

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

**Jenkins, Joshua**

U.S. Navy, Hospital Corpsman E5

*Interviewer:*

Interview conducted by Mr. Kevin Ash, Salem State University, on 4/2/2018

*Summary of transcript:*

Joshua Jenkins, originally of New England, took a collegiate path in history before joining the Navy at age 30. Joshua talks about his unorthodox childhood being homeschooled in New Hampshire, and how it presented unique opportunities for him. He graduated from Gordon University with a history degree in 2004 and, after joining the military, Joshua became a Navy Hospital Corpsman specializing in environmental health. He was originally going to be stationed in New Jersey, but ended up spending his military career in Hawaii. Joshua served in a non-combatant role, and provides insight into the diverse roles of military personnel. Joshua talks about how being stationed near Pearl Harbor influenced his decision to pursue a Museum Studies graduate program at Salem State after leaving the Navy.

Joshua Jenkins

Narrator

Kevin Ash

Salem State University

Interviewer

April 2nd, 2018

at Salem State University

Salem, Massachusetts

Kevin Ash: Hello there. Good morning. This is April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Monday. My name is Kevin Ash and I'll be interviewing Joshua Jenkins from the US Navy about his experiences as a sailor in- I think your deployment was 2013 to just until January 2018 right?

Joshua Jenkins: Career not deployment, but yes.

KA: Yeah excuse me, misspoken.

JJ: Correct, correct.

KA: And yeah, I'm ready to get started. You ready to go?

JJ: Always ready, as we say.

KA: [laughs] So, I wanted to start off with a little bit of early life. What was it like in your hometown where you grew up?

JJ: Sure. So, hometown is a bit of a misnomer for me.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Moved around a lot, pretty much always in the same area grew up around the same group of friends, but from the time of about 12 on, never spent more than two years in the same house.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Usually a year, sometimes less. So a lot of that was in New Hampshire, where I grew up. Like I said, same group of friends, grew up in the same church. I was home schooled so wasn't a lot of moving schools, but which was beneficial in a lot of ways. But it was small town New

England. You know, pretty much everybody knew everybody if not by name, at least by face. So, it was kind of what you grew up with.

KA: So yeah, that's interesting. So, you were home schooled all the way through?

JJ: 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade I was home schooled. So right in that moving around time.

KA: Now that was- that must have been an interesting experience though, like I mean home school. I know personally a friend of mine who was home schooled and he had a wildly different schooling experience, especially in middle school. But you still managed to make and keep your friends and all that stuff?

JJ: Yeah I mean every talks about, you know, oh home schooled, you're just huddled in your home and you never make friends, and you never see anyone, and it's not at all the case. Yes, we're not around a group of friends for 8 to 10 hours a day.

KA: Now did you have an instructor that came to your house or were your parents in charge of your home schooling?

JJ: So the way it worked for my family- I have two sisters, both younger.

KA: Were they home schooled as well?

JJ: Yes.

KA: Oh wow.

JJ: During that same time period-

KA: Sure.

JJ: And- or the one was because one's a year and a half younger than me, and the other was eight years-

KA: Okay.

JJ: So, but the younger one obviously wasn't really schooling well, I was for the most part, but the younger one was very different. She has a learning disability, so there was a lot of focus by mostly my mother, my father was working, and I was a lot of just on my own because I didn't really need the help. So that was kind of the advantage of home school is, part of the reason I home schooled is, I was already academically faster than most of my classmates. I was in public school for elementary school, and I'd be finishing the curriculum before Christmas.

KA: Right.

JJ: Just kind of like so now what? So home schooling allowed me to kind of push harder and pursue courses and topics, even in junior high, that I wouldn't of if I was in public school. I would have been sitting there, spinning in a chair, possibly getting in trouble just because of

boredom, possibly getting into trouble just because of acting out out of nothing to do. So, home schooling allowed me to do that. It allowed me to spend more time in the woods-

KA: Sure.

JJ: You know, in New Hampshire-

KA: Right.

JJ: I really loved doing that so-

KA: Quite a lot of woods in New Hampshire.

JJ: There's definitely that. And we were very social, I mean there was home school groups we'd be part of. We'd take classes, some of the more advanced ones together. There'd be a group of ten home schoolers in 8<sup>th</sup> grade doing Spanish together, you know. So it was things like that. So there were definitely- home schooling is not any less social than public schooling. In some ways it's actually more because you're choosing to spend time around the people you're spending time with, so.

KA: That's a very good point, yeah.

JJ: But yeah. That was, like I said, growing up for me home schooling was a lot better.

KA: And then you moved on towards a pretty small high school from what I understand, right? Something like 50 students give or take 9 to 12<sup>th</sup> [grade].

JJ: Right. There were 60 total if you include the part-time students.

KA: Wow, that is small. That's about as small as they get.

JJ: It is. It was a private school, so.

KA: Sure. I would have to imagine.

JJ: Well the town that I was primarily in high school didn't have its own high school. It was one of those extremely small New England towns-

KA: [laughs] Oh, sure okay.

JJ: So anybody of high school age in that town went to one of three area high schools, or any private school or whatnot. So again, having moved around a lot being in a private school didn't affect as often as we were moving because it was a private school anyway, so everybody was driving and there were no busses to the school.

KA: Sure. And so was there, like, I know you said that it's obviously very still social being home schooled, and I assume you stayed social during high school, but going up to the college level eventually you went to Gordon- what, 2004, I want to say?

JJ: Sure.

KA: Was there like a big, like- was it really different going to a school that was that much bigger, not that Gordon is an enormous college but certainly bigger than your high school or probably the circles that you ran with in home school?

JJ: Sure. So Gordon actually was my third college-

KA: Oh, really?

JJ: -and the one I eventually graduated from.

KA: Okay.

JJ: I went to a small school. It was twelve hundred students out in Michigan.

KA: Okay.

JJ: So again, by college standards it was tiny. But certainly an upgrade from high school.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: And I went to a community college in between, and then eventually went to Gordon and graduated from Gordon.

KA: Oh, okay.

JJ: So, in a sense, the fact it was a smaller college was easier you could say. Both the college in Michigan and Gordon College are both insular campuses, meaning they're not spread out like Boston University or Berkeley. It's one campus, one school.

KA: Much like Salem State.

JJ: Even more so. I mean Salem State, you're in the town, you know. One side is Salem State, one side is town businesses. This is literally the streets on these campuses were just the college.

KA: Sure.

JJ: So in that sense it kind of fostered that smaller community as well, especially at Gordon. Everybody knew everybody. At least knew of, if they didn't know personally.

KA: Yeah, I know a guy who knows a guy, yeah.

JJ: There'd be times, you know, again at six three and 200 plus pounds.

KA: You're telling me. [laughs]

JJ: And I was- my nickname on campus was cowboy because I wore the boots, the hat, the whole deal. And you know, northern Massachusetts at six three with a cowboy hat and boots walking around, you don't blend in.

KA: No, no.

