assignment, because

179

00:22:34,060 --> 00:22:42,940

we... not only id we have a real world everyday mission, we had a lot of opportunities to do some other fine training,

180

00:22:42,940 --> 00:22:51,180

especially with the Germans. I got to go to the German airborne school, I did the German mountain school,

181

00:22:51,180 --> 00:22:57,960

did a bunch of their other things like [inaudible] and the [inaudible] and all that stuff. So yeah we...

182

00:22:57,960 --> 00:23:05,020

It was an exciting tour and that's where I met my second wife and we got married. [laughing]

183

00:23:05,020 --> 00:23:13,340

So before being assigned to that unit, did you have to get any kind of special training, special security clearance?

184

00:23:13,340 --> 00:23:20,520

Oh yeah, yeah I already had a security clearance, but it got upgraded to another level.

185

00:23:20,520 --> 00:23:30,820

While I was there we did the - I'm trying to think what it was called - the NATO site, nuclear site security course up in Holland.

186

00:23:30,820 --> 00:23:38,420

You know, that just involved how you secured nuclear sites and all this other stuff and of course

187

00:23:38,420 --> 00:23:45,200

all of our documentation was classified material and everything, It just drives you nuts. [laughing]

188

00:23:45,200 --> 00:23:47,200

Did you have to go to sear school?

189

00:23:47,200 --> 00:23:55,600

I went to sear school when I was doing the ...

190

00:23:55,600 --> 00:24:02,920

I did the RCSFQC, which is reserve component special forces qualification course.

191

00:24:02,920 --> 00:24:13,080

That's a part of the basic course, you go to Camp McCall, you do your patrolling, your land ave, your survival, and then you do your

192

00:24:13,080 --> 00:24:19,600

escape invasion as a part of that as well in phase one.

193

00:24:19,600 --> 00:24:22,400

So you said you met your second wife there?

194

00:24:22,400 --> 00:24:22,900

Yes

195

00:24:22,900 --> 00:24:24,020

Was she German or?

196

00:24:24,020 --> 00:24:24,960

Yes she is.

197

00:24:24,960 --> 00:24:31,360

Okay, how did that work out? How did your meet a German girl there in Germany?

198

00:24:31,360 --> 00:24:38,900

I was a young lieutenant in Germany, what can I say? [Laughing]

199

00:24:38,900 --> 00:24:49,520

Okay, so did anything interesting happen while you were there? Any alerts, any false alarms?

200

00:24:49,520 --> 00:24:54,400

Oh god there was a dozen things.

201

00:24:54,400 --> 00:25:02,520

Of course we had VIP site security. There was always the soviets.

202

00:25:02,520 --> 00:25:13,860

Probing this, probing that, just checking this that and the other. In the field, lots of protests, even at the sites, lots of protests. There were times when we would have to

203

00:25:13,860 --> 00:25:21,400

drive through 2,000 people to get the secure site to do a change over.

204

00:25:21,400 --> 00:25:33,120

We had a missile accident in the field one time where one of the missiles actually rolled off their launch thing.

205

00:25:33,120 --> 00:25:47,140

Of course we had to get in there and secure that. We did have a helicopter accident where three or four of the crewmen were killed.

206

00:25:47,140 --> 00:25:55,460

And like I said, we had direct support of an aviation company; 193rd aviation company.

207

00:25:55,460 --> 00:26:00,420

And we knew the pilots very well, just because we worked with them all the time.

208

00:26:00,420 --> 00:26:07,660

We had to secure the site since we were the closest there and recover the bodies and stuff like that.

209

00:26:07,660 --> 00:26:12,480

But yeah it was an interesting tour.

210

00:26:12,480 --> 00:26:15,460

You said the soviets were probing?

211

00:26:15,460 --> 00:26:16,420

Yeah, yeah.

212

00:26:16,420 --> 00:26:19,560

How so?

213

00:26:19,560 --> 00:26:28,880

At that time okay, there were trade agreements between Eastern and Western countries and everything.

214

00:26:28,880 --> 00:26:42,740

And East German transport vehicles were allowed to come into West Germany. You know, the drivers and all that stuff. And they were all marked TBA on the bumpers and everything like that so you could identify them and everything.

215

00:26:42,740 --> 00:26:52,420

But both the Russians and the Stasi routinely sent people across that way

216

00:26:52,420 --> 00:26:58,720

and you know, if they came into West Germany, yeah okay if they drove through say Schwetzingen or something like that, the guy

217

00:26:58,720 --> 00:27:06,680

would drop off and he'd spend a couple days in Schwetzingen and everything, but he would be collecting data.

218

00:27:06,680 --> 00:27:14,100

There were a lot of things like that through and the P2s were very high priority for the Soviets.

219

00:27:14,100 --> 00:27:18,500

So where they actually trying to physically get near the equipment or...

220

00:27:18,500 --> 00:27:19,000

Yeah.

221

00:27:19,000 --> 00:27:20,540

were they talking to service members at the bar?

222

00:27:20,540 --> 00:27:26,640

Everything from, you know a broad spectrum collection.

223

00:27:26,640 --> 00:27:31,960

You may not be able to answer this, but did you ever catch one doing this?

224

00:27:31,960 --> 00:27:34,340

We detained quite a few people.

225

00:27:34,340 --> 00:27:36,740

What was that process?

226

00:27:36,740 --> 00:27:47,060

[Laughs] There were... I don't know how far I can go into this.

227

00:27:47,060 --> 00:27:50,160

Don't cross any lines, but this is...

228

00:27:50,160 --> 00:27:57,020

There were various levels of restriction in a site, okay?

229

00:27:57,020 --> 00:28:10,820

And you did have a lethal force zone, but most people were detained in either the turn away zone or detaining zone. So yeah.

230

00:28:10,820 --> 00:28:14,200

Did you turn them over to..?

231

00:28:14,200 --> 00:28:17,860

Military intelligence.

232

00:28:17,860 --> 00:28:25,620

They would determine whether they were legitimate loss people or collection assets or whatever. And then from...

233

00:28:25,620 --> 00:28:32,320

if they were just regular people, they would be turned over to the German police

234

00:28:32,320 --> 00:28:37,800

and if not they were detained by the Americans.

235

00:28:37,800 --> 00:28:42,400

So you had to be prepared for that?

236

00:28:42,400 --> 00:28:42,920

Yes.

