

Miracosta College Student Veteran Oral History Service Learning Project

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AD = Andrew Deyoung

KL = Kyle Limbaugh

AD: Alright so, my name is Andrew Deyoung, today is April 19, 2017 and we are here at Miracosta college library, I will be interviewing Kyle Limbaugh who is a current student at Miracosta college and has served in the military. Joining us is Cali Espinosa and James Jordan. The organization we are involved with is Miracosta college student veteran oral history service learning project.

AD: Alright so why don't we start off by getting to know you a little bit tell us some interest that you have some hobbies some music you like.

KL: Sure, well I actually started rock climbing while I was serving in the military. I've been climbing for about two years now. Its pretty much consumed my life. I climb just about every week I spend a lot of time up in Idlewild and Joshua tree, with the occasional trip up to Yosemite, red rocks, bishop, wherever it may be but that's what I do with all my free time and pretty much anytime I'm not in school. As far as music. I'm into a lot of different genre's within rock, old school punk, new age punk, classics, folk, quite abroad variety of music I listen to.

AD: So pretty much an active outdoor person type of person?

KL: Yeah

AD: Alright so tell us where you were born and raised?

KL: I was born in Sacramento California, I lived there for 18 years, I went to elementary, middle, and high school there and then stayed there until I had enlisted in the Marines.

AD: So are you the only person in your immediate family to join the military?

KL: First person to join the Marine Corps. I had a grandfather who was in the navy during WW2 and then one who was in the air force during the Korean war.

AD: Growing up in middle school and high school, did you have anything that really encouraged you to join or did you like school or did you not want to join to college?

KL: So I don't really recall ever having a drive to join the military within elementary or middle school, let alone high school until junior year early senior year. I did not enjoy school as a child. I think that's what drove me to join the military later in high school was the lack of passion I had for school I didn't want to continue with college at the time, I just wanted to cut ties and go do something else for a while and that's what I did.

AD: So you just wanted to change everything just take off and do something completely different, something new.

KL: Exactly.

AD: So aside from that was there any other motivation for joining, like the GI bill or you wanted to be the first Marine or anything else?

KL: I definitely wanted to do something different, the GI bill was a factor even though I wasn't into the idea of school at the time. I know someday I might be and it is such a useful benefit that even though I might not have enjoyed being in the military so much, the GI bill alone is a benefit that should not go to waste, it's a good after plan, it gives you a few years to reset.

AD: So you said you were in the Marine Corps correct?

KL: That is correct.

AD: And you were the first Marine in your family?

KL: That is correct.

AD: How long did you serve for?

KL: I served for five years active duty.

AD: How did you decide on joining specifically the Marine Corps, was it being the first one or a certain job you wanted?

KL: There was a certain job I wanted and it didn't work out and I got placed into a job not by choice, but I talked to a few other branches and the Marine Corps seemed to suit me the best and that's what drove me to it.

AD: So what was your MOS?

KL: To sum it up I drove all of the land tactical vehicles the Marine Corps had to offer.

AD: So when you first decided to sign up and you decided you were going to join and you were talking to the recruiters, how did you feel about that? Did you just want to get up and get away? Were you nervous and unsure?

KL: I was a little unsure for a while it took me quite some time to make up my mind for the decision. Ultimately I wanted to get out of the town I was in and move on to something better and different.

AD: You just wanted a change?

KL: Yeah.

AD: So when choosing your job, did you specifically want that job or were you talking to your recruiter and that's what was available?

KL: I went into it not exactly knowing what I was going to get, there was some risk that I was aware of that things might not work out in the school I was in and my job could change and that's what happened, that how I ended up doing what I did for five years. I would like to say over all it was beneficial, I definitely didn't enjoy every minute of it, there was a lot times I didn't like what I was doing , but I just pushed through it, made it to the end and got out honorably so that's what matters.

AD: Did you pick a job that had certain skills or it was just something that sounded cool to do?

KL: Yeah I kind of just wanted to do something cool and fun and exciting. It had its moments definitely, we got to do a lot of cool stuff, ranges, but overall it didn't really end up suiting me in the end, so it's just time to move on.

AD: So, when you first told your friends and family that you were signing up, how did they react? Were they supportive?

KL: My friends were fairly supportive but the majority of them, there was always going to be those that are anxious for you to go. As for my family so, a lot of them were supportive because of prior family that served in the military, my mom was quite anxious of course, I think most mothers are when their children leave to join the military, but overall, they were supportive and they were supportive the whole time that I was in to. They were well supportive of my decision to get out as well.

AD: Did you have anyone or friends say you shouldn't join or say its not a good idea or any negativity?