JJ: So there'd be times even walking around campus if my father was visiting, since we lived only an hour away, somebody would be walking by and they'd be like, "Oh hey cowboy" "Oh hey, what's going on?" My dad, "Who's that?" "I have no idea, dad." But it was just the nature of the campus, so you just kinda rolled with it.

KA: Very cool.

JJ: But yeah, it certainly made it, the social aspect of it, wasn't any tougher than it would have been- public school or not. At least for me.

KA: So, at what point did you feel like you were going to enlist in the armed forces? When did that happen, during college or was this a much earlier life thing? I know you had family members in the service as well.

JJ: Right so, like with most of my life and jokes with some of my friends, there's no easy answer.

KA: Oh, sure.

JJ: To anything. But then again that's humanity- [inaudible, both speaking] So, definitely had always wanted to join the Navy. It was really only the Navy for me.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Looked at the coast guard a little bit, too. Navy light, as many of the jokes go-

KA: Yeah I was just thinking.

JJ: But I never really considered, definitely never considered the Army or Marines. Which was never against them, I just knew it wasn't a culture that I would fit into well. Looked at the Air Force a little bit, but I still didn't really pursue that side of it. Don't know exactly, somewhere in my teenage years, I started to think about it seriously. As you mentioned, there's a large family history. One of those family legends is that we have a member of the military in every single generation since the start of the country, and we are related to John Adams, John Quincy Adams. So there is some potential truth-

KA: Legacies on legacies-

JJ: There is some potential truth to that family legend, but nobody's ever sat down and actually taken a census and looked at military records all the way through. So at some point that's on my my bucket list, if you will, is to try to prove that or I guess disprove that legend, but it's a fun legend. So all the way through, I thought about it. High school obviously you're starting to think about what do I do after high school, what do I do at military college, trade school, get a job, all of those different options. And I definitely thought long and hard about the Navy, looked into it a little bit and for a bunch of reasons, both valid and excuses, I never did.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And interestingly, of course I graduated high school 2001 and, June 2001, which had I left for boot camp right away means I would of left boot camp August 2001 to roll right into big Navy September 2001.

KA: That would have been an interesting time.

JJ: And as we all know certain things happened in the US in September of 2001 that certainly would have made it interesting to have joined and trained in peace time, and then immediately get to my command at war, or at least the specter of war even if we did not know exactly at that point. So in some ways I'm glad I didn't. Of course the patriotic side of me wishes that I had, but I don't regret the fact that I waited. I certainly accomplished a lot in the meantime, failed a lot in the meantime, but got to know myself a lot better. And I think that having waited until I was 30, which was when I finally joined, I was ready for the mental aspect of the military.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Just because of my own background, not to say that these 18 to 20 year old kids that join aren't ready, because a lot of them are or they get ready in boot camp real fast. But for me, I don't know that I could have handled the mental pressure of boot camp and getting ready for the military. The physical part would have been easier than thirty years old and academic then rolling into the military, but the mind games that boot camp needs I don't think I could of handled ten years earlier. Because boot camp, of course, is they have to break the individual to form a collective.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Because the military can't function on individuals. It just won't. Individuals are important, but if you don't act as a unit, you will fail.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: So a large part of boot camp is removing the individual citizen mindset, and giving the collective citizen mindset.

KA: Sure.

JJ: I will still say citizen is still important. You're still recognized as a citizen, but you have to mold that unit. At some point everybody breaks at boot camp. Some people break first day, some it's, you know, five weeks in they'll finally break. But I think I would of broken, and not in a positive way.

KA: Sure.

JJ: If I had gone right after high school.

KA: Right.

JJ: Whereas the breaking that needed to happen when I was 30 allowed me to stay in and start to form a collective, so that's a big difference.

KA: That's good. Boot camp is definitely a trying experience from every account.

JJ: [laughs] It is that.

KA: Is there- so your boot camp experience, I mean you speak of it mostly positively especially given the fact that you went when you felt like you were really ready, is there anything that you would have changed about the way boot camp was conducted? Do you feel like there's anything that could be like updated or maybe that they pushed a little too hard on, or anything like that or do you really feel like that they had it down to a science?

JJ: I definitely do think they have it to a science because its working, but everybody has their things they hate about boot camp.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Some of those are more valid then others. You know, I certainly would have enjoyed more sleep than given.

KA: [laughs]

JJ: But then again, that's part of that breaking. If you can't handle the pressure of not sleeping in boot camp, you're not going to be able to handle it in real time scenarios. So, you know, the big thing about boot camp is, of course, they reassure parents, "Oh no, there's definitely eight hours for bed that you're given." Well, what they don't tell you is that those eight hours is from lights out to be on the line ready to be inspected. So realistically, if you're lucky, you're maybe getting six hours of actual sleep.

KA: Because you have to get to bed, but then you also have to get up and get ready.

JJ: Get up, shave, get ready, the whole thing and that's you know 80 guys trying to get ready with six or seven sinks. [laughs] So you kind of have to learn how to work together, and usually you'll see two or three guys at a sink shaving just because everybody's trying to get ready, get moving, and get in line before the instructors come in because, lord knows, if you're not ready you're getting ready to do some early morning calisthenics shall we say.

KA: [laughing] Yeah.

JJ: And nobody wants to do any more than you already have to, so there's definitely that aspect to it. But you know, like I said, the way it seems to be working and they do evaluate constantly.

You know every once in a while you hear about, you know, new initiatives that go through boot camp trying to trying to fix, solve, alleviate issues because things will come up.

KA: Yeah absolutely.

JJ: You know, just recently they just started putting in more technology into boot camp because they're realizing that most kids coming in are growing up on Xbox and computers and technology and cell phones, and so the old here's a book and a notebook form isn't working for 90 percent of those coming through boot camp. Except for the old men like me that join at thirty that remember the times before home computers. But no, I mean as a whole the biggest thing was that the Navy, is all I can speak to as far as boot camp goes, they do evaluate constantly. What do we need to fix? What do we need to update? What is good? You know, complaints are looked at. Sometimes complaints are just complaints. I wish I had more time to eat.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: Don't we all. But again, a lot of it comes down to if you can't handle short time pressure situations, you're not going to be able to handle being in a potential war. You're not going to be able to support the man or woman on the left or right of you when it comes down to battle, so there's a reason to the process and you kind of have to trust that process to work out.

KA: I hear that a lot, trust the process, with boot camp. Yeah. It's a very, I think that's a very expressed sentiment for most people that have gone through it. So, you ended up being a hospital corpsman correct?

JJ: Correct.

KA: When did you pick your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], or was it assigned to you during boot camp or did you know right from the outset when you enlisted? How exactly did that work? How did you end up with your MOS?

JJ: Sure. So MOS is an Army term.

KA: Oh, is it? Well I apologize.

JJ: No, it's fine. We get it all the time. RATE-

KA: RATE.

JJ: -is what the Navy uses. It's the same, means the same thing. Terminology 101.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: It's also a great way that you can tell, and I'm not going to go too much into the whole stolen valor issue-

KA: [laughs]

JJ: -but if you have a guy in a sailor uniform talking about his MOS.

KA: Ah, I see. Okay.