237

00:28:42,920 --> 00:28:49,720

I'm sure you were also prepared for a military operation

238

00:28:49,720 --> 00:28:53,340

and then were you also responsible for crowd control for protesters?

239

00:28:53,340 --> 00:28:54,600

Yes.

240

00:28:54,600 --> 00:28:58,880

So you had almost three completely separate missions.

241

00:28:58,880 --> 00:29:02,300

Yeah.

242

00:29:02,300 --> 00:29:07,340

I'm curious, which one did you spend more time training on?

243

00:29:07,340 --> 00:29:14,920

Okay like I said, initially I had a rifle platoon and then a security platoon.

244

00:29:14,920 --> 00:29:25,120

With rifle platoon it was, a lot of it was crowd control and physical site security. With the security platoon, it was immediate action

245

00:29:25,120 --> 00:29:34,900

and like I said, we would be... Now they call it wills up, it was skids up... within

246

00:29:34,900 --> 00:29:43,900

three to four minutes of being called. I literally jumped out on a helicopter with a big map book and receiving the mission as we were flying

247

00:29:43,900 --> 00:29:50,480

and designating LZs in route and you know, we would be briefing

248

00:29:50,480 --> 00:29:59,320

between the squads literally over the radio while we were flying.

249

00:29:59,320 --> 00:30:05,380

I was an exciting time.

250

00:30:05,380 --> 00:30:08,940

So what years were you doing this?

251

00:30:08,940 --> 00:30:17,340

Oh let me think. '83 to '88, '84 to '88, something like that.

252

00:30:17,340 --> 00:30:19,040

So you were in Germany in '88?

253

00:30:19,040 --> 00:30:19,720

Yeah.

254

00:30:19,720 --> 00:30:26,160

What was the atmosphere like where you were?

255

00:30:26,160 --> 00:30:34,500

I'm not sure what you're asking. The Germans' opinion of us?

256

00:30:34,500 --> 00:30:39,600

The Germans' of us and the Germans' ideas about reunification.

257

00:30:39,600 --> 00:30:55,040

Okay, reunification took everyone by surprise, everybody. The German populace,

258

00:30:55,040 --> 00:31:04,080

the older generation was supportive of the Americans, supportive of the West,

259

00:31:04,080 --> 00:31:12,420

the younger generation were a lot like ours that were looking for something to get angry about and we were an easy target.

260

00:31:12,420 --> 00:31:18,520

And a lot of them just didn't care one way or another.

261

00:31:18,520 --> 00:31:26,680

But the reunification yeah, took everybody totally by surprise. My brother in law was in the East German Navy

262

00:31:26,680 --> 00:31:35,860

and defected in 1977 while they were in port in Paramani; literally jumped off the ship and swam to shore.

263

00:31:35,860 --> 00:31:43,500

His bud that was with him didn't make it shore. He spent nine years in an East German prison.

264

00:31:43,500 --> 00:31:47,620

So there were some people that were.. yeah.

265

00:31:47,620 --> 00:31:56,680

So I'm curious exactly where you were located, was that a part of Germany that had been captured by the Russians after World War II

266

00:31:56,680 --> 00:31:57,180

Oh no

267

00:31:57,180 --> 00:31:58,340

Or U.S.?

268

00:31:58,340 --> 00:32:06,500

I was actually stationed in Ulm, which is about half way between Stuttgart and Augsburg

269

00:32:06,500 --> 00:32:19,560

and you know it's a farm area, Southern Germany. They are conservative bunch of people down there, hill farmers, hillbillies.

270

00:32:19,560 --> 00:32:25,780

I can actually speak their dialect, so it's funny as hell.

271

00:32:25,780 --> 00:32:41,740

The Eastern zones, I had family in Austria and Austria had been occupied by the Soviets for a while, but then they became their own independent Westernized country.

272

00:32:41,740 --> 00:32:48,340

You really didn't have very much contact at that time with anybody in Eastern zones.

273

00:32:48,340 --> 00:32:56,960

I mean, I had been in Berlin, I had been in Eastern Berlin, I had been in Austria and all that stuff, but

274

00:32:56,960 --> 00:33:05,280

Actually having face to face with the exception of my brother and law and his family, not much.

275

00:33:05,280 --> 00:33:10,880

So what happened at the end of that tour, did they..?

276

00:33:10,880 --> 00:33:14,820

In Germany or to me?

277

00:33:14,820 --> 00:33:17,980

Well to you, did they just give your orders for a new.

278

00:33:17,980 --> 00:33:24,960

Oh yeah, it was time for rotations, spent an excellent time over seas. it's time to go back to the states.

279

00:33:24,960 --> 00:33:37,100

I went to the infantry officer advance course, again at Fort Benning, Georgia. [Laughing]

280

00:33:37,100 --> 00:33:51,640

At the end of the advance course I was assigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina and my initial orders, 18th airborne for 118th core and they said "you're an infantry officer you're going to the 82nd"

281

00:33:51,640 --> 00:34:02,420

So they got orders to move me over to the 82nd. I signed into the 82nd and the first thing the G1 says to me is "you're not a ranger, what the hell are you doing here?"

282

00:34:02,420 --> 00:34:12,060

And I'm think "oh my fucking god" you know "what is going on?". Anyway, the

283

00:34:12,060 --> 00:34:17,320

director... deputy commander of operations, general Kinzer

284

00:34:17,320 --> 00:34:24,500

actually had told the G1 that he wanted to interview the next five infantry captains that came in because he had some jobs that he wanted done.

285

00:34:24,500 --> 00:34:32,360

So he called five people in. There were five of us in there in front of John Kinzer's desk and you know he's asking background information.

286

00:34:32,360 --> 00:34:43,860

"what did you do? Okay, bah bah bah, we're going to send you down to first brigade. Bah bah bah, what did you do? mah mah Oaky you're going down to third brigade". He got to me, he said "okay Saunders..."

287

00:34:43,860 --> 00:34:53,220

What was it? He said "glad to see you here. When was the last time you were in 82nd?" I said "sorry, I've never been in the 82nd".

288

00:34:53,220 --> 00:35:11,840

And he said.. what was his next question? Well he asked me how many jobs I had and all that stuff and he asked me where I'd been assigned and I told him. He said "do you know Colonel Anderson?" I said "yes sir, he was the G3 at 56th field artillery command."

