

Summary of Oral History Transcript
Student, Citizen, Soldier: Oral History and Student Veterans

Theriault, Maxime

U.S. Navy, SONAR Technician Submarines Third Class, E-4

Interviewer:

Interview conducted by Rachel Sherman, Salem State University, on 11/25/2013

Summary of Transcript:

Maxime Theriault of South Hadley, MA, enlisted in the Navy in 2007 as a means of securing a financial future and paying for college. He served for five years as a Sonar Technician and was stationed at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, CT. Theriault discusses daily life on a naval submarine, the culture of the Navy, and the life skills learned in the military.

Maxime Theriault

Narrator

Rachel Sherman

Salem State University

Interviewer

November 25th, 2013

at Salem State University

Salem, Massachusetts

Rachel Sherman: All right. Today is November 25, 2013, and my name is Rachel Sherman. I am joined today by Max Theriault who was a Navy Sonar Technician for submarines 3rd class or E4. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the project, “Student, Citizen, Soldier.”

Max Theriault: No Problem.

RS: All right, so I’m going to begin with the first question. Your biological [*biographical*] form says you were born in Barnstable and then raised in South Hadley after the age of ten. What was it like growing up in those two towns?

MT: It is almost hard to remember living on the Cape. I guess I can’t really say too much about it. I mean, I lived on the Cape, so that was kind of nice. There’s beaches and stuff like that, but it is dead in the winters and nothing happens. But when I was ten my grandmother died, so we moved to South Hadley so my mom could be closer to my grandfather and help take care of him. And that’s I guess where I consider my hometown just because that’s where I went through high school and stuff like that. So that was fun, and it was a smaller area, a smaller town, so it wasn’t bad, but then again it is in western Mass, so there’s not much going on out there.

RS: All right. Were you surrounded by a military family growing up?

MT: No. The only person I knew of that was in the military was my grandfather who was in the Army during World War II. And then after I enlisted, I found out that some of my uncles that I didn’t know too well were in the Navy also—just by coincidence really, but there wasn’t too much military association with my family.

RS: All right. Why did you decide on joining the military?

MT: My family didn't have much money, so I didn't see how going to see college was—how that would work, I guess. And it is just kind of part of a lifestyle that I kind of realized I would have. I didn't want a job where I'd just go in and work like 9 to 5 doing things I didn't really want to do just to make money. So I saw the military as kind of like—you live your job, sort of, where it is more an aspect of your life, and, you know, I guess there is the nice things where you get to go places and stuff like that, so—I don't know. It distracted me. I went in and started talking to recruiters, and one thing led to another.

RS: That's awesome. So you answered my other question. How did your family react? Did they support you?

MT: [*Laughs*]. My mom was not excited; she threw some tantrums, but my dad liked the idea, and I think he signed the paperwork for me before she did because I was seventeen when I enlisted, so I still had to finish out my senior year.

RS: All right. So now we're going to go to the next section. What was your first impression when you first arrived on base? Was it anything like you expected?

MT: Like for boot camp, or—?

RS: We can start with boot camp, yes.

MT: I don't know. For boot camp like I guess you don't know what to expect going in. You hear from other people what things are like, and you just kind of see things on TV or something. I don't know. You expect it to suck, and it kind of did. At first, you're doing all kinds of ridiculous things, and you have no clue why, and you're like, "What did I get myself into?" But then by the end, you know, you get used to the military structure somewhat and stuff like that and all the new things you're doing because, I mean, it is not like it is anything you've ever done before, and by the end, it is—it is already over. It passed by that fast, and it is, I don't know, it was kind of a fun experience I guess.

RS: Fun and boot camp, okay! [*Laughs*] That's just me. So why did you choose the Navy and not another branch such as the Army or the Marines?

MT: I actually spoke with Army recruiters first, and, I don't know, I didn't like talking to them. [*Rachel laughs*]. They didn't really sell me on it; and I don't know if it was those guys or not, but I didn't really like what they were putting out, I guess. And then the recruiting office I went to was right next to the grocery store I worked at at the time, so I just kind of just walked in there, and it was lined up. Each one of them had an office in a row. Navy was like the second one or something, so I don't know if it was just chance that I happened on them—actually, I just remembered [*laughs*]. One of my friends had been speaking with them, too, so that was my next stop, and right when I started talking to them, everything clicked I guess.

RS: So your friend joined the Navy as well?

MT: Yeah, we both joined together, and we were supposed to leave like a week apart. He ended up getting a little delayed for something medical, so I left first, and that's how it worked. He's still in.