JJ: There's a pretty good chance that he doesn't know what he's talking about. Anyway, I digress. So, when I chose my RATE you go through the whole process- the MEPS, it's called, military entrance processing station and it's about a day and a half to two days of examinations. Physical, mental, psychological, financial, anything you could possibly look at. They fine tooth comb your life.

KA: As much information on you as they can.

JJ: To really, to find any reason that you should not be in the military.

KA: Okay.

JJ: And that sounds like a harsh way to say it, but better find out now in the process than, you know, sometime after boot camp or whatnot. So, you go through and take the ASVAB, which is essentially the SAT for the military. Much harsher than the SAT, I will put it that way. It's a lot tougher but it's effectively the same thing. You get a score on that, and then your score determines both what branches you qualify for because every branch has a certain minimum. So that's important, and then after that your score can qualify you or disqualify you from certain jobs.

KA: Okay.

JJ: Again, because the collective idea of the SAT and the ASVAB is the higher the score the more intelligent you are. Now they do look at the certain aspects. People who score at spatial reasoning higher than verbal, they take that into consideration, too, but at least as a collective whole. So, once you get your score, they go okay here's everything you qualify for that we need right now. Because the Navy doesn't need every single job all the time.

KA: Makes sense.

JJ: Because people are getting out, separating, retiring, et cetera. They need to fill those jobs just like the civilian world. You know, if you have ten cooks and one dishwasher, you don't need to hire anymore cooks. You need to hire dishwashers. It's a crude example but effective. So got my list of here's what I qualify for. In another quirk of that list, is certain jobs they need faster.

KA: Okay.

JJ: So, if they need an MA, master of arms, basically the Navy's police, they might need a MA in the next month. So you leave for boot camp in the next month. They might need another corpsman in four months, so you're not leaving for another four months.

KA: Okay.

JJ: And so that kind of plays a part. How quickly do you want to leave, versus how important is the job you get. So, for me, it was a combination of both of those things. When I got my list of jobs there were basically two that they were trying to push me to get. One was a MA, and of course that's why I use that term, and the MA, master of arms, position was leaving in two weeks.

KA: Oh, very soon.

JJ: You can get right out of here. The downside for me is it was a reservist position and that's fine, and there's nothing wrong with reservists. I am one now, but reservist means I go to boot camp for eight weeks, MA school for however long that is, I want to say that's six months I could be wrong, but you know within six months I'm back home again with no job and I'm back in the same situation I am. A reserved position does nothing for me. Corpsman was a position that was open but it wasn't leaving for another, I think, six months.

KA: Okay.

JJ: Which wasn't ideal, but at least it was an active position. And I had been casually looking at nursing school anyway, so it was something I at least had some interest in doing. Unfortunately, there is no Navy historian positions because that's something I would have preferred to do.

KA: Sign me right up, right?

JJ: Exactly but that is certainly nothing that was going to come straight out of boot camp. So I realized okay, what's the next on the list and, like I said, going into nursing school. All right, well I already have an interest in this medical profession so sure let's do corpsman. Sounds good. Sign on the line and do the thing.

KA: Very cool, very cool. So what was the specific nature of your RATE? I know that corpsman, it's kind of a broad term for pretty much every doc, right?

JJ: Sure.

KA: [inaudible, both speaking] So what exactly did you do?

JJ: So, the nature of a corpsman is- I usually describe it to people who have no idea what a corpsman is, because they hear like, "Oh a medic?" But even a medic, what does that really mean?

KA: That is even vaguer I would think.

JJ: Yes. So a hospital corpsman is one part EMT and one part licensed practicing nurse. That's actually the two different trainings we get. We actually have the option to become a civilian EMT. We'd actually do the physical training, the hands-on training, as part of our military training, and if we want we can sign up with any fire department that offers the written test and the Navy will pay for the written tests and we're actually civilian certified.

KA: That's very cool.

JJ: The Navy doesn't provide the test, but they will pay for it. So, it isn't something I wanted to do but just for the sake of knowledge it is something they can do. And then the LPN part again it is the same training, roughly equivalent, but at current time we do not get the civilian certification. So, if a corpsman left the Navy and wanted to become a nurse, in almost every state they would have to go through school like they were any other high schooler coming out and wanting to go into nursing. Or any other person, I shouldn't just say high schooler. Their years of military medical training would mean basically nothing on paper.

KA: That's interesting.

JJ: There's one state that does allow a transfer, and I can't remember what state it is so I'm not going to say anything, but it basically says if you bring in your corpsman credentials with a good recommendation they'll turn around and hand you your nursing license. And then in a different state will let you take the nursing exam. So you still have to take the exam to prove you have the head knowledge and then they'll give it, and a lot of other states have been looking at doing that, at least providing the exam because-

KA: -it makes sense that they would.

JJ: -as one state's governor, I can't remember again which one said it that is, what's the effect to have been people who have been doing this job with bullets flying over their head, and now they have to come back to a classroom to prove they can do it."

KA: Yeah sums it up very well.

JJ: So there's that aspect. So, in general, a corpsman is an EMT and a nurse.

KA: Okay.

JJ: Not a registered nurse. We're not that level of training, but that next step down. So for me, I went into a specialty, which was preventive medicine.

KA: Okay.

JJ: Another way of saying preventive medicine is public health.

KA: Cool.

JJ: So that basically trickles down to we manage immunizations. We manage environmental health things like sanitation, inspections, pest control, climate control, water testing, as well as epidemiology, disease research, surveillance. We are effectively known as the STD guys.

KA: [laughs] That's good.

JJ: And the stories that I could tell would make pretty much any hardened medical professional terrified, because Marines. No, I love my Marines, but they get the stereotype for a reason. I'll just put it that way. [laughs]

KA: [laughing] Okay. okay. Without incriminating anyone.

JJ: Without insulting a large group of people.

KA: Sure. Sure. So, without incriminating those people, what was an average day like for you?

JJ: Sure. So most of my time that I spent in, I was focused on the environmental health side.

KA: Okay.

JJ: So inspections, pest control, things of that nature. So, a general day for me, I mean again in the military just as in civilian life an average day can mean so many things. But usually it meant once I mustered in, and it's not a condiment, that means we had to muster and basically accountability for the day. We go through, you know, emails, normal office kind of work. Get caught up on whatever you need to do and then prep out to do inspections. So we might be inspecting food facilities. We might be inspecting barracks. We might be inspecting swimming pools that are on base and these are all military properties that we're inspecting.

KA: Sure.

JJ: So depending on that day it might be anywhere from four to nine inspections, depending on what we're doing and how long they all take. Swimming pools might take 20 minutes to do. A barracks inspection might take an hour. A food facility that's really bad might take an hour and a half to go through everything. So it just obviously depends on time and of course traveling between facilities because in Hawaii, on Oahu, we are responsible for 255 facilities.

KA: Wow.

JJ: Some of those were monthly inspections, and some were annual inspections and everything in between. So it wasn't 255 inspections every month, because we'd lose our mind.

KA: Yeah, I can imagine.