289

00:35:11,840 --> 00:35:18,840

And he said "well hold on a minute." He got on the phone, after a couple minutes he hung up, he said

290

00:35:18,840 --> 00:35:27,880

"you other guys leave, I want to talk to captain Saunders." I said "yes sir?" He said "okay, I just talked to Anderson and he says you're a good guy so

291

00:35:27,880 --> 00:35:37,720

I've a got a position that I need to fill and I want you to fill it". And I said "yes sir, you tell me what to do and I'll do it". He said I'm going to make you lead.

292

00:35:37,720 --> 00:35:48,200

You're going to be assigned to the G3 air of the 82nd airborne division. You're going to be our ground liaison officer to the Air Force at Pope Airbase"

293

00:35:48,200 --> 00:35:53,320

I wanted to go down to an infantry battalion and all this other stuff. "Yes sir, three bags full".

294

00:35:53,320 --> 00:36:05,000

So I spent almost two years working out of the Air Force command post at Pop airbase there at Fort Bragg.

295

00:36:05,000 --> 00:36:13,240

Totally different world for me. I mean first time I worked around women, first time I really worked around other services and everything.

296

00:36:13,240 --> 00:36:24,980

And It was an educational experience. It was wonderful, but at the same time I was assigned to G3 air so I was always a division, working on staff and stuff like that.

297

00:36:24,980 --> 00:36:41,640

But that was a very busy time in the Army. Oh my goodness, we did hurricane relief operations in Saint Croix.

298

00:36:41,640 --> 00:36:55,520

Immediately after that, we did Just Cause. Immediately after that we did a huge market garden and immediately after that we rolled into Iraq.

299

00:36:55,520 --> 00:37:00,940

So it was just balls to the wall for what? Twenty-four months.

300

00:37:00,940 --> 00:37:06,640

So let's take those one at a time. Just Cause was?

301

00:37:06,640 --> 00:37:09,460

Invasion of Panama.

302

00:37:09,460 --> 00:37:13,040

Were you on the ground for that or were you doing..?

303

00:37:13,040 --> 00:37:21,760

I initially pushed the division out, because I worked right there at the airport doing the liaison coordination between the Air Force and the Army

304

00:37:21,760 --> 00:37:24,960

and that can be a serious headache

305

00:37:24,960 --> 00:37:31,980

And then I was on the ground down there doing staff functions and then doing the redeployment back home.

306

00:37:31,980 --> 00:37:33,160

You didn't jump into Panama?

307

00:37:33,160 --> 00:37:39,020

I didn't, no. They didn't have to jump into Panama. That was all general Johnson.

308

00:37:39,020 --> 00:37:44,980

Rangers had already secured Tucuman. That was not necessary. Oh well.

309

00:37:44,980 --> 00:37:48,900

But it had been a long time since anybody had been able to do a live jump?

310

00:37:48,900 --> 00:37:51,400

Yes.

311

00:37:51,400 --> 00:37:55,860

Okay, so Panama and then..?

312

00:37:55,860 --> 00:38:01,260

Oh god, I tell you what I remember Desert Storm.

313

00:38:01,260 --> 00:38:11,600

Before we get to leave Panama, my wife and I were leaving for Germany to go visit her parents -- She was pregnant my second son --

314

00:38:11,600 --> 00:38:18,180

and I actually got a phone call down in Atlanta, paging captain Saunders.... Went over picked up the phone, it's my boss

315

00:38:18,180 --> 00:38:26,600

"get your ass back to Bragg now". I said "I'm going on leave".
"Leave's cancelled, get back" Yep, got back up, that's what we're doing Panama.

316

00:38:26,600 --> 00:38:30,600

So even you as high up as you were connected, didn't know that anything was coming?

317

00:38:30,600 --> 00:38:40,480

Well we had been pushing stuff into Panama . You know, like Sheridan tanks and this and that. We knew it was cooking, but

318

00:38:40,480 --> 00:38:47,140

the date and time, we didn't get you know until it came down form higher.

319

00:38:47,140 --> 00:39:02,420

And that same general Kinzer, who was our deputy commander for operations, got pulled out of the 82nd and put up as the director of operations for JTF Panama down there.

320

00:39:02,420 --> 00:39:14,400

I'm trying to remember, Theremin... was it Theremin commander down there? But he pulled Kinzer out and put him in charge of everything down there. It was interesting.

321

00:39:14,400 --> 00:39:20,940

So I'm just curious, it seems exceptional to me that you got leave to go over seas approved...

322

00:39:20,940 --> 00:39:21,760

I know.

323

00:39:21,760 --> 00:39:22,420

with that immanent...

324

00:39:22,420 --> 00:39:24,940

It was crazy.

325

00:39:24,940 --> 00:39:29,820

Do you think some admin didn't put two and two together or were they seriously..?

326

00:39:29,820 --> 00:39:39,940

No I think... okay the G3 at that time was colonel McNeil, later general McNeil

327

00:39:39,940 --> 00:39:52,040

and he's the one who had to approve my leave. So if the 82nd didn't know they were going in until two days before, probably nobody knew.

328

00:39:52,040 --> 00:40:00,500

I mean general McNeil approved my leave, so apparently he didn't think anything was cooking in the immediate future.

329

00:40:00,500 --> 00:40:07,480

I mean I've heard that it was a surprise to everybody, but it shocks me that it was a surprise to the generals.

330

00:40:07,480 --> 00:40:10,840

Yeah, yeah.

331

00:40:10,840 --> 00:40:15,960

I mean I think that right there is an indication that it was...

332

00:40:15,960 --> 00:40:33,920

You want a nightmare though? That August of course Saddam Husein invaded Kuwait. Okay, and everybody "oh yeah, yeah we're going to put the Army out there first". Well not really, the Air Force is actually getting there before we do.

333

00:40:33,920 --> 00:40:41,120

But the first U.S. Troops were the DRB 182nd Airborne.

334

00:40:41,120 --> 00:40:46,420

And day three. Do you know what JOPES is?

335

00:40:46,420 --> 00:40:47,160

Doesn't ring a bell.

336

00:40:47,160 --> 00:40:57,600

Okay, it is a massive computer system that the military uses: joint operations phase deployment system whatever. Okay.

337

00:40:57,600 --> 00:41:08,780

It is a huge computer program that you can cut and paste different units to build new units and put them into a sequence for deployment or redeployment.

338

00:41:08,780 --> 00:41:21,280

It crashed day four or day five of that deployment. For the next three weeks everything was stubby pencil.

