

Mira Costa College Student Veteran Oral History Service Learning Project

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Interview Date: November 13, 2017

Interview Location: Mira Costa Community College Library

Acronyms:

CR: Charles (interviewee)

DD: Daisy Donoe (primary interviewer)

JW: Jaclyn Walsh (secondary interviewer)

DD: Today we are doing the MiraCosta College Student Veteran Oral History Service Learning Project. The Date is November 3, 2017. The location is the MiraCosta College library and the time is from 11-1:30 PM. We are introducing Charles as our student veteran and we are here with Jaclyn and Daisy. What was your life before you had joined the service?

CR: I was working, me and my brothers. Once I turned sixteen, we moved out and I was just working, finishing up school, and that was pretty much it.

DD: So, you moved out by the age of sixteen?

CR: Yeah, we were just ready to do something new you know, and we like had the chance to get our own place so we decided, let's do it.

DD: So, was joining the service like a part of your plan, since you had started working at a young age?

CR: No, actually I didn't think of the military until I say like half way into my senior year. I was working, I ended up getting promoted; I was a produce manager over at a market back at home. So, it was not at the back of my mind; like I want to go to the military.

DD: So, what was the first thing that you thought about when you first decided to join the military?

CR: At first, when I first got there it was different. I was nervous. I wasn't used to being away from my family, so I just went with it.

DD: So, what were any role models that had encouraged you to have joined the Marines?

CR: My grandpa he was in the army. I mean of course he got drafted, but besides him my uncle he was the only actual one who went into the military. He was in the Marines as well. As for that, that was it for the military background in my family, so it was like a different step.

DD: So, you weren't drafted you had enlisted right?

CR: Yes.

DD: What were your plans before graduating high school?

CR: Honestly, I couldn't think of anything that I wanted to do like for sure. So, I worked for a little while, I graduated early, so I had a long break before I could decide what I wanted

to do. I was working at the same job, and I want to do something new because I'm all about new experiences. So, I walked by a recruiter's office and I was going to go into the Air Force at first, but when I walked in I didn't like it. It was a different feel. I didn't feel like I wanted to be there. But when I got to the Marines it was kind of like one I didn't hear of, beside of my uncle. Then I walked in and I saw them, and they were like family instantly, so I was like I want to be this.

DD: So, walking into the recruiting factor was a big change in what you were deciding, such as which service you wanted to join in?

CR: Yeah! Cause a lot of kids were talking about joining the military and I was like never in my head and as soon as walked in. I was like "I CAN DO THIS!"

DD: So, what was the environment like when you went to go and enlist, like every branch has a different field?

CR: Yeah, so like most branches when you come in they try to settle you on this idea of the military, but then I walked into the marines they didn't try to sell me into anything. It's you either want to be in or you don't, and I was like I want to. They didn't try to convince me; even though they needed people because it was: "We only want the best, so if you don't want to do it don't even think about it!"

DD: So, it was whether you want to join or don't want to join?

CR: Yeah.

DD: Did you stay in touch with any your family and friends while you were in service?

CR: My close family, I have like eight cousins that I keep in contact with all the time. As well as my mom and my brother Dominic moved to Arizona, so once I was stationed here in California. Well, it was easy to go back and forth.

DD: What about when you were stationed in different places overseas? Since, I know that my brother was stationed overseas, and it was kind of hard to get in touch with him.

CR: It's kind of gotten easier now. I mean there was a chance that I might have got sent to Okinawa Japan, but my brother was already here. I scored really high in school so I kind of got a preference to where I wanted to go.

DD: So, what was the schooling like in the service?

CR: A lot different. I mean you wake up at five; and you have got to have your room clean by then. You're waking up but your room has to be clean, your bed has to be made, and then they come through and inspect and then once all that's done you march to class. Then you sit in a classroom and you get taught like a regular student. I mean it's not exactly the same because the language is different, and you are expected to do better in every class.

DD: So, what was it like the different schooling? Like I did some research and I realized that there are different classes in school that you go to.

CR: Well yeah like my job was logistics. The logistics school is based in North Carolina, in like there is logistics supply motor tech mechanics. Which is where they just work on the

vehicles and in other places there are different MOS job. Which requires different training so they have to go to a different environment.

DD: what is MOS?

CR: Military Occupation Specialist.