JJ: It was probably pretty close to 30 inspections a month, I would say, including all the annuals that would fall on that month or semi annuals, things of that nature. So, part of the day would be inspections. In Hawaii, I was also responsible for our mosquito surveillance. Obviously with a lot of diseases coming through Hawaii from Australia and Asia, Hawaii being a major entry point for the US from the Pacific, we obviously want to make sure that diseases aren't coming in along with all those people and certainly mosquito borne diseases are a major concern. So a big part of my day would be setting out mosquito traps, or collecting them 24 hours later. A real fun part of my day might include having to identify these mosquitoes.

KA: Really?

JJ: After we put them in a freezer to humanely and efficiently kill them, no polite way of saying it, because obviously we can't smash them because we need to actually then to look at them, and we identify mosquitoes by species and gender. Until you've tried to identify the gender of a mosquito, you've not lived a full life.

KA: [laughs]

JJ: But there's different ways you can do that. It's not like trying to lift a mosquito leg and determine. It's just like other animals. It's based on coloration, it's based on patterns and mosquitos, like other animal species, are pretty consistent with patterns and you can kind of tell from there. But it does mean looking at a microscope at anywhere from hundreds to thousands of mosquitoes over the course of a month trying to determine what species carry what diseases? Do we have those species that we're concerned about? That kind of thing. So the job can get extremely tedious very quickly, but it's also fascinating at the same time.

KA: Yeah it sounds pretty- like I understand how it could get tedious but it does sound pretty fascinating. Entomology has always been really interesting to me. So your form mentioned that you got promoted a couple times pretty quickly, right?

JJ: Yes.

KA: Did your responsibilities change across your promotions or was it pretty much just, like, just a higher rank but same basic idea of the job?

JJ: Sure. So your responsibilities do shift slightly. My second promotion was just before I left the military, or left active duty I should say. So as far as that would of meant on a day to day, it would have been a big shift but I don't have any personal experience of that shift because, as I said, I separated.

KA: I see.

JJ: Usually when you go to the rank that I am currently, you go from less of a day to day work to more of a supervisory role. So you do still do the day to day work, but you're also responsible for two, three, four, or more sailors underneath you making sure they're doing their work, whatever they need, along with our basic paperwork and anything we need for kind of our daily life along with the military job. So, there is that shift and change, too.

KA: Okay. Sure. So I have on your form that you were stationed first in Fort Sam Huston for a little while-

JJ: Correct.

KA: And then pretty much for the rest of your employment, not deployment, employment-

JJ: -employment, yes we can go with employment.

KA: That's works. You were at Pearl Harbor. So, well I do really want to get to Pearl Harbor, because I'm sure you have plenty to say about it as a history student.

JJ: It's a thing.

KA: Yeah. [laughs] I first really want to talk quickly about Fort Sam Huston and what your time was like there.

JJ: Sure. So Fort Sam Huston is now the training command for all of military medicine.

KA: Okay.

JJ: Army, Air Force, Navy.

KA: So, you were there with soldiers and air men and everyone?

JJ: Correct. So, as you may have heard, and anybody else who does listen to what I just said it's Army, Air Force, and Navy. Kind of another branch in there that's usually commonly said.

KA: Yeah since you mention it.

JJ: Marines don't have a medical unit.

KA: Really?

JJ: Because Navy corpsman are the Marines' medical unit.

KA: I did not know that.

JJ: So that is the difference. So, when you hear the term doc, is often ascribed to a Navy corpsman, that is usually Marines refer to the Navy corpsman as doc. And it is something that, of course, every military has their sense of pride, every unit, every branch, et cetera.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: For Navy corpsman, a Marine calling you doc is a big deal. Because it's also a sign of respect. Because if a Marine doesn't know any better, or for that matter if you've lost the respect for whatever reason of your Marines, they'll just call you corpsman. It's not wrong, it's not disrespectful.

KA: Sure.

JJ: It's just you lost the familiarity that respect breeds. Whereas if your called doc, you've gained that Marines trust. Most Marines will default to doc because they will assume, as long as they have had good docs previously, that any new corpsman that comes in is just as good as the ones they've had. But you can very quickly lose that term doc if you show that you don't care, you don't know how to do your job. You know, care and respect obviously is a big deal especially with Marines and especially with the sometimes sensitive nature of being on the

medical side. You know, making a mistake never good but if you maintain that respect of the Marine, they'll often kind of overlook your minor glitches.

KA: Sure.

JJ: So being a doc is a big deal. And being in Texas, San Antonio is where Fort Sam Huston is located. Initially for a corpsman the training is four months. It's about a month of that EMT side, and then three months of the nursing side. Learning how to not just do the emergency portion, but even the care taking because yes, combat deployments are a major part of the military, but you're not always in combat and very few units, comparatively speaking, are actually engaged in combat.

KA: Right.

JJ: So, a lot of the time is just making sure, hey did anybody get sick? Has anybody been injured? Has anybody just needs a routine health and care? So a lot of being a corpsman is just making sure the basics are covered for however many sailors are under you. That could be hundreds of sailors depending on the situation. So that's, again, a lot of work even if it's routine. So Fort Sam, like I said, four months of corpsman training and then my specialty preventive medicine is one of the longest specialties in Navy medicine and that is just about six months.

KA: Wow.

JJ: There are two other trainings which are longer, and then another that's also six months so we're right in there with the longest time. So I spent almost a year just in training alone, and then due to waiting for my actual command I spent roughly two months in Fort Sam Huston just in transition.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And the way that looked for us was actually two sides to that story. Typically if you're in transition in a military unit, especially coming out of a training command, you are effectively put on cleaning detail. Now, not a whole lot to clean everyday, all day.

KA: Right.

JJ: So that often involves frequent mustering. It's basically like taking attendance, so everybody shows up every few hours, gets into formation, make sure everybody's here that's supposed to be here and then you go back to cleaning parking lots, cleaning rooms, cleaning buildings, whatever it is. There's a lot of physical training that happens because it's like, well we now need to wait another hour before we can release you for the day, so we're all gonna go on a run or we're gonna go over to the gym or whatever it is. So, when I left preventive medicine training, I was in hold. You don't know how long you're going to be in hold.

KA: Oh, that's great.

JJ: You could be in hold three days, you could be in hold two months. You never really know until you get orders. I spent, like I said, almost two months in hold. My second day of hold, I went to the lieutenant of my program, preventive medicine, and went, "Sir is there anything I can do? Can I sit in classes again and at least relearn everything, continue to freshen up?"

JJ: You know, even if not my skills, at least the knowledge. Because if I have to sit here and push a broom for eight hours a day, for who knows how many days, I'm going to go crazy, bottom line. And he certainly laughed and understood, and as it so happened the hospital that was attached to the command, which was run by the Army, they also have preventive medicine technicians as well. Different term, but same idea. But they were actually looking for help with their inspections. They were short staffed just in between their own rotations for the Army.

KA: Sure. Sure.

JJ: And they were supposed to have, like, 12 soldiers in their department and they had two.

KA: Wow.