339

00:41:21,280 --> 00:41:33,740

It was an education. I was working out of the command post at Pope Airbase, representing both the 18th airborne corps and the 82nd airborne division

340

00:41:33,740 --> 00:41:42,440

and I was literally getting phone calls form the Pentagon at one o'clock every morning "tell me what...

341

00:41:42,440 --> 00:41:49,900

how many airplanes did you send out? What was on every airplane? What was the equip?" That kind of shit.

342

00:41:49,900 --> 00:42:02,180

And I would be on a secure phone two or three hours passing this information to people in the Pentagon, people at various levels on the chain of command.

343

00:42:02,180 --> 00:42:10,460

They finally got JOPES back up in running. It slowed down a little bit after that. I was

344

00:42:10,460 --> 00:42:17,320

amazed at the amount of personnel and equipment that we sent via commercial carrier.

345

00:42:17,320 --> 00:42:28,800

I had a lot of experience with military airlift, but I got real education on commercial carriers and their contract deals. It was great.

346

00:42:28,800 --> 00:42:38,280

And then I deployed over there -- oh god -- January and

347

00:42:38,280 --> 00:42:47,560

spent some time in Iraq and then they pushed me down to Daqran after the seize fire was signed to start prepping the movement back.

348

00:42:47,560 --> 00:42:50,280

Did you see any combat?

349

00:42:50,280 --> 00:43:02,420

Everybody saw something. The Iraqis were surrendering in droves. There were a few points here and there were not good.

350

00:43:02,420 --> 00:43:11,940

We actually had French Dragoons out in in front of us, the 82nd. When they took down the Salomon Airfield

351

00:43:11,940 --> 00:43:20,380

they ran into some resistance there and we policed up what was left. No big deal or anything like that.

352

00:43:20,380 --> 00:43:40,800

We were at Basra after the seize fire, the republican guard did repression of dissidents in Basra

353

00:43:40,800 --> 00:43:48,820

and yeah they killed a lot of Shiite, dumped them in the river, that kind of stuff, you know.

354

00:43:48,820 --> 00:44:01,160

But that was an interesting operation and when I came back from that I ended up as a company commander in an infantry battalion.

355

00:44:01,160 --> 00:44:08,600

Oh my god, I spent forever as a company commander there. Normally you get like 11, 13 months in any command.

356

00:44:08,600 --> 00:44:19,960

I commanded an infantry company and then I commanded a headquarters company and I spent almost three years in command, which is like my head's exploding. You know you don't get that's a...

357

00:44:19,960 --> 00:44:27,620

And remember I said when reported to the 82nd. "You're not ranger, what are you doing here?"

358

00:44:27,620 --> 00:44:33,560

The standard in the 82nd at that time was you did not get a company command unless you were a ranger

359

00:44:33,560 --> 00:44:44,460

and the period of my command, I think I was the only non-ranger infantry commander on our tents.

360

00:44:44,460 --> 00:44:56,160

So it was a good thing, yeah. And I'm trying to think, I did that all the up until 1993.

361

00:44:56,160 --> 00:45:04,420

So prior to that you had done you know the security with the artillery,

362

00:45:04,420 --> 00:45:11,480

you had been with some pretty elite troops and then going down to being a company commander on an infantry company?

363

00:45:11,480 --> 00:45:24,020

Airborne infantry company. That was like the icing on the cake. Everybody wants the 82nd. Everybody wants the command in the 82nd. It's just, you know...

364

00:45:24,020 --> 00:45:34,540

And in addition to that, okay the hierarchy of who-ness we used to call it. [laughing]

365

00:45:34,540 --> 00:45:42,160

If you didn't have a command and you had to do a staff position, you wanted to be in operations.

366

00:45:42,160 --> 00:45:48,960

If you were in operations you wanted to be air, because that was sexy or something

367

00:45:48,960 --> 00:45:56,740

and I nailed it all the way through. When I was at battalion level I was battalion S3 air.

368

00:45:56,740 --> 00:46:05,160

That's how I ended up in the ground liaison position in the 82nd being assigned to the G3 air and you know,

369

00:46:05,160 --> 00:46:12,880

had a lot of visibility there so I got an infantry company when a lot of other people wouldn't of.

370

00:46:12,880 --> 00:46:25,780

You know, If I'd a been in another position, probably wouldn't have gotten it. My follow on assignment from there was Panama and...

371

00:46:25,780 --> 00:46:31,660

[inaudible] calls and says "okay it's time for you to rotate. We're going to send you over seas. We're going to send you to Japan".

372

00:46:31,660 --> 00:46:43,560

I said, "no, not Japan. What other choices do I have?" "Blah, blah, blah, okay we can send you to Panama". I said "sign me up". [laughing]

373

00:46:43,560 --> 00:46:53,420

And I asked what I was going to be doing there. they said "oh well too bad this is like third or fourth down the list here, so you're going branch unassigned".

374

00:46:53,420 --> 00:47:00,840

I'm thinking "oh my god an unaccompanied tour to panama, probably set in some warehouse counting beans and stuff".

375

00:47:00,840 --> 00:47:07,340

I'm doing the in processing and this colonel come in and he says "I'm looking for captain Saunders". "Yes sir".

376

00:47:07,340 --> 00:47:16,060

He says "what the hell are you doing down here, we need you down at the office" and I said "sir, what am I doing?" and he said "didn't they tell you?". "No sir".

377

00:47:16,060 --> 00:47:22,480

"You're the J3 air for JTF Panama USRSO". "Whoa, yes!". [laughing].

378

00:47:22,480 --> 00:47:31,760

And you know it's something that I knew and something I was practiced with and something they were in need of.

379

00:47:31,760 --> 00:47:44,860

Yeah I stepped right into the United States Army South J3 air position and ran with it and they were impressed so it's alright.

380

00:47:44,860 --> 00:47:46,520

So how long did you do that?

381

00:47:46,520 --> 00:47:47,960

Two Years.

382

00:47:47,960 --> 00:47:51,560

So that takes us to '95?

383

00:47:51,560 --> 00:47:52,060

Yeah.

384

00:47:52,060 --> 00:47:55,360
Okay, Where next?

385
00:47:55,360 --> 00:48:05,480
[Laughing] That was the Clinton Administration, the draw down.

