

Miracosta College Student Veteran Oral History Service Learning Project

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Interview Location: MiraCosta Community College Library

Acronyms:

JK= Jeff King (Interviewee)

EJ= Ernest Jackson (Interviewer)

TD= Thaddeus DeLaPena (Technology)

LB= Lizbeth Barranco (Interviewer)

First Interview Transcription

EJ: This takes on the 12th of April at 2:27 pm the person that is being interviewed is Jeff King. The people attending the interview are Jeff King himself, Ernest and Thaddeus. The organization we are working for is the Miracosta college student veteran oral service learning project.

EJ: Why did you want to join?

JK: Ever since I was a child I wanted to join the Marine Corps and my dad was in the Marine Corps too.

EJ: How did you join?

JK: I just went down and enlisted.

EJ: Why did you pick this service branch you joined?

JK: Just following my father's footsteps.

EJ: He was a big influence on you as a kid?

JK: Yes.

EJ: Did you recall your first days in service?

JK: Yes.

EJ: What were they like?

JK: Stressful just how they are supposed to be.

EJ: Can you define stressful?

JK: It was Sep. 1983 graduated high school I was already enlisted at the age of 17 and I went to Paris Asylum. Got off the bus and drill instructors introduce themselves.

EJ: How did it feel to get off the bus?

JK: I was looking forward to it but was a bit apprehensive.

EJ: How did you get through the Boot Camp?

JK: It was stressful but I was it was stressful. I was physically fit and I had a good idea of what was going on because of my father and his friends.

EJ: So did you do drills most of the time?

JK: Drills knowledge personal fitness.

EJ: After you finished the Boot Camp what was your job?

JK: I was an administrator.

EJ: An administrator what does that do?

JK: I was one of the guys that did the payroll.

EJ: So like a manager?

JK: More like a record keeper.

EJ: How did you stay in touch with your family?

JK: Back in those days it was clip calls and handwritten letters.

EJ: How often would you stay in contact?

JK: I would call once a week and write a letter once a week.

EJ: Did you live on-base or off-base?

JK: I was on and off. I was in the Marine Corps for 23 years. I was on and off and when I was single

it was on base and when I got married and I was on active duty it was on base. We are still married. It all depends on what station and the cost of living was and things like that.

EJ: How was it living on base different from living on base?

JK: There was a big difference different set of rules.

EJ: What kind of rules?

JK: Certain things you can do on base that you can do off base like have an open fire in your backyard. When I lived on base back in the day it was segregated housing meaning you live with your own rank so there is that.

EJ: Was the lifestyle different?

JK: When you lived on base you knew what everyone did. Everyone usually left to work at the same time and came back home at the same time.

EJ: How was the food like on base?

JK: In the early days it was terrible then the Marine Corps was willing to spend more money and it got a lot better.

EJ: So do you remember your first meal? How you reacted to it?

JK: Oh on boot camp?

EJ: Yes.

JK: Well I ate it all, I was hungry.

EJ: Any favorite meals that you can remember when they started to pay more money for it?

JK: Fish and Chips.

EJ: How did people entertain themselves on base?

JK: When I was younger we read books, drank beer went to the beach. And when I got older I would hang out with my family. When I went overseas I read a book, drank beer and go to the beach. (Laughs)

EJ: Is that how people normally entertain themselves?

JK: I retired in 2006 and not everyone was very interested in the internet. I am assuming that now everything is connected to the internet as for how they entertain themselves now.

EJ: How did you leave the military? Did you just retire?

JK: Yes, after 23 years.

EJ: You just thought it was time to retire?

JK: Yes, it was a young man's game. I wasn't physically fit anymore.

EJ: Where did you travel on service?

JK: I been to Europe a few times. Germany, Iraq, Japan, North Korea, Nicaragua, England, and Puerto Rico.

EJ: You've been all over the place.

EJ: Anyone of those places do you remember as your favorite?

JK: Probably Nicaragua, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. I like the tropics.

EJ: Anything you liked like some surfing?

JK: Oh yeah.

EJ: Any adventures or humorous activities having on base?

JK: It was 23 years of mostly good times some bad times, but one incidence up front would be my combat experiences.

EJ: Do you recall the day your service ended?

JK: I just remember a retirement ceremony my family flew down. My wife was there also my kids, brother, sister, and mother. It was pretty cool.

EJ: How did you fear adjusting from 23 years in the military to having days off?

JK: It felt great. Just relaxed.

EJ: While in service did you make any close friends?

JK: Yes really close friends, but I haven't followed up with them. Some are still in the Marine Corps and some are retired. Or some are somewhere else.

EJ: What about a veteran organization?

JK: A veteran motorcycle club.