JJ: So, they were really running behind-

KA: Wow, understaffed is a little bit of an understatement.

JJ: -which it's, that's military life for you. Unfortunately, it tends to be a little bit understaffed most of the time. But we all make do. We make it work. So, the Army had just called the instructors office, just asking if a couple instructors could come and help even a day a week. Just something to help them kind of get caught up.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: Conveniently, I roll into his office and say "Sir is there anything I can do? I got to do something." And he called over to the Army office and said, you know, we have new preventive medicine techs. They are techs. They've graduated. They're fully techs, but they have very little real world experience. But if you like them, they're here and they can certainly be of help and the Army thought that was great. Like, they're trained, they know what they're doing, they just haven't done much of it in real terms.

KA: Get him over here.

JJ: Having us at least be there and maybe asking a lot of questions was still beneficial to them because it helped spread them out a little bit more, too.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: So instead of spending two months pushing a broom eight hours a day, I was actually out doing inspections. I was doing my job. I was learning the forms, learning the procedures-

KA: -that's cool, that's fortunate-

JJ: -which helped when I actually got to Pearl Harbor. Yes, I was new out of training, but I actually had just spent the better part of two months doing the job.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Which was better than some individuals that had come out of training, straight from training to the job. Not that they didn't know the job, but again having that extra experience helps going into the real- [inaudible, both speaking]

KA: I can imagine. Especially if you think about it, it's almost like having like, a four month difference given that you didn't also have to just push a broom for two months, so you had, you know, it's like you had literally just graduated like you still had all the knowledge fresh.

JJ: And that's what happened. We would check in the first formation in the morning, and then you would go over to the hospital and you're just at the hospital until we were done. So, definitely was a lot better the pushing a broom.

KA: Yeah. So how was it at Pearl Harbor in that RATE, division?

JJ: [laughing]

KA: I can't remember the exact title. Could you-

JJ: It's okay. You can always just say job.

KA: I was gonna say public health division, but I'm like that's not really quite what it is, that's just what he compared it to.

JJ: It's fine. I mean you could say public health and nobody would get upset about that. RATE is the term that you're looking for.

KA: No, I know RATE-

JJ: But specialty-

KA: Yeah-

JJ: All of the above. It's all right. So waiting for orders, going through, the way that it typically works going through a training command is you have class rank. Basically, how well did you score on your exams or tests, things of that nature, and then the Navy says, "Okay. There's 15 students. Here's 15 billets or places or assignments that we need filled."

KA: Okay.

JJ: And then basically the number one student in the class gets his first pick of the litter. Second rank, second pick and all the way through. So there's some incentive to do well because you don't want to be that guy with what's left over, which may or may not be something that you want. I did pretty well. I was the fourth pick in the group.

KA: Pretty good.

JJ: I was second and then biostatistics kicked my butt a little bit [laughs] and dropped me a bit. But again, we were all- I think from first to last there was only eight points difference.

KA: Oh wow.

JJ: So we were all pretty high scoring, it was just you're looking down at the hundredth and thousandth of a point to decide who picks next, which is good. I mean that's really the way you want to be able to do it, because it means we are all actually learning the material.

KA: Yeah that's a good problem to have basically.

JJ: Just saying. So I originally got New Jersey, which really seems like really random location to want when you're fourth pick out of a myriad of others. But with my family now living in Maryland-

KA: Oh, okay-

JJ: -and having grown up here and I still consider Boston home, New Jersey was a nice central location into what we call day leave which basically- and that's not the official term, that's just the colloquial because the Navy lets you go a certain distance without having to take formal leave for vacation days. So, Boston and Maryland where my parents were was within that circle.

KA: Boston's within the distance for New Jersey, wow.

JJ: [nodding] From New Jersey, so it was right close. It was right on the cusp, but basically it was close enough where if something came back and they had to call you in, can you get there within the same day.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: Basically what that distance is. So it was nice for me if we had a three-day weekend I could drive north or drive south without it costing vacation time. Save the vacation time for actually traveling somewhere and doing something.

KA: Right.

JJ: Then something that had no issue with me, some coding error stupidity-

KA: Thing.

JJ: Thing cost me New Jersey so I didn't go. I ended up being in hold for two months. Ended up going actually through four other sets of orders.

KA: Wow.

JJ: So there's a difference between soft order and hard order. So a soft order is your detailer, your guy in the billet office, the choosing office, saying this is where we're probably going to send you.

KA: Okay.

JJ: Hard orders is the actual paper in hand saying yes, you will report in on this day, at this time, to this command. So, it's kind of like soft orders a verbal agreement, hard orders are the contract.

KA: Okay.

JJ: That's another way to look at it.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: So, my soft order was to New Jersey. Something happened, went through a bunch of soft orders, and at some point I was soft orders to San Diego. I really had no interest in California. I really wanted to go to kind of the north east corridor. Experience seasons.

KA: [laughing] Yeah.

JJ: Like snow on April second.

KA: [laughing] Yeah.

JJ: But nonetheless, San Diego wasn't happening or was going to happen I would say. I did call the detailer directly and just be like is there anything we could do because- and I literally said this- I would rather go combat than California.

KA: Wow.

JJ: I was just not interested in that whatsoever. So he was like, "Well, let me see what we can do," he's like, "As of right now you're going to San Diego but I'll take another look and see if anything pops up." Get a call from him an hour or so later- hey Hawaii popped up do you want to go to Hawaii?

KA: Sure.

JJ: No I don't want to go to Hawaii. It's the same as California.

KA: Worse than California it's so far out.

JJ: It's the same idea. And a bunch of different conversations happened and I ended up agreeing to go to Hawaii because I figured I'm probably never going to want to go there in civilian life when I'm done so why not have the Navy pay for it get the experience. And you know, if I hate it, I hate it and if I don't well, there we are. But at least that way if I hate it I know when I'm leaving, so that was certainly part of it. And so that was the advantage of going and, like I said, I

wasn't a fan of going there. I hated it. I didn't leave the barracks for the first three months that I was there. I didn't leave the base I should say, I went to work and stuff.

KA: Sure.

JJ: First three months I was there, I didn't go anywhere.

KA: Right.

JJ: I just was so angry about being in Hawaii that I literally just went to work, went to the barracks, went to work, went to the barracks. That was it. Then I realized I should probably actually experience Hawaii since I have to be here. I'm going to get out and try to see some things and if I still hate it at least I now know I hate it. But I don't just, you know, I hate Hawaii. Well all you did was stay in the barracks. Yeah. So, you didn't experience Hawaii, how can you hate it?

KA: Right.

JJ: So, I went for the things that did interest me; history museums, some other different cultural aspects. Like okay, let me try to find the things I like in a place I hate, and maybe that will help. Which did. But yeah, the first few months there, I was miserable, hated it. Was hot. 75 to 80 every single day. [laughs]

KA: I know that people listening probably think that that sounds great, but I think me and you are in agreement-

JJ: Yeah, it's-

KA: I'm not into that. So, you're a history student and you were a history student at Gordon, you're a history student as well now at Salem State.

JJ: Yeah.