386
00:48:05,480 --> 00:48:11,540
We went form 19 divisions to ten divisions in the Army

387
00:48:11,540 --> 00:48:25,880
and I was looking at [inaudible] and I was saying "boy things are getting really, really tight". My wife hadn't seen me very much for like three years, four years, kids are growing and I'm saying "okay,

388
00:48:25,880 --> 00:48:34,980
maybe it's time for me to go ahead and get out". So I did and but at the same time you know,

389
00:48:35,000 --> 00:48:44,180
I didn't want to just let go of everything so I said "yeah, I will go in the reserves" and I did.

390
00:48:44,180 --> 00:48:51,840
Got off of active duty, resigned my regular Army commission, accepted my reserve commission,

391
00:48:51,840 --> 00:48:59,100
and moved back here to Ohio and started looking for a job and

392
00:48:59,100 --> 00:49:09,720
I actually got picked up by Airborne Express in Chicago, Illinois, but my family was still down here in Ohio. You know, Chicago is not exactly the friendliest town in the world so we decided...

393
00:49:09,720 --> 00:49:17,500
Anyway, I went in the reserves. Initially I was assigned 83rd Arcom as

394
00:49:17,500 --> 00:49:24,120
an operations/mobilization officer in their G3 and

395
00:49:24,120 --> 00:49:30,720

just a couple of months later the G3 USRSO Panama

396

00:49:30,720 --> 00:49:38,020

asked if they would send me back down there for a month to do some stuff. So they sent me back down there for a month, came back up.

397

00:49:38,020 --> 00:49:46,640

83rd Arcom received orders to disband okay,

398

00:49:46,640 --> 00:49:55,080

and they were to be replaced by what they called a garrison support unit.

399

00:49:55,080 --> 00:50:06,300

And out of the like 300 people in the headquarters there maybe 90 of them were transferred over to that GU, I was one of them so.

400

00:50:06,300 --> 00:50:18,040

I actually ran their MOPE for about a year and then they made me the commandant of the 5026th.

401

00:50:18,040 --> 00:50:27,420

And so I got another command and about a year and a half later they disbanded that one as well.

402

00:50:27,420 --> 00:50:37,560

And so it was like running around trying to get all these people jobs and all that other stuff, but one of the guys I had been in the special forces with many years before

403

00:50:37,560 --> 00:50:51,360

Sergeant Major Jesse Boyd called me up out of the blue. He said "hey we've got a reserve PSYOP unit that needs a commander". It's a major position, I'd just go promoted to major.

404

00:50:51,360 --> 00:51:02,660

"And they're airborne so you really ought to throw your hat in the ring". I said "yeah okay, I'll do that". So I did.

405

00:51:02,660 --> 00:51:12,160

I as interviewed by the battalion commander and they plugged me in as commander of the 346th PSYOP company airborne

406

00:51:12,160 --> 00:51:21,180

and you know, I was a reservist, I was [inaudible] job, all this other stuff.

407

00:51:21,180 --> 00:51:29,540

Great unit, really, really good unit. They'd been deployed to Bosnia

408

00:51:29,540 --> 00:51:39,660

about a year before I came in there and they had a big turn over and everything. I rebuilt the unit, set them up, I actually commanded that unit for almost three years.

409

00:51:39,660 --> 00:51:51,000

And at the end of that time I was selected to be battalion S3 for the 15th PSYOP battalion, which is the next higher headquarters

410

00:51:51,000 --> 00:52:01,440

and I'd been in there six, eight months and 2001, 9/11. [laughs]

411

00:52:01,440 --> 00:52:12,800

We were notified in the end of October that we'd be mobilized effective 1, January.

412

00:52:12,800 --> 00:52:20,100

So, I was the S3, that was my job. Get them up, get them ready to go.

413

00:52:20,100 --> 00:52:31,800

We deployed two companies plus a headquarters element at Fort Bragg. We were attached to 8th PSYOP and our companies immediately down range to support operations in Afghanistan.

414

00:52:31,800 --> 00:52:39,000

And then as a part of the staff, we were deployed piecemeal into theater, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia,

415

00:52:39,000 --> 00:52:50,160

Saudi Arabia, and Omaha and everything. Did a year there doing this out, they de-mobed us, sent us back out. I was still the S3 15th PSYOP

416

00:52:50,160 --> 00:53:03,400

and about a year later they needed a senior officer for Bosnia

417

00:53:03,400 --> 00:53:12,860

and I was coming up towards the end of my S3 assignment. So I said "yeah, okay send me".

418

00:53:12,860 --> 00:53:22,800

And then yeah they did, they sent me to Bosnia S4. I was the...

419

00:53:22,800 --> 00:53:32,220

chief PSYOP branch S4 and that meant that all the psychological teams in

420

00:53:32,220 --> 00:53:42,420

Bosnia-Herzegovina reported to me. You and the Brits and the Dutch up north, you and the French and the Germans down south and then you had the Americans up in the north-east.

421

00:53:42,420 --> 00:53:48,640

And then I ran the PSYOP branch there in Sarajevo

422

00:53:48,640 --> 00:53:54,200

and that was a fun assignment. It was good, good. And yes?

423

00:53:54,200 --> 00:53:56,820

What kind of missions were your units doing?

424

00:53:56,820 --> 00:54:06,900

[Laughing] Oh good lord. PSYOP is a strange animal in that

425

00:54:06,900 --> 00:54:18,280

The approval for anything you do is at such a high level it could make your head hurt. You know you can't do anything without a very elaborate approval process.

426

00:54:18,280 --> 00:54:27,520

The programs and things are approved at NATO, they get pushed down to S4 you know, stabilization forces.

427

00:54:27,520 --> 00:54:39,880

Commanding general Behr could approve products. He couldn't approve themes, he couldn't approve programs, he could

428

00:54:39,880 --> 00:54:45,420

approve products. So we had to lash all that together and make it all work.

429

00:54:45,440 --> 00:54:55,760

One of the successes in Bosnia was the de-mining program. The PSYOP branch actually

430

00:54:55,760 --> 00:55:09,920

did comic books, films, things like that for little kids. "Hey don't step on mines, don't play with blah, blah, blah". That was one of about eight or nine programs we ran and

431

00:55:09,960 --> 00:55:23,000

there were some other operations having to do with war criminals and at the other extreme there were Islamist extremists in

432

00:55:23,000 --> 00:55:31,720

Toplik and Jablanica area that we worked with as well, but I don't even know

433

00:55:31,720 --> 00:55:37,100

what the current standard on classification of that stuff is now, so I'll leave that alone.