RS: All right. Describe some of your other military personnel on the base. Is there anyone in particular that you looked up to or anything?

MT: I mean—

RS: Or you didn't like?

MT: It could be kind of a broad question, I guess, in the sense that like from—there's boot camp, and then I did a year of schooling for my job to be a sonar technician, and then I went to the boat. I guess it would mostly apply to the boat.

RS: Okay, so why don't you do that.

MT: So I guess once you get there, it is—every part, you know, you go through all this schooling and stuff like that, and then you get to the boat, and you realize you still don't know anything. But that's the time you're actually working, you know, doing your job, so that's the time that you start to meet people that can affect you like that, I guess. And—the—the relationships you form in the military are, I don't know, I guess entirely different than anything else, so I met some of my best friends there. And a lot of them were really good at what they did, so that kind of helped form our relationship, I guess.

RS: All right, what was the general atmosphere while you were on the base or on the boat, I should say?

MT: Like—what type of atmosphere?

RS: Like, was it friendly? Was it kind of like tense? Did you guys all get along, or was there like—?

MT: Everyone, really for the most part, really gets along. There's a lot of—I don't know how to say it [*laughs*]. There's a lot of horseplay and stuff like that, but, in general, everyone gets along, and the atmosphere, I guess, would really be a working atmosphere because anytime—there's always work happening on a submarine because we're always getting ready to go out again and get ready for the next deployment. So anytime we're at sea—we're obviously at sea, we're doing work constantly. And then anytime we come in, you know, a lot of times we'd come in hoping to like get some sort of time off; but really something broke, or there's some other maintenance availability that's coming up, so we have to go through and do a bunch of work. So that's the primary atmosphere, I guess.

RS: Constant, constant work. Was it a hard adjustment to military life—living on a boat verses living on the shore, I guess, or—?

MT: I don't think—well, living on the boat is never really fun.

RS: Were you ever boat sick, or—?

MT: Sea sick?

RS: Sea sick, thank you, were you sea sick at first?

MT: No. I never really got sea sick, but also being on a submarine, it only affects you until you dive, so then it is like being in a building or something like that, and you don't notice it unless you do angles, and then your world goes like this [*Max makes a tilting hand gesture*]. I actually forgot what the actual question is [*laughs*].

RS: The hard adjustment to military life?

MT: Oh yeah, the adjustment was easy for me at least. I mean, it is based on you I guess because there are some people who couldn't adjust to it, and they obviously didn't make it very far. But I liked it; I liked the structure, I guess, even though even within that structure there's a lot of unknowns still—but, I just liked the—I don't know, you kind of know. In one aspect it is nice, and in one aspect it kind of gets boring, but you kind of know what's happening in your life.

RS: That sounds fun. All right, so describe your typical day. How did everyone entertain themselves—so from when you wake up to go to sleep, what did you do?

MT: I guess that would be best for an underway question. So the days underway are eighteen hour days. You cut off that extra six for twenty four because there's only three sections, three watch sections on the boat. So you get in and you do your watch which, I guess, would be the first six, and then you have your off-going time, and that would be—you'd clean. There's always an hour of cleaning or so, and then you'd go into any work that you had to get done, any type of maintenance, or if you had a collateral duty of some sort, you would go and do that type of work. And then if you finished, and you still had time, you could get into some sort of recreation, I guess. A lot of times guys would play movies on the crew's mess because you can't really—it is the only crew area, and it is not very big, so it is not like people can really go in there and take it over. So a movie is kind of a general consensus there. Other than that, people bring their laptops underway, and you can watch a movie on that somewhere else or play a game. Some people played games on them. But still, there is a lot of work that happens, so your time is kind of limited. And then the third six hour block is your time to sleep before your next watch, so you don't really want to cut into that if you can me.

RS: Yeah, I wouldn't [*laughs*]. So what was your favorite—did you like the work, or you liked the leisure? That's kind of a silly question, but—?

MT: [*Laughs*] I mean, everyone likes leisure, but the workload was kind of nice at times because you're on a six month deployment or something. It helps make another day go by. So it is kind of boring, work and sleep and then doing it all over again, but it helps keep—or pass the time.

RS: What was your impression of the people of Groton, Connecticut, where you were stationed?