KA: Pearl Harbor, as far as US history goes, that's a big one.

JJ: It's known. It's a known entity. [laughs]

KA: Yeah exactly. So, I kind of want to talk a little bit about your experience with history of Pearl Harbor and how you're folding that into Salem State.

JJ: Absolutely.

KA: How do you feel like the experience, historically at least, that you had at Pearl Harbor is really moving the way you are academically now?

JJ: Sure. So without putting the cart before the horse as generally doesn't work out well. When I graduated from Gordon-

KA: Sure.

JJ: Which was just 2016.

KA: Okay.

JJ: I finally left Gordon before I actually graduated. Just life and finances-

KA: It happens.

JJ: -that kind of thing. And then while I was in the military, finished off my degree. So, my degree at Gordon is also history with a concentration in museum studies and public history. I was actually the first student in the program at Gordon college.

KA: No kidding?

JJ: It was non-existent until- it came along with Dave Goss, who was a professor at Salem State up until a couple years ago.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And is still the museum studies chair at Gordon. And Gordon and Professor Goss had been discussing a museum studies program. They weren't really sure if it was going to work, if it was something the college wanted to do. And I was actually a helpful part of the conversation because when Professor Goss put forth: this is what it think the program should be to really be a solid museum studies program, I had already done all but one of the courses on my own.

KA: [laughing] Oh sure.

JJ: Just out of pure interest.

KA: Yeah, yeah.

JJ: Including the internships. I had literally done everything just because it was something that interested me, and the only course I had to take to actually get the concentration was a nonprofit business course, to round out the nonprofit side of museums.

KA: Makes sense.

JJ: So, it was- it helped his argument, because he's like clearly students want to do it. We have one who has effectively already done it.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: And it proved to him that they can do it. So, because I didn't graduate, I wasn't the first graduate of the museum studies program but I was officially the first to enrolled so I will take that little note of that.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: So of course, when I finally did graduate last year, you know, the path was already in place. But there was a conversation when I came home from commencement, and I spoke with Professor Goss and we were trying to figure out, you know, what now. Do we do master's, do we do any kind of program. And I was trying to figure out about the Navy and all the different kind of career questions, and he made the comment that I still use to this day: that I was never happier than when I was elbows deep in history. And having realized I'm in the middle of one of the most iconic World War II sites, that's something of note.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: So, suffice it to say, it was a big deal. So when I graduated, or when I went through commencement, it was kind of like okay I'm going back to Hawaii. I have approximately a year left.

KA: Sure.

JJ: How can I take now my educational background? Can I use that summer in Hawaii? Obviously I have my Navy job. That's a huge portion of my job. You're talking it ends up being 10 to 12 hours of everyday. You're with your unit doing various assignments, but I do have downtime. I do have weekends. I do have kind of free time to use. And again I'm assigned to Pearl Harbor, where I can see the Arizona Memorial every single day I pass by on my way to the office.

KA: Right.

JJ: So not something small either. I'm going to take a minute and blow my nose here. I can feel a sneeze coming on. (blows nose twice) So when I got back to Hawaii after commencement at Gordon, here in Massachusetts, I had already had some relationships with museums. I had done some basic kind of volunteer things. You know, show up to events, set up tables, the kind of basic volunteer work.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: I decided I wanted to get a little bit more involved. I was working with one museum called the Pacific Aviation Museum, which was just inside for Pearl Harbor on Ford Island. And that connection, I was well known both from the museum side, but also as they had a café that we inspected because it was Navy property.

KA: Okay.

JJ: So I actually had a professional relationship with them from that side, and then I would volunteer there on weekends or for events and actually I filled in for them as a docent one night when two of their three docents didn't show up, and I knew so much about the museum and knew so much about the history that I literally was just like, well I was just gonna empty trash for the entire event but I guess I'll actually be out with the guests-

KA: That's cool-

JJ: -and talking and that was last minute. Which again, told me that maybe this museum studies thing is something that I am supposed to do if I can literally in 30 seconds come up with a tour program, you know, for a group of people.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And they all loved it, thought it was great. So I was like okay, this is really great. This is fun but this is really random and nothing consistent. So I decided I wanted to go volunteer at the Valor in the Pacific National Park, otherwise known as the USS Arizona Memorial, and talked to the volunteer coordinator at the national park. And, of course, when she found out my background, she was like we can't have you just handing out tickets sitting at a guest both talking to random people as they come in.

KA: Be a waste.

JJ: Like this is, you're literally the perfect volunteer candidate, we can't just throw you in the back somewhere. So she, plus the education coordinator of the park, contacted the curator of the memorial who had a different office on-base, and I actually ended up working with the curator of the Arizona Memorial three days a week for about two or three hours after I finished with the Navy. Get released for the day, I would go over to the Arizona and help with cataloging help with projects, help with whatever they happened to be working on that day or that week or that month. And I worked with them for about six to eight months on everything. They were working on a phone app that you could actually relive the day, the morning of the attack in 3D like you were sitting right there, and I helped fix some of the history mistakes that whoever had designed it had just put in wrong times and wrong planes and wrong ships. Sometimes just a fresh set of eyes no matter how well a historian knows the history.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: Sometimes the fresh set of eyes can mean knowing that ship wasn't hit yet by that time, you know, and things like that. So saved them a lot of potential mistakes from there, and helping with cataloging. I mean I've had hands-on literally to one of the gauges from one of the Japanese zeros that attacked that morning and crashed on the island and I'm holding some of their equipment in my hands. You know, I'm holding materials that salvagers, salvagers excuse me, some of the divers had brought up from the ship in the days after the attack as they were trying to bring up some of the metal and steel and items that they could still recycle and reuse, and other just miscellaneous trays and things like that from officers' rooms. So having my hands literally on history from stuff that had been, you know, part of the attack 75 years ago made me realize that this is something that I want to do.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And not just causally, not just as a weekend hobby-

KA: Right-

JJ: -but I really want to do this. I said as much as love the Navy, I was starting to realize that it wasn't gonna become a 20 year career for me.

KA: Sure.

JJ: I love it. Like I said, I never regretted any of it but just I realized I'm about done my time in the Navy, at least active duty side. So of course the other side of that is, what next? Well here I am, I just spent six to eight months by the time I left working with the Arizona, a bunch of other museums, a couple other museums downtown Honolulu. I was becoming pretty well known in the museum community, especially the military history community of World War II in Hawaii and so it made me go this is something that I really need to actually take a step back and seriously answer the what now question. And part of the what now is I knew I wanted to come back to New England. I had been out of New England for almost ten years at that point. Military for five, but I've been out of New England for almost ten.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And it was just like, I need to get back to New England. That's just home, it always will be. So that was kind of step one, but step two was I want to go into a museum studies master's. And while I would like to go back to New England, I also would at least like to try to get into one of the best schools in the country.

KA: Sure.

JJ: So, I was asking around, asked the curator of the Arizona Memorial, some other museum professionals, like what are some of the best reputations for museum studies programs in the country and low and behold Salem State was on the list a lot of the times. So it actually worked out nicely that I could go home and have one of the best reputations for the programs.