434

00:55:37,100 --> 00:55:46,400

And yeah, for me I loved it, enjoyed it. I figured that would be my hoo rah, I was already

435

00:55:46,400 --> 00:55:57,580

coming up on pretty close to mandatory retirement and that stuff. So I came back and did my retirement paperwork,

436

00:55:57,580 --> 00:56:08,340

got that turned in, actually retired from the military and about six months later I get a phone call "would you like to volunteer?" I said "pardon me?"

437

00:56:08,340 --> 00:56:20,700

They say "yeah we need MITs" you know, military transition teams. "We shook the tree, we're not getting enough people so we're calling you old guys". [laughs]

438

00:56:20,700 --> 00:56:33,980

So I said "yeah sure, why not?" I was brought back on active duty, went to Fort Hood, did the military transition team training there

439

00:56:33,980 --> 00:56:41,840

with a couple other retirees and we went to Iraq and I was assigned to

440

00:56:41,840 --> 00:56:53,340

9th Iraqi infantry division as a battalion MIT commander and I spent a year with the Iraqis in

441

00:56:53,340 --> 00:57:04,520

2006. By that time my oldest son had enlisted. [laughs] He was with the 172nd.

442

00:57:04,520 --> 00:57:12,740

A separate infantry brigade out of Alaska. They had gone into Mosul, they'd been there a year.

443

00:57:12,740 --> 00:57:26,480

Let's see, I got there in January. He'd already been there 7 months. they were scheduled to rotate out that summer and they extended them, sent them down to Baghdad.

444

00:57:26,480 --> 00:57:36,280

I had been doing combat operations with the Iraqis up in Diyala Province around Mashada and they had totally took our brigade

445

00:57:36,280 --> 00:57:43,780

pulled them down to Baghdad to support the American surge operations down there. And I was...

446

00:57:43,780 --> 00:57:47,600

my battalion was actually supporting my son's battalion.

447

00:57:47,600 --> 00:57:53,580

Wow. So how aware of that were you? Did you know exactly where your son was?

448

00:57:53,600 --> 00:58:08,080

Oh yeah, I could actually go down an alley and watch them clear a house while we were doing the same thing on the next street over. No that's why my hair is white. MIT teams, do you know anything about those?

449

00:58:08,080 --> 00:58:10,580

I've a had a little bit of experience with them, but...

450

00:58:10,580 --> 00:58:11,780

Okay, basically...

451

00:58:11,780 --> 00:58:13,080

but you should probably explain it for the...

452

00:58:13,080 --> 00:58:25,340

Basically they're a ten man team, okay. They tried to pattern them after special forces, ODAs.

453

00:58:25,340 --> 00:58:36,240

And there function was for an internal defense, which is one of the SF missions and everything, but of course nothing ever turns out.

454

00:58:36,240 --> 00:58:51,380

They're not ODAs. They're pretty good teams, pretty good you know, they work well. But one of the requirements was they could not protect them selves, so they ended up with a

455

00:58:51,380 --> 00:59:02,300

PSEs, personal security detachments. So I had a ten man team plus I had a 15 man security detachment that was just regular infantry guys from some place else.

456

00:59:02,300 --> 00:59:10,700

And we would go terressing around the country with a 3 vehicle convoy. 3 vehicles, all Humvees

457

00:59:10,700 --> 00:59:21,820

and that's betting your bars when you went on a mission. There's just not a whole lot of security there.

458

00:59:21,820 --> 00:59:35,760

Anyway, like I said we were initially up in Dyiala Province. We moved down to East Baghdad. The initial position we were in was FOB Hope wich is right on the edge of Sadar City

459

00:59:35,760 --> 00:59:41,920

and I'm there with an Iraqi battalion and you know,

460

00:59:41,920 --> 00:59:53,480

my ex-wife calls and says "hey our son got extended". I said "what?" By the time I found out what was happening, yeah okay get the briefing that we're supporting his unit, which is

461

00:59:53,480 --> 01:00:05,200

coming down from Mosul and everything. So that was interesting. I actually went on a couple of combat patrols with him and... yeah.

462

01:00:05,200 --> 01:00:15,560

But, you know, all the other MITs, they knew that I had a son in that unit and so if anything happened out there on the street, you know they're on the radio

463

01:00:15,560 --> 01:00:22,180

"hey there, did you know that this happened?" I'm like "geeze, don't tell me this, I don't want to know".

464

01:00:22,180 --> 01:00:31,600

But yeah, they finally got redeployed and that took a load off of me.

465

01:00:31,600 --> 01:00:44,220

I finished up my tour in December '06, retired again in '07, 1st of January, '07.

466

01:00:44,220 --> 01:00:56,180

So I think it's interesting that going over the previous twenty years you didn't mention at all being worried, but when your son was deployed, you mentioned being worried about three times?

467

01:00:56,180 --> 01:01:10,540

I realize now what I put my parents through, but you know that what was comforting was

468

01:01:10,540 --> 01:01:24,600

I knew that he had good training, I knew he had relatively good commanders, and I also know what it's like and you know there are...

469

01:01:24,600 --> 01:01:35,940

you can do everything right and something can go wrong. That's just the way it is and it's not always a choice between good and bad so much as a choice between bad and worse

470

01:01:35,940 --> 01:01:45,520

and if you've got half a brain, you're taking the bad choice rather than the worse choice. So that's a reality, so.

471

01:01:45,520 --> 01:01:54,000

Okay, so I mean I think this has got to be so rare. Did you have a chance to actually see in Iraq and talk to him and spend time with him.

472

01:01:54,000 --> 01:02:02,900

Yeah, Yeah. Like I said, I went on combat patrols with him and his squad.

473

01:02:02,900 --> 01:02:18,560

But military families are small. Like I said, I was my brother's squad leader in Germany. I have a nephew that was a black hawk pilot, did two tours in Iraq

474

01:02:18,560 --> 01:02:28,060

and he was there when my son got there and when I was leaving, he was rotating back in

475

01:02:28,060 --> 01:02:42,280

and as he was leaving, another nephew of mine was coming in a heavy engineer unit. So it's like, we've ought to own that damn country, because he had people on the ground for so long.

476

01:02:42,280 --> 01:02:54,640

But yeah, it's way of life, that's what you do and yeah.

477

01:02:54,640 --> 01:02:58,540

Okay, so retiring for real this time?

478

01:02:58,540 --> 01:02:59,520

Yeah.