KL: Yeah there was some negativity from friends but they were just nervous for me, makes sense, just natural.

AD: So you had to go through MEPS or the military entrance processing station correct?

KL: That is correct.

AD: What was that like, did that change your view of whether or not you want to join or anything special?

KL: It wasn't too significant, it's a lot of paperwork. Nothing really stand out during that process, it was quite a bit of pain through, it's a lot of paperwork on both sides, it's a little stressful trying to lock down your job and when you're leaving because you want definitive dates and plans but that's not always something they're able to give you so I remember being a bit frustrated.

AD: Yeah it's like you have to plan your entire career or next four or five years of your life within a day pretty much.

KL: Yeah I remember it being a bit of a pain but nothing really significant stand out during that process of entry.

AD: I remember talking to some of the guys that were also going through and it was really interesting to see their jobs and perspectives.

AD: So the first time you went back after basic training, after boot camp, what was that like?

KL: It was interesting, boot camp is definitely a brainwashing process, you're so regimented in ways that you're taught in the three months that you're there and it's difficult to break or veer from them after you've been doing it for so long friends and family definitely noticed when you come back that you've changed a little bit. You like to think that you haven't changed too much but looking back I can see that I was a little numb to say, it was strange going back seeing how other people have changed and how you have changed, yeah it was a little weird.

AD: Looking back from this point though, now you can see from your first day from boot camp and coming home, now you can see the difference?

KL: Yeah, absolutely, at the time it was probably difficult seeing but like you said looking back now you can absolutely see the change

AD: Ok so how old were you when you got to your first duty station?

KL: When I got to my first duty station I was 18 and that was in camp Pendleton California

AD: So when you first checked in, the first month or two what was that like, did it meet your expectations, was it nerve-wracking?

KL: It was definitely nerve-wracking going to your first unit in the fleet Marine force but it wasn't a happy time, it was really stressful, a lot of anger going around as you would expect in the Marine Corps. You just get thrown in the mix at first, you don't really know what to expect but you find out quick. I remember that being an anxious time, especially the wait up but you get used to it fast.

AD: So once everything settled in, you adjusted to daily life, what was an average day or week like, what did it consist of?

KL: Depends, for the most part it was similar to a 9-5 job, not those hours per-se but the aspect of it, you just go to work every day. We'd usually get there pretty early and work out for a couple hours in the morning and do group physical training and you'd go through the day, working, doing your job, whatever it may be, then maybe more physical training, back to work, lunch, then you're off typically around 5 or 6 every day, it depends. Each day varies but for the most part it's like a pretty normal job honestly.

AD: So what was the physical training like? Was everyone in a formation or individual in a gym? What was that like?

KL: It would vary throughout the week, sometimes we would get into a big formation and go for a run in the mountains, other times we would go to the gym which wasn't often but it's a lot of cardio training as a group, there's a lot of different activities but for the most part it was a group function.

AD: So going back to an average day, we talked about pt a little bit, what was the actual work you did?

KL: When I first got to the fleet we would do a lot of logistical runs, driving out to the ranges in these trucks to bring people out there or drop them off, bring food, water, supplies, whatever they need out there. Then it turned into operational runs so we would have tactical convoy's we would perform around Camp Pendleton or Twenty-Tine Palms and a lot of tactical training there and tactical exercises out there. A lot of driving though, it wasn't too exciting but it kept the days rolling.

AD: So is that what you didn't really like about the job? Just a lot of driving?

KL: Yeah it was very tedious, quite boring at times, that was what I did for the first years of so then I moved into a different aspect of the Marine Corps job wise, I was doing more like infantry based patrols on foot, like foot patrols and tactical conveys but with the tactical conveys we were. (quick pause) So what I moves into was more the infantry based foot and tactical patrols and those were more exciting and fun and we got so shoot a lot more than I did when I first got in the fleet. I got to do a lot of stuff for the reason that I joined is to do something more exciting and fun, not just sit around and drive trucks so that was entertaining and did that for about a year and a half and had a good time with that. Towards the end for the last year I moved into a more logistical and operational planning role, that was not as fun but it was really beneficial, I learned a lot in that role, there was a lot of responsibility and was pretty stressful but overall that was probably the most beneficial role that I served was that last year doing that.

AD: Did you deploy at all or go overseas?

KL: No I was actually in Camp Pendleton for the whole time, I went to Missouri for school but other than that I was in Camp Pendleton.

AD: Did you have any role models when you were in? Any NCO's or officer you looked up to?

KL: Yeah, kind of what I did was, a lot of the military's morals and ethics clashed with mine, it was difficult to find role models I looked up to in the military but there were a few NCO's and officers. What I would do would is pick personalities and leadership traits I liked and take those and conform them and make myself into the leader that I wanted to be and dismiss all the negative traits that I saw in them and just try and collect all the positive ones to make myself.