DD: what were some of the other acronyms that you had to learn, while in the service that were required?

CR: There's a lot. It's hard to think of off the top of my head, because I natural just use them now. But I don't really think of it.

JW: Even being out of the military you still use them?

CR: Well some they still apply a little bit you know. Everything pretty much everything in the military was an acronym to shorten it. So like you don't have to extend this long word when you have to say something and its just like; Hey field day, is today. Field day today to some people it's like they don't know what that means. It just means that you are about to clean for a good amount of time, before it gets inspected, before you can go and do your free time.

DD: So, what were some of the most memorable things that you remember?

CR: I got to do a lot of cool stuff, like when I first got in my schooling part of my job was to stand under these helicopters and hook up loads to the bottom of them. You think like aw you know it's cool like, I mean it is cool but at the same time it's super dangerous. When you first do it in the school house it's kind of safe needed, so like the helicopters that we uses, and then there's this hook that we use, and you have to ground it out first; before you hook up your load it's just with a group of your friends. So that was fun. Then I also got to do the hello doc. Which you take a makeshift aircraft underwater and spin to reenact a crash. An airplane crash. Since it's my job I'm in air crafts and helicopters a lot I have to go through it, and you have to pretty much find your way out. For some people it's scary but, I don't know I like new experiences. And it excites me so it was fun for me.

DD: So where those some of the training experience that you had gone through as well in service?

CR: Well everyone has to go through swim call you have to learn the basic of swimming, jumping off 10 ft high board, then you got your shooting. Where you got to go to the range. Everyone in the Marine Corps knows how to shoot; and everyone knows weapon safety. Which is like a big thing thats helpful which can be used in the outside world. I even got to train with the Army, Navy , and Air Forces. I did the Army training with some rail operations so we worked on the railroads and we just pretty much hooked up a bunch of vehicles to go. I Worked with the Air Forces pretty much all of Iraq we ran the flat line together. by putting people on, putting gear on, and taking it off. Then I worked with the Navy on ships all the time I was always on ships for at least a month at a time back and forth.

DD: So you were able to train with the other branches, as to training with just the Marines?

CR: Yeah.

DD: So I heard you mentioned that you were doing time in Iraq. was that one of the places that you were shipped overseas?

CR: Yeah, it was last year 2016. We got on the aircraft and we flew all the way to Quay. I was in Quay for about three weeks and it's nicer than what people think in Kuwait. They have like a whole little base because there is a lot of Army, Air Force. So there is a lot of fast food places there, but after three weeks I got shipped to Iraq. As for there, there was nothing, like I had no way to purchase anything besides online. Then the mail was like messed up so it took me like two months, to get mail. But Iraq being away from everything it feels weird at first; since it was like I can't do anything. But once you make your friends and make connections times just flies by. And it was just a fun time for me.

DD: what was your mission or job when you were in Iraq?

CR: I ran a flight line and put people on and off flights and put gear on and off flights. I transported them out to flatlines and since our flatlines were past the wire, about a mile and a half, so we had to drive black out. Which is no light in the vehicles or outside and all we had was our NVGs which are our night vision goggles. So I got to learn how to drive with completely no light, what so ever. Like that was my job I had to keep them safe. I had me and a passenger and we just transported them out safely and brought them out safely.

DD: So were there any issues or injuries while you were in Iraq?

CR: Yeah, both in Iraq and here in the states in Iraq. Not to many Americans, it was a lot of foreign contractors that would work with us that would hurt each other. for instance, there was a guy who got into a fight and he stabbed the other guy with a screwdriver. yeah! it was right in the chew hall. Yeah so it's like anything crazy can happen. Like Army they don't clean their weapons; the same way as we do. So they would accidentally fire off their weapons. As for back here in the states, accidents happen all the time. Nobody is perfect. You go on a mission, like I've been shot before. They always told us: "that once you are underneath the birds, it's not if you get shots, It's when you get shot!". And once you move up in ranks you see all these new eighteen-nineteen year old kids underneath 200,000 bolts, with the winds blowing over a hundred miles per hour. You know that something bad is bound to happen. So you are there to keep them safe. So instead of them taking the impact, you reach out grab the hook take the shot, and move along with your day.

DD: So, there is so much that you have seen in the service?