479

01:02:59,520 --> 01:03:07,320

Um how did that feel?

480

01:03:07,320 --> 01:03:14,180

An unbelievable loss for me. [laughing]

481

01:03:14,180 --> 01:03:28,380

I actually had to go into the veteran's programs for treatment for traumatic brain injury and PTSD [laughing]

482

01:03:28,380 --> 01:03:40,200

and a couple other things that just accumulated over the years in the military. Not a good time. I actually got divorced,

483

01:03:40,200 --> 01:03:49,240

but me and my wife got back together, we're remarried now. So you know, but as you can see it was a hard time.

484

01:03:49,240 --> 01:03:58,180

Prior to that you know, all the deployments that I did whether El Sal or Panama or Desert Storm or wherever,

485

01:03:58,180 --> 01:04:09,340

when you came back you were around other people just like you. You go down to the club, you slam some beers, tell war stories and everything. Couple of months later you're back close to normal.

486

01:04:09,340 --> 01:04:19,020

This was a total separation from the military into civilian life. There were no, very few support functions out there, very few.

487

01:04:19,020 --> 01:04:24,640

And that for me was very difficult, very very difficult.

488

01:04:24,640 --> 01:04:34,140

And you know, I'll tell you right now, the hyper awareness, I miss that so much.

489

01:04:34,140 --> 01:04:44,560

I mean you can literally taste the air. You're aware of everything and it's almost like a drug.

490

01:04:44,560 --> 01:04:47,840

So you went through some programs at the VA?

491

01:04:47,840 --> 01:04:51,380

Yes, yes.

492

01:04:51,380 --> 01:04:57,080

So how long did it take you to start looking for a job when you got out?

493

01:04:57,080 --> 01:05:13,500

Well, when I got out, for six months I didn't do anything, nothing. The I said "well you know maybe I ought to start back to school" so I started back to school just piddling around

494

01:05:13,520 --> 01:05:23,400

trying to decide what I want to do and I got pushed into the VA programs. I spent about 9 months in rehabilitation

495

01:05:23,400 --> 01:05:34,400

and they said we're going to recommend you for the chapter 31 program and so they payed for my graduate degree and I did two years in a graduate program.

496

01:05:34,400 --> 01:05:47,240

Did well [laughing] and when I graduated I put my resume out there on the street and in about five or six months later I got picked up for this position.

497

01:05:47,240 --> 01:05:50,520

So your graduate program, where did you go?

498

01:05:50,520 --> 01:05:53,000

Northern Kentucky University.

499

01:05:53,000 --> 01:05:54,920

And that is in?

500

01:05:54,920 --> 01:05:59,380

Public Administration. Masters of Public Administration.

501

01:05:59,380 --> 01:06:10,260

So what was environment like for you coming out of the military going back to a college campus, clearly not a traditional student?

502

01:06:10,260 --> 01:06:21,100

Well some classes I'll admit I didn't know. I had never done anything like human resources. That was one of the...

503

01:06:21,100 --> 01:06:27,880

My emphasis was on homeland security and emergency management, but covered a whole bunch of things.

504

01:06:27,880 --> 01:06:36,720

I'd never been exposed, well yes I have. I'd been exposed to data analysis and research methods, I just didn't realize it.

505

01:06:36,720 --> 01:06:53,520

And so that was a formal verification, but my initial class on homeland security, I almost taught the class. I mean...

506

01:06:53,520 --> 01:07:08,000

The instructor was not that familiar with the information and I had a lot of experience in stuff like that, so yeah. There was a lot in the class which was my contribution.

507

01:07:08,000 --> 01:07:12,320

So what was that relationship with the professor like?

508

01:07:12,320 --> 01:07:24,960

She was actually happy to have somebody in class who knew that much about it. So that was not bad. Some of my other professors...

509

01:07:24,960 --> 01:07:39,320

a couple of them were very, very supportive. The one from budgeting, he was a veteran and he really understood and appreciated veterans

510

01:07:39,320 --> 01:07:51,800

and we were his favorite students. Another one was not a veteran, but still had a good appreciation of veterans and I tell you what, I learned

511

01:07:51,800 --> 01:08:07,120

so much about data analysis from that guy, it was unbelievable. I had another professor in administrative law [laughing] didn't like us at all. Not at all.

512

01:08:07,120 --> 01:08:12,520

So what do you think the problem was? Was it anti-military or?

513

01:08:12,520 --> 01:08:18,080

Worldview, worldview.

514

01:08:18,080 --> 01:08:25,620

Did you have any professors that maybe didn't appreciate having a student with their own experiences and their own opinions?

515

01:08:25,620 --> 01:08:33,240

A couple of them yes, including the head of the program. [laughing] Oh well.

516

01:08:33,240 --> 01:08:40,420

So did you look into any veterans organizations, VFWs?

517

01:08:40,420 --> 01:08:53,040

Oh yeah, I belong to all of them. I am a member of the VFW, the American Legion, AMVETS -there's a couple others like Special Forces Association, CRB Association,

518

01:08:53,040 --> 01:09:07,780

on and on and on. Do I regularly attend those things? Not so much. I do have close friends that are veterans.

519

01:09:07,780 --> 01:09:18,860

I have a motorcycle and I have a friend who was in the Air Force just for three years a very long time ago, he's old enough to be my father.

520

01:09:18,860 --> 01:09:29,520

But he and I are riding buddies. We just go out and ride occasionally and you know, he has a interest in history like I do and we sit around, drink beer, talk, and have a good time.

521

01:09:29,520 --> 01:09:43,180

Thank goodness I have somebody like that. And then there are probably four or five people in thins region of the country that I have served with in the past that I'm really good friends with and I can always

522

01:09:43,180 --> 01:09:50,360

give them a call, go visit with them, they can come visit me or whatever. Don't do it very often, but it is nice to see.

523

01:09:50,360 --> 01:10:00,040

So you've gotten support from other veterans? Have you made connections like that with civilians?

524

01:10:00,040 --> 01:10:07,060

No. [laughing] Sad isn't it?

525

01:10:07,060 --> 01:10:16,240

What do you think the reason is for that? Is there no connection or?

526

01:10:16,240 --> 01:10:28,880

Veterans with combat experience probably scare people a little bit.

527

01:10:28,880 --> 01:10:34,720

We're going to say things that are going to make them uncomfortable.