MT: I think—I can't really speak from experience because that was my only base, but I think there is an amount of—I don't necessarily want to say hostility, but something along those lines—whenever there's a population near a military base because they have to deal with us in some aspect every day of their lives. And I mean, even if, you know, the majority of us are just doing normal things and not getting in any trouble or anything like that, they still see the the ones that go out there and mess something up, and that's their opinion of us basically. So, you know, some guy who goes out and gets a DUI or something like that, the town is not going to think highly of us because that's what they are going to see in the newspaper. So it is not like it is outwardly hostile, like you go around and people spit on your or something. But it is either everyone you see is military or they're civilians, and it is not like you really interact more than you need to, I guess.

RS: Did they thank you for your service in any way?

MT: Not usually.

RS: Just kind of saw you as—

MT: Just kind of there.

RS: I'm sure they thank you now. Were you allowed to stay in touch with your family and friends back home, and if so how and how often?

MT: Obviously I was stationed in Connecticut, so I wasn't very far, so when I was in port that was easy. But when you go out to sea, the only real communication you have is a program called Sailor Mail, and it is really crappy email basically, so being on a submarine again makes that a challenge. So whenever we'd come up to periscope depth, and we can get antennas and stuff out of the water, or if we surface for some reason, then we can start to exchange information. Obviously there's going to be important mission—like critical site things that we have to get on and off first, but if we have the time, they'll stay up, and they'll clear the buffer of Sailor Mail which just builds up every day because even if you're not sending it out, people will just sit there typing new ones or something like that. And same thing with the shore side, families will just keep sending them until it happens. So once they clear it, it is like emails everywhere. That's really it until you pull in overseas or something like that, and a lot of guys will buy like a local cell phone, like a cheap flip—

RS: Like a trac phone?

MT: Yeah, exactly, and every country they go to they'll buy a SIM card, and that's not very expensive. That's actually a really smart idea to do it. On my second deployment, I decided to activate global calling on my phone, and that was very expensive and not the smartest idea [*laughs*].

RS: You live, and you learn. All right, so it says on your biological [biographical] form that you worked as a sonar technician on base. What was your experience during your time on the submarines underwater? Do you have any stories to share about it? Say anything you want about being on a submarine.

MT: Let's see, I was a sonar technician. Operated and maintained all aspects of the sonar suite on the boat. Man, that's kind of a big question.

RS: Say anything you want.

MT: There's a lot that goes with it. I guess our basic job is for safety of ship really. So we're always listening, and basically whatever we hear in the ocean we have to detect, track, classify—is the order, I guess. But, you can hear like—obviously some of it is just fish. You'll hear a whale singing off in the distance or something like that, or a bunch of shrimp which are really annoying, or dolphins which are even more annoying. And so those are pretty easy to tell, but then you'll get other things where maybe you're not sure what it is exactly or clearly it's a boat, and any ship of any type—we track. And we make sure we know where they're going just in case—well, that's part of classifying it. You know, merchants [merchant marine ships] get paid to go in a straight line— get something somewhere as fast as they can, so that's easy. But then if something is moving around, then we know it might be something different, and that's what we look out for. Not only if we need to track something from another military but for safety of ship. If they're being erratic, we don't know if they might come at us or something like that—not realizing that we're under them. So, yeah, like I said sonar is really all about safety. And then at the same time, there's a lot I guess I can't really go too far into about tracking other countries' warships and stuff like that. That's really kind of like—safety is like the basis of our job, and that's the fun part, the mission, on-mission type stuff. And then there's a lot of maintenance that goes into it. A lot of not exciting maintenance that is very tedious and in very small places and stuff like that. So I liked it, I liked operating. You get to hear some cool stuff; you get to do some cool stuff, I guess. Lot of training, lots of maintenance.

RS: I don't think I could do that; I don't think I could survive on a submarine. Do you have any stories at all about a particular instance? Maybe you saw a big whale. Anything you want to share, one story?

MT: I guess I don't know. For me it doesn't sound like exciting stuff. I guess for someone else it might be a little better. On my first deployment as we were heading across the Atlantic, we had a whale follow us for like weeks, like the entire time. Well, not weeks, it only takes like two weeks to get across.

RS: Days? [laughs]

MT: Yeah, a few days. Every watch we came up he was right there, doing the same thing. I don't know, it was kind of cool. It was something that helped pass time, again, because you'd go on watch, and it is like, "Oh, where's the whale? Oh, I found him!" So, you know, kind of track him a little bit. I mean, there's not too many exciting stories that happen when you're not tracking something.

RS: Submarine life! [laughs] All right, so was there any rivalry with other branches of the military? On base, off base?