AD: How did you spend your weekend or downtime?

KL: Being in California I spent a lot of time at the beach. I made a lot of friends in the military so we would get together and BBQ with family and what not. I have a lot of family in California up the coast too so we would go visit them quite a bit. That is until I got into rock climbing and then I would climb on the weekends then return to work during the weekdays and that was how I spent my off time.

AD: What were some low points during your enlistments? Anything bummed you out? Not being able to go overseas?

KL: I was a little upset I wasn't able to go anywhere. Some of the lower points were after two of these deployments got cut. We would do six month workups getting ready to go, we would tell family, friends we were leaving, go home and say by to everybody and come back and we'd receive disappointing news that it was cut or there wasn't enough room on the base or whatever excuse they were to give us, it was always something. It was disappointing having to put in that much work to go somewhere, told your family you were going said by to everyone and then to have it not work out in the last two weeks you were supposed to go. That happened twice and those were probably the most disappointing times I spent while I was in the military.

AD: What were some of the high points? Promotions, awards?

KL: Promotion and awards were nice, it meant a lot to me but I joined because I wanted to go places and see things and do exciting stuff. It was, the entire time I spent wasn't a disappointment, it was more like a learning process but I learned that that was not what I want it's what caused me to move on because I was disappointed a lot with the military. It ending up not suiting me as well so some high points were some of the ranges I got to do or weapons I was able to shoot but other than that it didn't suit me too well and that's what made me move on.

AD: You said you were in for five years correct?

KL: That's correct.

AD: What was your rank when you got out?

KL: I got out as an E-5 so that would relate to a sergeant.

AD: Do you still keep in touch with any service member?

KL: I have maybe one or two close friends that I still talk to every once and awhile but all of my close friends are either out or just about out. I made a lot of friends that are civilians while I was in that are better friends than a lot of the guys I spent time serving with but there's one or two I still keep in touch with quite often.

AD: What about any veteran organizations? Have you joined any at all?

KL: To be honest I try not to associate with anything military anymore, I feel I got enough of it when I was in and I tempt to veer away organizations that still involve themselves with the military.

AD: Five years of twenty-four-seven you want your space.

KL: Yeah absolutely

AD: So comparing your first day in to now, overall you'd say it really wasn't what you wanted exactly and that's why you chose to get but how have you changed overall?

KL: I feel I've definitely grown a lot in the time spent but I've definitely matured as a person, slowly but surely figuring out what I want out of life and obviously that wasn't it. Like I said you grow.

AD: Do you think you way you handle problems or approach things is better at all?

KL: I definitely learned a lot about problem solving, while I was in you're faced with a lot of strange aspects that you'd typically not run into so it's definitely helped with that. It's a confidence booster as well like those problems I talked about like those that are more on the extreme side so when you're faced with normal daily issues it's not as bothersome as some of the problems you'd face in the military

AD: So I'll ask you for a minute how civilians view the military. Before you joined, what was your view? What did you think of it?

KL: I think I had some mixed opinions on it and of course I didn't know exactly what they do, I was probably a little confused or naïve. I definitely looked up to them, people in the military are serving for a better cause and they get to do cool stuff.

AD: So now that you're out, has your opinion switched at all?

KL: Yeah it has actually, there's definitely people to look up to in the military and I'm not bashing it whatsoever just because it doesn't suit me but I definitely don't look up to as many people as I thought I would in the military. It didn't suit me like I said many times before but in my opinion the people aren't as great as I thought they would be.

AD: So at what point did you decide you want to go back to school?

KL: I think as soon I made up my mind to get out I knew that school was going to be my plan because of the GI bill's benefits, it's not something to waste and it gives you a couple years to reset and get back into normal life, life as a civilian again, it's like another stepping stone getting out and transitioning.

AD: So you pretty much got out and said, the GI bill is here, might as well use it?

KL: Yeah pretty much.

AD: Was there anyone that influenced you, any friends that started going back to school that encouraged you?

KL: Not too much, I kind of made the decision on my own. My family was supportive of the decision because they always wanted me to go to school. It was a lot of my own decision, I thought it would be a good idea and I know it is but it's a little strange like getting back into it.

AD: It was mostly personal?

KL: Yeah pretty much.

AD: So how was it adapting to student life from the military life?

KL: It's freeing for the most part, getting out is the most freeing time in my life. It's really strange going from such regiment to such freedom, but transiting to a student has been a little weird. Definitely not used to being in school and having homework and test and it's not so much as being on someone else's schedule as it was in the military but there's aspects

that you don't have control over like homework and tests like I said before but it's a little difficult getting back into it.