CR: Yeah! You don't really think about it while you are in. As for when you get out. Is when you realize all the stuff you have done; that not a lot of people got the chance to do.

DD: Because of the things you are remembering and everything that you have done while there. do you ever suffer from PTSD from remembering all these situations?

CR: No, not really. I mean sometime like in Iraq we constantly got rounds going at us. Like when we first get to Iraq, you could hear shooting back and you can't sleep so sometimes. Such as sleep, I hear a bad noise like it doesn't scare me. I just wake up, but not really PTSD. Where it freaks me out.

DD: What were some of the things that you had gone through there, that would lead you to think of about the noises?

CR: Just 24/7 missiles going off. I worked the night shift and that was a lot of the time that we would fire. So at night all the lights would go off, so there would be no lights what so ever. So that would be a best time to fire back or for them to fire back. So misused that it wasn't that bad of a deployment for me. Like the closes that we got hit was our ECP which is the entrance control point which is right at the front gate.

DD: So you said that you worked the night shifts, so how do the shifts work?

CR: So with my job there is the day shift and the night shift, you pretty much make the hours whoever is in charge. Like in Quay I wasn't in charge but, I was in charge of the night shift. Like it was my staff that are over us. Then there's me and my recruit of Marines and we all worked the night shift. We would work 7-7. Sometime we wouldn't be able to go to sleep, because there would be a class or a meeting that we would have to go to. Or that I would have to go to or a course that I would have to fill out. So sometimes I wouldn't get to sleep. Then when I got to Iraq, the time I had to build my position there they had threw me out there. Since I was the only person with my job. So I had to go in and make this whole plan that would benefit them there. So I ended up helping them out a lot.

DD: So what would you do when you weren't on the job, so on your free time?

CR: Gym, eat, watch movies in my rack. Which is my bed and go to sleep. I would try to get as much sleep as possible, because there could be a class or there could be a drill. If there is a drill, the siren goes off and you have to get up, and put all your gear back on, and head out to a bunker. Just in case there is an attack. So like I would range probably 3-4 hours a night and that was good for out there, because there were people that got less sleep than that.

DD: So what were the drills like?

CR: So the drill usually always happen during the day time. Sometimes they were real I remember it was Ramadan for the Iraqis so it was an Iraqi-an holiday, and there was a dust storm at the same time. So we cancelled all flights since we were already expecting something to happen, and that's when they hit our south ECP. Then the alarm goes off really loud everyone on base can hear it. I mean I was on a small base. so you get out your rack and put your boots on; through your flack on Calverton. Put your helmet on, grab your weapon, and your gas mask, and head into this moment bunker. Hope that they don't get close.

DD: So you were mentioning that there were dust storms so what would you do during the natural disasters there?

CR: Well with the dust storms everyone would stay in. Since it was already hot enough but if there is usually a dust storm you work through it, unless there is a reason not too. the only time you actually stop during a natural disaster is if it actually starts thundering. So like it wasn't raining out there, so dust storms we work through that.

DD: Did you experience any casualties?

CR: On our side not one from battle, but from suicide. The two weeks he was in Iraq, something happened at home so he decided to end it. But besides that only other casualties were the foreign people. They hurt each other a lot of time because we helped them, the once that were on our side they would come into our medical. I did combat life saver which was CLS so I had enough training to go in there to help the medics and the docs. To help them out, you see some weird stuff like when the guy got stabbed by a screwdriver. I was in there when they had to stitch up his heart. It was just like everyone doesn't get to see that, and it was just something. Something new like I wasn't scared when I walked in there like I knew that I could do it.

DD: So, after experiencing that would you plan to go into a medical field?

CR: Yes, actually my major is physical therapy, doing that medical training over there. And my shoulder got messed up before I had sent in, so I had physical therapy for that and so I kind of enjoy the type of job it is.

DD: So, what were some of the things that you had learned, apart from seeing all the different things?

CR: Well, I got really good at public speaking cause before I was in the Marine Corps I was a shy person. I didn't like people I mean I still don't like people, but I would just stay in my room. Reading but once I got in it, it really got me out of that shell. So I got really good at public speaking. Like there is a lot of just leading in all I'd say it definitely made me a better leader. Like I have lead plenty of fire teams, which is just small groups platoons like they have helped me out a lot.

DD: So, you learned a lot of things that you have picked up from the Marines?