MT: My base is only a submarine base, and it is only really Navy. I think there was a small Army veterinarian post there, and I don't remember seeing anyone else really. But I don't think that—I can't speak on behalf of the other branches or even the rest of the Navy, but for our base I don't think it was really a thing, no real rivalry. We didn't see them also, so that might have helped. The most I could say on that is we did homecoming in Annapolis, Maryland, and so I was on the USS *Annapolis*, and we pulled into Annapolis for their homecoming football games and stuff like that. So, that's kind of like, you're at the Naval Academy. You know, Navy – Army is a big rivalry. I guess that's the closest it would've come to it. I don't know—really, I don't know if it is active. We all joke with each other, especially now with the Veteran's Group, we're all from different branches and stuff like that. We all joke with each other, but it is kind of—we're all going through a lot of similar stuff type deal.

RS: So there's really no more rivalry, it is just like, "You're Navy, that's cool. I'm Army. We did this and—"

MT: It is more of a sibling rivalry type deal.

RS: Okay, sibling rivalry. That's a better word for it. All right, so we're going to get into little more tough—I shouldn't say tough questions. Why do you feel that Americans went to war?

MT: Whew! Talking about like in 2001?

RS: Sure.

MT: Well, I'd say—I don't know if it is ideally or not, but we were attacked, so we went to find Osama bin Laden, and obviously that's how it started. And—I wouldn't say ended because it is still not over, but we did that, and it took a long time. Moving into Iraq, there's all kinds of stuff on that, and people associate it with oil and stuff like that. And then everyone says that, you know, we said he [*Saddam Hussein*] had WMDs, and we didn't find any. But in the same sense, he was a dictator, and I guess it depends on your definition of a WMD because I would think that chemical weapons that he used to kill thousands of his own people are probably a weapon of mass destruction. So I don't know if it is right or wrong, that's not my call, but I think that's part of the reason, I guess.

RS: All right, a little tough again. Do you agree with the reasoning behind the war, behind us going to Iraq?

MT: In the beginning?

RS: Why don't we start with the beginning or beginning verses now.

MT: Okay, I guess from my point of view, I don't know if that's how I rationalize it personally, but, I mean, I was fairly young at the time. I think I was like fourteen when we were attacked, and then not long after that we went into Iraq, too. So I don't know if that's kind of how I've rationalized it for myself or not. I think a lot of people say we're there for oil and stuff like that, and I know oil is definitely a valuable resource in the world today, but I don't know if it would really be worth it for how much money we spend fighting these wars to say it is just for oil or something like that. But I guess I agree with the things I may have rationalized. I mean, there's no way you could let Osama bin Laden get away, and his networks get away, with attacking us. And then moving into Iraq, like I said, at least he [*Saddam Hussein*] was a dictator, and we did depose him.

RS: All right. What are your views, if you have any, in regard to the media's views on the war? So how do you feel the media's representing it? Do you have any views?

MT: I think there are some things, there are some documentaries and stuff like that, that really don't get much attention that are probably the best aspect of the war. I feel like almost everything is anti-war for better or worse, but I feel like the media is actually really terrible about it. You only hear bad things in the media. You never see—hear any stories about the units that go over there, and their whole job is to go over there and rebuild infrastructure, build schools, and stuff like that. And even if you do, it is usually people saying we built them crappy schools or something like that—to try and get more oil, something along those lines. I don't really like the way the media does anything. It is only really bad things that they can sensationalize, and I don't think it is really a good thing to try and show war footage when they show dead Americans or dead anyone really. But when they're showing dead soldiers, that's inappropriate.

RS: I feel the same way. All right, so have you associated with the VA system, the Veterans' Affairs?

MT: Yes.

RS: How was your experience with that? Do you feel their treatment was good towards you, bad?

MT: I haven't done too much. I still need to go in and see them more. But as far—so there's the VA which I use for my school benefits, and then there's the VHA, the Veterans' Health Association. It is the same thing, but that one I am less familiar with. I've gone in, I got a

doctor, I waited way too long, and I finally got one. I just had my first appointment like a month or two ago, and I mean that went smoothly, I guess, but it is—I don't know.

RS: Do you feel you waited too long—well, like they made you wait too long?

MT: I waited on my own regardless. I probably should have gone in earlier and could have, but I don't know how the actual wait would have been. I'm waiting on an appointment right now. It is hard sometimes to work it with your schedule and their schedule, I guess, but you can't really blame that on anything.

RS: So you use it definitely more for school. Are they paying for your school?