EJ: What do you guys normally do?

JK: We go on rides, join veteran affairs to support the veteran suicide that is going on today, and things like that.

EJ: So you are like an awareness group?

JK: It is a motorcycle club we do things for awareness NYU issue the new hot topic veteran like the 22 suicide a day we try to bring awareness to. We do fundraisers for victims on the 22 a day. We have support groups like that

TH: Why did you want to get back to schooling?

JK: I was able to I got out of the Marine Corps worked a few jobs where I got hired. I worked at the plant. I worked there for five years then they started to take layoffs. Everyone in my family has a degree so minus go to school. Kids were out of the house my wife worked we were able to afford to go to school.

TH: What are one of the things you can take away from being in the military?

JK: Going to school taking test, returning assignments on time, and being respectful to others.

EJ: What were some of the challenges you faced like starting school again unlike when in the military?

JK: Fear.

EJ: Computer?

JK: No fear from people. I have PTSD and the first four times I came on campus I brought my adult son or my wife because I was afraid. Then I got here a realized that there anything to be afraid of.

EJ: So your wife how did you meet her?

JK: In High School.

EJ: What was the easiest part about coming back to college?

JK: The easiest part?

EJ: Yes.

JK: The routine having a routine because of the military.

EJ: Since you were in the military for so long did that influence your lifestyle on the everyday task?

JK: On yes.

EJ: Yeah how so?

JK: Well you stick and do so many things in your life for so long. As you progressed in the military

as a leader you are expected to do things. Your mission accomplishment. Well, it was easy.

EJ: Is there any advice you would give any fellow student veterans that have come back from the military trying to get their degree?

JK: Don't be afraid of it like I was. My biggest fear was Backpacks. People having bombs in backpacks and things like concealed weapons scared me. Just hope that it doesn't happen. Keep that in mind and you realize that everyone here is a bunch of cake eaters. You're not around a bunch of meat eaters.

EJ: Did you think about every going back after you retired?

JK: There's no way, I was too old.

EJ: Too old?

JK: Too old to go back in. they won't have me out of shape.

EJ: How did you overcome your PTSD when it came to coming back to MiraCosta?

JK: I realized it was protected. No one is going to cause you any harm. The Vet center is a great place a retreat too. I just got over it. It's different because, in a learning environment, they foster creativity the foster original thoughts. In the working world, you're under the gun because you're worried about the money. When you're worried about the money you start to think "if I do this a might get fired or if I do that I might get fired." In academia, it is more relaxed. You put pressure on yourself because you want to succeed. You want to be good at a personal level. In the real world, you are always competing against other people to see who can get the next promotion. It is a different kind of stress. In academia it's a healthy stress in business it is an unhealthy stress. That make any sense?

EJ: yay that makes sense.

JK: is there anything that you want to talk about that we haven't brought up?

JK: You guys have done a real nice job with this little interview?

TD: You said you were an administrator, what rank would that be?

JK: I was a first Sergeant then I retired. Which is E-8, in administrators can go from E-1 to E-9. I did other things I was a drill instructor, a combat instructor, I was a jump master. I was always with good units.

EJ: Did your constant connection with your family help when you were overseas?

JK: Of course.

EJ: How so?

JK: Morale. Knowing the family there and they're doing okay. I didn't have to worry about that, the wife was taking care of the kids and the dogs okay. Paying the bills let me take care of the marines while I'm over here.

EJ: How long do you plan to be a student here at MiraCosta?

JK: Until I get my associates degree. If everything goes alright three more semesters.

TD: Where are you getting your associates degree in?

JK: In history.

EJ: Is there any reason for that?

JK: I enjoy it.

EJ: why?

JK: I've always enjoyed history. I've never not enjoyed history it was the only thing in High school that I enjoyed.

EJ: You said your dad was a big inspiration in your life. Did he say how great the military was?

JK: My Dad was, he was. Well, he passed on. He was a good father and I wanted to be like him. If my Dad was a plumber I would have probably been a plumber. That is the kind of influence he had on me. He didn't make me have short hair, he didn't make me dress a certain way, and he didn't make me call him sir. I had long hair until I joined the Marine Corps and I had earrings until I joined the marine corp. The only influence he had over me was being a good father. If he had been a sailor, a carpenter, a candlestick maker, or a baker I would have probably have done what he did. In that vain, most of my family are Veterans also. We are a patriarchy family on both sides, father, and mother.

EJ: What about your kids?

JK: My son is also a veteran.

EJ: when you first came back what was the hardest class for you?

JK: Biology or historical culture or algebra.

EJ: Did you not use that.

JK: No never. The whole time I was in the Marine Corp and since I've retired I never had to use algebra. I was able to figure everything out with basic math.