KA: Not far from where you'd spent plenty of time at Gordon anyway.

JJ: Exactly. Ten minutes away, fifteen minutes away.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: So it was definitely- once I realized I could combine home with reputation, it was a no-brainer for me from there. It was, well let's apply to Salem State and if I get in, great and if I don't, then I'll start looking at other places and for obvious reasons it worked out. Here I am. So, it definitely worked out and definitely continued my connection with Hawaii and some of the intuitions there, some of the professionals. Like I said, I'm now basically specializing in World War II because of all the time I spent focused in Pearl Harbor. It's kind of hard to be a museum studies scholar and ignore World War II when you're living in Pearl Harbor. Like, you could do it but it would be kind of silly.

KA: Yeah. So how has it been since you've been to Salem State? How's reacclimating to civilian life? How's that going for you?

JJ: [laughing] Be, becoming a civilian again. Oh, rough. I mean I say that jokingly but at the same time-

KA: There are little things-

JJ: There are big things as well as little things. [laughs] You know, you laugh at that whole military thing and you know, you show up same day, same time, uniform, everybody does the same thing, looks the same, so on and so forth. Well there's the other side of that of somebody is telling you what to wear, when to show up, where to show up, what you're going to do that day, and then that's gone. There is an adjustment to: okay, what time do I actually have to get up, what do I wear, what do I do, what am I doing today? I have a whole day where I have nothing to do, and I mean there things I need to do but nobody's telling me what to do. And of course even in my job in the Navy, no it wasn't necessarily every morning somebody telling me this is what we're doing today, but you knew there were certain tasks that had to be accomplished with deadlines. And if nothing else, there always was somebody higher up the rank that if you were really stuck and not sure what to do, would tell you do X, Y, and Z then come back to me. Now you are the X, Y, and Z-er. So, there's a certain element to that where it does kind of make you go okay, so now what? I did have an advantage over many military members. I had been a civilian adult for ten years.

KA: That's a fair point.

JJ: More than ten years. So it wasn't as startling of a transition for me, because I had already been doing it.

KA: More like a recurrent-

JJ: And I'd only been gone, so to speak, for five years, you know. So I still knew what it was like to have to be a civilian, versus somebody who had joined at 18 to 20 years old and spent a 20 year career and is now getting out and going, what do I do with my life because I'm only 35 to 40. What do I do? And they talk a lot about that when you're in all your transition classes to get out they talk about, do you have a plan, what are you going to do, what's the situation. And they were always startled by me because I was like, I know what it's like to be a civilian.

KA: Sure.

JJ: I know the checklist that has to be taken care of. So that helped, but it was still tough because I was leaving from 6,000 miles away to come back to Massachusetts without a job, without a place to live. I was going into school but I didn't know exactly how that was going to work out because, although I obviously knew Salem State, I had never set foot on campus until the first day of classes. So I was a little bit- I don't know what's going to happen here. So there was some trepidation. There was a little bit of even fear. Can I do this? Am I doing the right

thing? Is getting out really the right idea? Did I make a mistake? Can I go back? Can I fix this? And, you know, it's almost a certain point where I think of the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, and they talk about a couple times about when the prisoners get out. When you're in so long, you're institutionalized, you don't know how to be free. And even there's some truth that even in the military again when every single thing you do is accounted for and directed and ordered, and then you're out there is a certain element of what do I do with myself now. My decisions are mine to make but that also means they're mine to fail. Or succeed ideally. So there's that element of, please don't let me make the wrong decision.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And having been now out for, you know, coming up on three four months, you know, classes are going well, projects are going great. I was able to find a place to live. Fortunately the GI bill and student loans are helping me out financially, because I'm still trying to find employment. And so there are certain questions still in play, but a lot of those big terrifying questions have an answer. They've been answered, whether solidly or sufficiently, they've been answered but part of that transition to civilian life there is also an excitement. I can actually do what I want to pursue now. If I want to take a trip, if I want to go somewhere, if I want to do something, I don't have to ask somebody for permission. I don't have to make sure it's okay. So there is that aspect that makes it simpler as well.

KA: Sure. So now that you're not, you know, I almost said deployed. Now that you are not enlisted in the same capacity that you were before- you are still a reservist, obviously.

JJ: Right.

KA: But you are not an active duty which is what I'm saying.

JJ: Correct.

KA: Looking back on the last 15 years, especially as a historian, you're equipped to do this as well, looking back at the last 15 or so years in American foreign policy-

JJ: Sure.

KA: How do you feel about the wars, the conflicts, in Afghanistan and Iraq? Do you feel like America has been doing well over there? Do you think the reasons [regions] are definitely better for us having been there, or do you think they're worse off? Do you have any strong opinions about any of those conflicts, especially given your time in the military? I know you weren't anywhere physically near those but-

JJ: Sure. One of my only issues, and that sometimes rubs me the wrong way, is when civilians who have never been in the military start telling me how the military is supposed to act and what the country is supposed to do with foreign matters. It kind of makes me go, "You have no idea what you're talking about." Now passions are fine, you should have an opinion. You're a citizen

of the country. You have every right to say what you think. Hopefully it's informed. Hopefully you've done some research. Hopefully you haven't just heard something on Fox or CNN or MSNBC, and decided to repeat it because you liked the way it sounded.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Hopefully you're not just doing that. But there is a certain point where, especially if I hear a civilian say, well the military just needs to (makes open hand motion). You have no idea what you're talking about. They might have a valid point. I mean there's certainly certain aspects that you don't have to have been in the military to understand what the military should or shouldn't be doing.

KA: Right. [laughs]

JJ: But at the same time if you're talking about, oh well why don't they just (makes open hand motion), there's probably a long list of reasons why that has or hasn't happened. And again, I never saw combat and I wasn't deployed. But I prepped a lot of guys for deployment.

KA: I can imagine.

JJ: I made sure a bunch of guys were medically ready to go. I've lost guys in combat, people I know. So yeah, I know what it's like to actually face a battle. Maybe not directly but I've gotten those letters. I've gotten those phone calls. And it does change your opinion on what we're doing with foreign policy when, you know, you have friends who can't sleep at night because every time they sleep, they see the last battle they were in. So, there's that aspect of foreign policy that people tend to forget. They tend to- people talk about foreign policy and, you know, the military for a lot of people it's just on paper or its just reports they've read and that bothers me. Because there's a lot- you can't have a foreign policy without a military. Even if your foreign policy is were not going to foreign territories, you still better have a military to back up your domestic side, you know. You know, Washington preferred no standing militia. We have one now. Whether that's right or whether that's wrong I don't know. Jefferson got rid of the Navy, technically, legally.

KA: Right.