MT: Yeah, the school benefits are really pretty awesome. They pay for my school, and they pay me money for housing, and I can still get grants and stuff like that, so it is cool. So that's actually really good, the education benefits. It can take a little while when you're first getting into the system, so my first semester I had to wait almost a month, a full month I think, to get my first payment. Which if you're not ready for that, and I don't think most people are, even if you hear there's a wait, there's no real way you can prepare for that. But after that, it is seamless really, so I don't have anything bad to say about that, I guess.

RS: Do you have an opinion on how the American government treats its veterans? Whether the Iraq War or any other war: WWII, Vietnam, Gulf War, Korea, etc?

MT: Well, I mean nothing good can be said about how they were treated with Vietnam. And I think that the government could've done a lot there that wasn't done, but I think that was a lot of the part on the American people also. For WWI, WWII type things, I mean even back to the Civil War, when they started trying to take care of Americans really, there were things put in place, but I don't know. It was a different time, so you can't compare any of that. The GI Bill came around after WWII, and again it was a different time. But now people are paying attention to things like PTSD, where back then it would be, you know, shell shock or battle fatigue or something. It was just like, "You'll get over it. Get back to work" kind of deal. Now, I don't know, it is kind of a big question in the sense that government varies so much, state to state, federal—that there are a lot of places and people that are trying to do really good things, and some of those are pretty awesome, but then again there are people who make sweeping generalizations and ignorant comments and things like that. And that's not helping anyone really.

RS: So you feel that if people were more educated they would accept it?

MT: Yeah, you can say that for most topics really.

RS: All right, so did your experience serving on the base and on the submarines, all of that, alter your perception of the military as a whole?

MT: I'd say yeah. I mean, I don't think you can actually serve in the military and not come out with an altered perception of it to some aspect. I think a lot of it depends on you again just like some of the questions earlier, and it depends on how well you take to the military. You don't have to love every second of it to have a change, but some guys went in, and I don't know what they were expecting, but they found that they did not like the military, and I'm sure they came out with a lot worse opinion of it than I did. You kind of make it harder for yourself if you don't work within the system, I guess.

RS: All right, so the final segment. What made you decide to go to Salem State University or Salem after serving?

MT: It was actually really, really just a random choice. I wanted to come closer to Boston. I guess going to high school in western Mass was all right, but I didn't really want to go back there right away. I wanted to get closer to Boston; I'd been coming into Boston while I was in on the weekends when I could get away from the boat and stuff like that—with my friends for a while. So I wanted to be closer to here. And I went online to look at the benefits offered by the GI Bill, and really it came down to money also because they offered the same amount to live in Salem as they do in Boston which is obviously pretty good.

RS: So it said on your biological [*biographical*] form that you wanted to do law enforcement. Did that alter your decision as well to come here because we have a pretty good Criminal Justice program?

MT: Honestly, that probably should have, but it didn't have anything to do with that decision [*laughs*].

RS: Okay, that was just a quick question. All right, what was the most difficult aspect of the transition to college life if you can think of any?

MT: I guess it is really a different experience. The military kind of makes you grow up quickly. I've been living on my own since after high school, immediately after high school, where, you know, I had to take care of myself and be an adult, make sure I was getting to work, getting my work done, go home and make sure I was getting taken care of there, too, and I was dealing with all of these different things. I lived off base for a time, and I had to pay rent, and I paid bills—stuff like that, all the normal—just like normal adult life. But then I came back to college, and I'm here with people who are coming literally just out of high school, and it is just like—hearing some people's problems and stuff like that really just doesn't even make sense, but I guess I can't blame them because they're normal. I'm abnormal in this situation.

RS: I don't think anyone is normal. All right, did you have any close friends during your time on the Naval base? Like specific friends? Did you want to compare your relationship with them that compares with friends and family from home? Anything you want to say about that?

MT: The military, like I said, you make really different and kind of close bonds with people. I made some really good friends. Some of them are still in Connecticut, and some of them have moved around the country and stuff like that. One of my real good friends is in Virginia now. I guess the difference would be—I guess the difference would be—I guess you kind of are more equipped to handle, it sounds bad, but you're more equipped to handle the distance relationship of a friendship because people move around, and you're used to losing people all the time, but it is staying in some sort of contact, you know, if you were close with them. So you kind of accept that you won't see each other for a while if you're not stationed with each other for anymore, but you kind of almost go out of your way when you get the opportunity to make sure you can see them or something like that. I drove out to my buddy's wedding in Ohio when I got out of the Navy which was kind of a crappy drive, but it worked out.