EJ: Your favorite class I assume is history.

JK: Yep history yay and critical thinking. It helps broaden horizons and expand the vocabulary.

EJ: Was there any one individual that pushed you to go back to school or was it a unanimous help?

JK: Both my kids had education and they said: "go to school Pop". My wife got her education when the babies were small. I figured if they could do it I'll do it. Now I have the time. When I was a marine my focus was to be a marine, husband, and father.

EJ: if you were not being a student again what would you be doing?

JK: I wouldn't be here if the plant hadn't closed down, I would still be working at the plant. I wished I had gone to school while I was on active duty.

EJ: Going back to when you first retired from the military, anything you miss from it?

JK: I think if you talk to any vet I think they'll miss the comradery. The morale that's the big thing the Veterans miss when they get out. When they get out they don't have that camaraderie, brotherhood, sisterhood, a failsafe. In the military, they have people covering them. If something happens somebody is there to help you get through it. When you become a civilian people can't relate to military life. If you have not been there you don't know about it. That's probably the biggest transition people have. The hardest part I think is the loss of the comradery and the connections.

EJ: So your family and Bike club helped you fill that missing connection.

JK: Yes and my bike club, my motorcycle club.

EJ: Do you have anything you want to say that you think we haven't covered?

JK: No you guys have it covered. Did you guys come up with those questions?

EJ: Yes. We used inspiration from a website that lists question you might want to ask Veterans. I used some of those and then I put in some of the ones I thought would be friendly questions. Some that could give us civilians some information. My grandpa served in WWII and my aunt joined the military after him, but my Dad and uncle didn't do anything. I'm left out of the loop for it. This experience helps me look at a different worldview and I appreciate your time.

TD: Same with me. My Grandfather was an E-9 Master Gunnery Sergeant, so I don't know the exact life but I know they raised me when they retired. My mother was going through her issues so. They raised me but they didn't do adoption papers for that kind of thing. Which they could have but my Grandma had a caretaker's affidavit for me.

JK: That's good. Well, you guys came up with a good list of questions.

JK: What do you want to hear about?

EJ: The main project is about the transition between veteran life and civilian life. We are trying to focus on the challenges.

JK: one way people might think about is "when you get a job what do you wear?" In the Marine Corps, they tell you what you are going to wear each day. I had to worry about what to wear when I got out of the Marine Corps. I would tell veterans not to worry about keeping the vernaculars from the military. I hear it all the time. "I'm going to get a head call" means I'm going to the bathroom. Don't worry about it people will pick up on what you're saying and if they don't you have to explain it to them.

EJ: Anything you can think of?

JK: No I think you go it.

JK: Now in the marine corp they tell you what to do all the time and when you retired well where are you going to work? They tell you what to eat and what to wear. For example, I still use military time and so do my kids. Like my dad, he never took a shower without a pair of flip-flops in the shower. No matter where he was at he always wore flip flops.

EJ: So it is necessary to wear flip flops in the military while in the shower.

JK: Yes in every rank.

EJ: Was there any changes you had to overcome while in the military?

JK: No.

JK: The military is easy you are told what to do it that best you can. You're going to pass.

EJ: Speaking for a civilian when we see documentaries of a journalist going into boot camp we think "that there is no way I would be able to do that." So, it is okay as long as do what you are told on time.

JK: Yes that is exactly it. Like being a civilian. You shouldn't rob banks so, everybody doesn't go and robs banks. You shouldn't drink and drive so, everyone doesn't drink and drive. That is what is taught in the military, not that you are going to be beat until your brain comes out first. It is to believe that the team comes first.

EJ: So is that the first thing you learned from the military?

JK: Oh yeah it is called the spirit of court.

JK: The civilian life transition to the military life is easy. It is not like you can't do it.

EJ: Since you are off base is there anything that you miss while being in the base?

JK: No just that when I was a marine my job was to be my family not to be a student or anything else. When I was off I was with my family most of the time.

EJ: Was there any habits you had while in the military that now you have cut off as a civilian?

JK: The way you talk to be people but there is anyways going to be similarities. One way or another there is going to be something that is the same. When you become a civilian there is not that certainly.

EJ: Yes because it is job to job.

JK: Right, because in the Marine Corps if you ask where this is? Everyone is going to know where it is.

EJ: Was there any habits you had in the military that you could not continue as a civilian?

JK: In the Marine Corps there is no PC police. You can't just tell someone to Fuck off as a civilian like you did in the Marines. When you transfer from unit to unit there are always going to be things that are universally the same.

EJ: What have you taken out of this experience?

JK: I did this to help you guys out.

EJ: And we're thankful for that.