528

01:10:34,720 --> 01:10:44,380

I've got two sons. One of them I was Iraq, he was an infantry man, he's got a CIB, I've got a CI. we can talk, we can sit down and blah, blah, blah.

529

01:10:44,380 --> 01:10:50,940

Don't always see eye to eye, but you know, if he wants to say something he can say it, if I want to say something, I can say it.

530

01:10:50,940 --> 01:11:05,360

My younger son is not a veteran. Love him to death, I do, but there's a lot of things we can't quite connect on. I don't know.

531

01:11:05,360 --> 01:11:13,400

Alright, well let's try to summarize all this.

532

01:11:13,400 --> 01:11:17,560

Tell you what, very briefly talk about your job now. What do you do?

533

01:11:17,560 --> 01:11:26,620

I am a disables veteran's outreach program specialist for the state of Ohio. We're in the office of -

534

01:11:26,620 --> 01:11:35,200

oh god I can't think of this - OWD: Office of Workforce Development.
And we

535

01:11:35,200 --> 01:11:44,880

provide case management case management and intensive services to veterans with special barriers to employment to assist them in finding employment. That's the long and short of it.

536

01:11:44,880 --> 01:11:51,480

Is it a mandatory qualification for the job to be a veteran yourself?

537

01:11:51,480 --> 01:11:58,340

Yes, you have to be a disabled veteran for this position.

538

01:11:58,340 --> 01:12:03,720

Your clients, do they appreciate that?

539

01:12:03,720 --> 01:12:18,320

Yes, it's easier for them to talk to somebody like me than say, just a normal state worker or county worker or anything like that.

540

01:12:18,320 --> 01:12:29,660

And once they're comfortable with me they will say the damnedest things you know, okay.

541

01:12:29,660 --> 01:12:36,160

Okay, so how did your military experience effect your life?

542

01:12:36,160 --> 01:12:45,740

It was my life. I think of myself as a soldier. When I think of myself, that's what I think of first.

543

01:12:45,740 --> 01:12:59,320

I am no longer an active soldier. I understand that. I'm getting along. I've got some bumps and bruises, but yeah that's the way I think of myself.

544

01:12:59,320 --> 01:13:06,400

Any life lessons, something you've learned in the military that's stuck with you?

545

01:13:06,400 --> 01:13:14,740

Hundreds and hundreds of things. My grandfather used to give me good advice like

546

01:13:14,740 --> 01:13:22,060

"if you're going to get married, make sure she's catholic and not speak English" that's a good point.

547

01:13:22,060 --> 01:13:32,680

Yeah military, never ever quit, ever. No matter how bad it is, you don't quit and I mean small person.

548

01:13:32,680 --> 01:13:41,340

I was in a physical environment, the infantry. Lot's of guys bigger, stronger all that stuff.

549

01:13:41,340 --> 01:13:57,200

I did well. because I didn't quit. Don't quit ever. The other thing is that realization that yeah, sometimes it's a choice between bad and worse

550

01:13:57,200 --> 01:14:05,520

and you've got a man up and do that. Probably one of the more important things is

551

01:14:05,520 --> 01:14:15,820

every officer that I've ever penned, commissioned including one of my nephews, I give them the spiel, you know.

552

01:14:15,820 --> 01:14:27,660

"You're a leader now, you're responsible for people, but those people are somebody's sons and daughters. They are our treasure and that's what you take care of

553

01:14:27,660 --> 01:14:37,960

If you can do that you'll be a successful leader".

554

01:14:37,960 --> 01:14:45,480

So what are your feelings about the military in general?

555

01:14:45,480 --> 01:15:04,760

I'm concerned. We at one time were like the 900 pound gorilla. I mean period. There was American forces that could go anywhere, do anything.

556

01:15:04,760 --> 01:15:21,700

I've seen three cycles of downsizing: the Vietnam War, the Clinton administration, the peace dividend from the falling of the Soviet Union, and now we're seeing the draw down from "okay Iraq's over with, Afghanistan's drawing down".

557

01:15:21,700 --> 01:15:35,300

Every time that they have done that it's like "okay, we're going to save all this money". Well they didn't save all that money, they took it, they moved into other things in the government to pay for something.

558

01:15:35,300 --> 01:15:46,540

We got a less efficient, smaller military, but that money is still coming out of your pocket.

559

01:15:46,540 --> 01:15:58,440

Like I said, after the Cold War we went 19 divisions to 10 divisions. It's cutting our strength in half and right now they're doing it again

560

01:15:58,440 --> 01:16:07,540

and that money is not going to come back to the people at all, it's going to go into other programs in the government overall.

561

01:16:07,540 --> 01:16:20,520

I remember the Carter years, training with almost nothing. You know, it was practically wooden sticks going bang bang. I wasn't that bad, but it was bad.

562

01:16:20,520 --> 01:16:36,360

I saw a wonderful, effective, very motivated military during the Reagan administration and after that. I mean, they were awesome.

563

01:16:36,360 --> 01:16:47,400

People were trained, they were motivated, they were... good leadership there, good leadership. And I see a lot of that being flittered away now.

564

01:16:47,400 --> 01:16:58,540

I'm sure it would come back with the proper amount of pressure, but I don't know how that's going to be. I do know that we have the best trained,

565

01:16:58,540 --> 01:17:14,140

best motivated military in the world bar none. But you can stretch them and stretch them and stretch them and that's it.

566

01:17:14,140 --> 01:17:17,860

Okay, well we've got a few minutes left. Is there anything we missed?

567

01:17:17,860 --> 01:17:26,180

[laughing] Yes lots and lots of stuff, but no, we won't go there.

568

01:17:26,180 --> 01:17:39,280

Okay, so you've got a minute. Future generations are going to watch this. What message do you want to leave for kids thirty, forty years from now who see this?

569

01:17:39,280 --> 01:17:52,980

You know you struggle in life trying to do something original and everything and I've been around for a few years and

570

01:17:52,980 --> 01:18:05,500

I was trying to think of -- is there anything truly original that I've ever said or done? And I've got maybe one line:

571

01:18:05,500 --> 01:18:17,680

you do what's right, because that's what makes us men, you do the needful thing so our sons will have the courage to be men.

572

01:18:17,680 --> 01:18:26,560

And if I had one original thing in my life, that's it.

573

01:18:26,560 --> 01:18:30,000

Okay, well thank you very much for the interview.

574

01:18:30,000 --> 01:18:32,000

Glad you could come in.