RS: Hey, it is another place to go. Ohio! All right, would you serve in the Navy again if given the chance or in any other branch? Why or why not?

MT: Yeah, I think that in a lot of the ways made me who I am today, I guess. I think highly of service. It is kind of hard to say, but in hindsight I'm pretty sure, you know, I always respected people who were in the military. I didn't know too many, like I said, it wasn't in my family that much, but I respect it. I respect my other veterans at school and everywhere that went and served, and I think that's a good thing. It helps you grow up. It shows you the world in an aspect. Not literally, just because you travel some, but you meet people from all over the country—all kinds of different people. It just helps you grow.

RS: I like that. All right, how do you view the other students at SSU?

MT: Other vets? Everyone?

RS: Other students straight out of high school. They have problems—[*different*] than you had.

MT: I mean, I can't say anything bad about them. But at this point, I come out of the military, like I said, I was living my own adult life. That could've been my career if that's the way I wanted it to go. And I come back, and now I'm in the same classes as like eighteen year olds who just came out of high school, and it is just a weird setting. Like you said and I said, we all have different problems and priorities—things like that in life, and we come into a class and, you know, it is just a weird interaction, I guess. And then you meet—a lot of people are somewhat ignorant on things that are, you know, going on—going on with the war and going on with the military and stuff like that, and sometimes you get some questions, and sometimes you get some inappropriate questions or something like that. It is just a weird interaction, I guess. I mean, you get used to it, and a lot of people are perfectly fine, but I guess you only remember the ones that rub the wrong way, I guess.

RS: What about Salem State University veterans, do you get along with them a lot better?

MT: Yeah, I think that veterans are inclined to get along with each other well in the sense that, you know, we've all done something similar to some extent. And coming and being part of the Veteran's Group and stuff like that, I've learned that even though we all had entirely different jobs, and we were all in different branches, a lot of our experiences are very similar. So it is easy to get along with that, and most of us are older than the other students, so that's another bonding point, I guess. And Salem State actually has a really good veterans' community which was kind of random and kind of a good benefit of coming here. It is not very old, but it is getting established well, and we're kind of doing big things, I guess.

RS: All right. If you had anything to say to the SSU students, whether they're making a comment or not, would you say anything to them? Do you have anything to say to them or to the community? Is that a good question; is that understandable?

MT: Like what I would say? Do I have something to say through this?

RS: We can do that last. If someone came up to you and said something, or like what would you say to them if they asked you what was your best experience or what was it like?

MT: I mean I try to answer questions. I mean, like I said, lots of people are ignorant of what goes on in the military. How it really is. And I know Professor Darien knows that we would get into some of these discussions in classes, same with the other Learning Community teachers, and that can take an entire class up quick. I try to inform people, anything they ask and stuff like that, try to be open about things just to help them understand how it works. Did I answer that right? Is that what you wanted? *[laughs]*

RS: No, that's perfectly fine. Answer as much as you want. So the Learning Community you mentioned—I knew about this before because he's my professor, and he told us, but has being part of that Learning Community class helped you here at all?

MT: I think it was actually really good because that really started at the same time as, like I said, the Veterans' Group was really kind of rebounding, I guess. And we kind of just worked together, and now most of us from that learning group are in the other one, and we work with each other well. It was a good experience, and we've talked about—I'd be fine if I did it over again in taking it the same way, but we talked about, you know, what could be improved, what couldn't be. But it is good to come in, at least in the beginning, in that awkward time when it is like, ugh, these are all eighteen and nineteen year olds and have a class where it is all veterans, and you can go in there and see what's working and what's not working kind of.

RS: Would you recommend that class for other veterans that are coming here? Kind of take them under your wing?

MT: Yes. I think it was a good experience, and it knocks out classes that you need to take regardless, so I'd say why not?

RS: Why not? The core is difficult. All right, so is there anything else you wanted to talk about that you haven't mentioned? Any stories, observations, anything you want to put on the record for the camera to say to SSU, the students, the faculty, anyone here?

MT: There's not that much I can think of off the top of my head. Like I said, though, the school has been really good towards us as a Veterans' Group, veterans' community, with a lot of different things like the learning community program and stuff like that. The Veterans' Group is doing a lot of good things, and we're growing and doing good things; so it is a good place right now to be a student veteran. So things are working out in that aspect, I guess. I think that's all I've got.

RS: All right. Well, that's all I've got. Thank you very much for doing this.