JJ: It came back a few years later. There was- it was decided there was a need for it. So there has been, from the dawn of the country, a conversation about what about the military when it comes to foreign policy. And there should be a conversation, there should be debates, there should be political public discourse about foreign policy absolutely. I do think having Secretary Mattis now as Secretary of Defense is a big deal. You hear a lot about the jokes about just how revered Mattis, Secretary Mattis, is. But there's a reason that a lot of military members feel comfortable just saying Mattis, because as a general he proved that he cared about his Marines under him. He cared about the most junior service member even while he was thinking about running overseas operations in the Middle East.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And a lot of people don't realize that having a cabinet member of the military that has such a glowing military background matters. And, you know, there's a reason why Secretary Mattis didn't wait the required time between retiring to public service. That was waived because he was recognized by all parties as somebody who really was aware of what was going on and how to best handle it. Not that he's perfect. Even he's admitted that he's made mistakes as secretary from time to time. There's a lot of things that we can be doing differently in Afghanistan and Iraq and other, other smaller areas, you know. There was certainly the whole issue that came up recently in Niger and that whole attack and that whole situation. Military's going to make mistakes. There's going to be places where we do go that we shouldn't and there's going to be places we didn't go where we should have.

KA: It doesn't have to be that vague. You know can't do every single thing perfect.

JJ: So there's an element of- where we're at now is we, in my civilian opinion, is we're endanger of spreading ourselves too thin.

KA: Okay.

JJ: We're in Afghanistan. We're in Iraq. We're in- we're starting to just get bigger and bigger. We've been called, either jokingly or insultingly depending upon the statement, the world's watchdog.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And we kind of got that reputation after World War II of being capable of being the world's watchdog. But again, we lost a lot of that with Vietnam, which we really had no business being in Vietnam. Regardless of the how and the way we were there, at best it was a stalemate for the US, Vietnam was. We kind of left while we could. We're in danger or doing that again in the Middle East in Afghanistan and Iraq from what I know which is admittedly, hi I'm just a small corpsman who's, you know, in the middle of Hawaii. So, do I really know what's going on? No. But I'm a student of history, and being active military I have seen things that maybe the average civilian hasn't.

KA: Absolutely.

JJ: So, you know, are we on the right track? Yes. Did we start on the right track? Absolutely.

KA: Okay.

JJ: You hear all about the whole, you know, weapons of mass destruction did he have them didn't he have them?

KA: Right, right.

JJ: Yes, no, depending on which news channel you watch. But yeah, at the end of the day, you know, there are dictators in the world that needed to be removed. Whether or not the US was the right person to do that, that's a matter of opinion. But you know, like I said, I think the biggest fear the US has now, or excuse me not the biggest fear, the biggest risk the US has now is trying to solve too many of the world's problems militarily.

KA: Sure.

JJ: And we just can't, I mean financially can't, afford to do that.

KA: Right.

JJ: You know even if you're going to start sending the military around the world, well you need to have individual service members to send. You know and if, that's the same thing, whether you're talking about a small job of 20 employees or the US military. If the people doing the day to day don't believe in the overall mission, it's gonna be a lot tougher to accomplish that mission. Right, whether that's a small lawyer's office in Boston or you know the US military and I think the US is very much in danger of: what's the point? We've been at war for 15 years. Minor advances have achieved. You know, there were big things when we found Saddam Hussein and his execution. That was a major lift to the military. We're doing something right. We found him, and we got rid of him.

KA: Right.

JJ: You know, the capture of Osama Bin Laden. I mean it interrupted baseball games around major league when that announcement came out. So, it was a huge lift to, you know, the American spirit. But that doesn't then change, you know, a week later we're talking about how horrible this war is and we need to get out again.

KA: Right.

JJ: So, you know, because you can't have an Osama Bin Laden moment every month. It's just not going to happen. It's not realistic. But if you're not still demonstrating why we're there, it's tough to do. Now service members, we're of a different mindset because we're kind of trained to think that our senior leadership knows more than we do about the situation. So even if we don't understand we have faith that they know. Civilians don't often have that understanding.

KA: Right.

JJ: They don't understand that there are people who know more than they do, and unfortunately with a lot of the armchair political pundits that are out there today, you know, it becomes how much do you have the right to speak? Which is absolute.

KA: Right.

JJ: And how much should you speak?

KA: Sure.

JJ: Which is less absolute. There are many people who are intelligent, but haven't done enough research. There are many more people who are less intelligent, that have done less research, that are just as loud.

KA: Right.

JJ: And those are the people that service members tend to go, why are you talking? You literally have no idea what you're talking about, but somebody you liked said something so you're just going to repeat it without even determining whether or not it's true.

KA: Sure.

JJ: Most service members, certainly the ones I've encountered, will respect anyone who has an informed, researched opinion. Even if we disagree at the end of the day, if you can say I've read this source, I've read that source, I've researched this material, we might end up with: okay, still think you're wrong but I can respect your opinion.

KA: Right.

JJ: Versus somebody who is just shouting something that doesn't even sound accurate. We're not gonna listen. And that's kind of the big thing that a lot of service members have an issue with is, especially non-current and former service members, just talking about foreign policy.

KA: Right.

JJ: You've done no research. You heard a news piece and decided that now you know everything that's going on in Afghanistan.

KA: Yeah sure.

JJ: So that's the big deal.

KA: (to himself) I got time for one more to wrap up? (to JJ) Cool, alright. So, this has been a great interview. I want to thank you for your time.

JJ: Sure.

KA: I just want to know, is there any one thing just from this interview, people are gonna be hopefully watching this for a couple years, we're gonna be looking back on this. This is gonna be part of the historical archive. This is- we're trying to form a historical record here. Is there any one thing that you would like someone to take away from this interview?

JJ: Big thing, both with the interview and the project as a whole, is that service members have a lot more to offer than people realize or even acknowledge. That's both current and, you know, separated service members. Especially on a collegiate level, whether that's undergrad or graduate. We've experienced a lot more of the world whether that was combat or not,

deployment or not. By nature of our jobs, we've had to think harder, think faster. Weigh situations, pros and cons, a lot stronger. And I've been fortunate that in my classes this term, my professors have listened when I've said, "as a service member". It gives it a little bit more of a, no, there's a valuable opinion here that the rest of the class can't offer. And, so far, Salem State has a pretty good handle on realizing that service members have something extra to offer. Not more important than anybody who hasn't been a service member not any more valid but just a different perspective. Because most of us have been trained to think big picture and small picture at the same time. And, you know, if anyone can take away anything I hope, whether it's from my story of the collective stories, it's simply that. If a veteran or service member has something to say, probably a good idea to at least contemplate it, because we've probably thought about it a lot longer than it sounds like we've thought about it. Because we're also trained not to talk unless we have something important to say, so that's an important piece of it. But that's really it, is just if a veteran, whether a recent veteran like myself or a veteran from Vietnam or even the few World War II veterans that are around, if they're talking, listen to what they're actually saying not just what you think they're saying.

KA: Well that was a pretty good history, I think.

JJ: [laughs]

KA: That's what I'm taking away. Listen, hey thank you so much again for your time. It's invaluable that we get these kind of interviews and I really can't say enough. Thank you so much, and I'm excited to see you hopefully in a museum coming soon, right?

JJ: Here we go.

KA: Yeah.

JJ: Very soon, I hope.

KA: Yeah, cool awesome.