AD: Its like you have more freedom but you don't have homework, once you're done with work, you're done, but here there's always something else to do.

KL: Yeah there's always something else you can do you catch up on or get ahead.

AD: So as far as students, do you seem to get along or be able to relate to them at all or is that still difficult? Do you still picture yourself as a military mindset?

KL: No, I think I've been out of the military mindset for quite some time now, it's pretty easy for me to relate to other people and students, by no means do I hold myself to a higher standard or level then them. I'm no different then them just because of the time that I've served and I think it's important for veteran to recognize that even though you've done something important for your country it doesn't make you or them any better than everybody else, you need to realize and recognize the equality so I try and remain humble and be able to relate and communicate easily with other students and teacher and what not.

AD: Have you ever thought about dropping out or maybe schools not for you since you started?

KL: Yeah I definitely have just because the stress and frustration coming into school and being assigned homework every day and it definitely a change and I've definitely had thoughts of maybe this isn't for me but it's just something I'm going to just push and progress through.

AD: So when you first got out and transitioning to civilian life then to school life, what was the difficulty with that? Was there any easy parts?

KL: Being out and free was like I said before, was the most freeing time of my life.

AD: Was it hard coming back to school and adapting to the academic life?

KL: It actually was, coming back to school after six years it was difficult, it was difficult like getting into a schedule on my own program, keeping up with homework and quizzes and tests and studying, it's something I'm not used to and still getting used to. So, to answer it was difficult and stressful, I'm still getting used to it and I'm sure as time goes on I'll find some better organizational skill and settle into a regiment.

AD: in the military you generally have someone you report to or a chain of command?

KL: That correct.

AD: So how is reporting to your professor or answering to then compared to the military?

KL: Teachers I've found tend to be more like mentors, they help guide you, they're not extremely strict or regimented like members of the military or superiors in the military. With time in the military, I see it all the time, the leaders and supposed mentors in there they get so jaded they lose their way and get wrapped up in their power and it's very common. Not to say they're all like that but there is a strong majority of them who are like that and it's hard to look up to people like that. I've seen that teacher on the other hand are less jaded and able to relate to the students because they've been there before and they remember what it's like to be there for the most part, unlike leaders in the military it's hard for them to look back and remember 10-15 years ago because it's all an angry blur. I like the style teachers help guide the students in.

AD: So what made you decide to do this project and share your experience? Anything in particular?

KL: I was approached by professor Strona and he asked if I was willing to share my experience for your project and I didn't see a reason not to. Its nice to put your message out to everybody else, especially someone considering joining the military or getting out I think it'd be nice to hear something like this. Especially from a different perspective than a reciter telling them all of the upsides to the military because I can go on all day about the negative sides and why not to join. There's absolutely perks but there's a lot of downfalls as well that people aren't aware of and I think it's important for them to know.

AD: They only tell you about the pros and not the cons

AD: So on that note is there any advice you would give to veterans coming out today or going to sign up today?

KL: We'll start with people going to sign up today. Really think about what you're doing and the time that you're giving. The typical contract length is four years and four years is a long time. Just think hard and do a lot of research and if you can talk to a veteran who has already been there please do, it's going to absolute help, in fact try and get a couple different perspectives from veterans because some of them are jaded and that's all I have on that. As for veterans coming out and going into student life, you're not in the military

anymore and it's time to drop the hat, the act is over, not to say that you didn't earn everything that you've done or gave but you're not in the military so it's time to start a new chapter of your life and become a civilian again, start school and prepare for something new.

AD: Do you think the day you first stepped on the yellow footprints to where you are sitting right now, how would you say you've changed? Changed good parts bad parts?

KL: I'd like to think I've changed for the better. I definitely learned a lot in the military like I said it fast tracks you in life but overall I'd like to say I've changed for the better. I've gone through some dark times but it's a learning process and I think whether you want to or not the military is going to bring you there.

AD: Going back, when you were in the military did you have any specific goals you wanted to accomplish?

KL: Not any set goals, I don't want to say I went in blind but I went in with not too much information. I didn't know what I was doing, I just wanted to kill some time and try and figure life out and what I wanted to do and it showed me what I didn't want to do.

AD: So you didn't just join for the GI bill or to make some money or leadership skills, you were just looking for change from where you were and you thought it would be the next step and so you tried it and now you're here in school and it's your next step?

KL: Yeah, it's the next step coming out of the military. The GI bill I always had in the back of my mind and I was fairly certain I would use it someday which I am now but I didn't know what I was doing after high school and figured why not?