CR: Yeah, I know I found different ways of learning, different ways to thinking. In the military you are around a bunch of people that are like family. There is no judgments towards you. Say something everybody takes it in. So there is no unbiased opinion, so you don't ever have to watch what you say. Since you now everyone there is willing to lay down their life for you so there's just no judgement, it's just welcoming.

DD: So, what were some of the bonds that you grew while in the service since you said that it was kind of like a family?

CR: Yeah, well definitely I met one of my best friends Austin Powers like no C*** his name is Austin Powers. The first time I met him I was in the garden in the school house, so I was the guy that would carry the stick or with the flag one day. So I was kind of in charge of the platoon, and he came in and they had a uniform inspection the next day. Which we have a uniform inspection in the military all the time. He had to make sure that his room

was squared away, and he didn't know how to iron his shirts, and so I ironed his shirts and from. There on he moved next to me and once we got here to California, we just kind of have been best friends. and my roommate Davidson we had the chillest relationship; I mean we just kind of chilled in our room watching TV and play game. I didn't like him at first, so it was weird in the schoolhouse me and him would but in head a lot. But because we had never been together and for 4 years that was like one of my best friends.

DD: So, you have grown many bonds, do you still keep in touch with any of them?

CR: Yeah, I do actually when I came back from Iraq I actually came home with my friend Austin and met his family. I met his family out here, but I went there, and I stayed in their house, and it wasn't weird at all. It was like oh this is part of my home too, like that's how close we got and we still talk ever day.

DD: So, you guys became so close that you became brothers?

CR: Yeah.

DD: So, you had mentioned that you guys have your uniforms, I know that there are different meanings for the uniforms like the dress blues?

CR: Well the dress blues you only wear for ceremonial type stuff, like the Marine Corps ball is most of the time that you wear dress blues. You wear during sad times like memorials and anything like that. Then you have your service uniform, and that's when you first check in your service outfit. This is what you wear, and based of that once you walk in, they see your uniform and if you put pride in your uniform. Then most likely you are a good to go Marine and if you walk in and your uniform is wrinkled, and your ribbons aren't placed correctly they are going to see that this guy doesn't care. Then when I first joined in every Friday we would wear our service Charles or our service Bravos, and the bravos is the long sleeve tan shirt with a tie. Which is very uncomfortable since you can't breathe in it. The service Charles is the short sleeve version, and every Friday there was an exception. they didn't have to say make sure your stuff is squared away, you wanted your stuff to be squared away. Because you liked looking good in your uniform. And then you have your utilities ,which is just your cameos and your work clothes. You know even those had to be squared away, unless you were in the field so on field operation you just go up maybe twenty- nine palms.

Charles: You might get a slide with your utilities looking like crap. Just because they know you're working; you're in the dust. But most of the time your uniform should be squared away at all times.

Daisy Donoe: Some of your uniforms you carry your medals or your awards, what are some of the awards you have received?

C: I got the OIR which is the Operation Inherent Resolve its the new Iraq ribbon. I have the deployment ribbon, which is the overseas ribbon. Everyone gets the national defense

ribbon. They actually might be stopping it soon, I hear. Then I have the GWOT which is the Global War on Terrorism and that's when you help on missions to -- it's pretty much a humanitarian thing. There's one other one I had. I can't think of it right now.

DD: What was the differences between the marines and the other branches?

C: Well I learned real quick with working with the other branches that marines work and behave different. Marines, yes, we play, but when it's time to work we work hard and there's a rank structure. So, you're not going to see an E7 working an E1's job or an E3's job. And we have that steady balance and with the army I noticed, when we worked on the rail heads, there were E9's working on the rail cars while the privates were just chilling. We yell a lot, so, when we would yell at them we would get in trouble because they're sort of more safe-netted than we are. Because when marines want something done they get it done, and you can't be thin-skinned walking around in the Marine Corps. The navy, there's two parts to the navy, for marines at least. You got blue side and you got green side. Blue side's the one that works on the ship. They're usually-- some of them are squared away, good to go. Some of them, I don't know why they're there. And then you got your green side which is the corpsman, the docks, and those are like marines' best friends. They help us out. When you're deployed they're the ones you go to even if it's a night of drinking. Those are the ones you go to and you get medical advice, and those are the ones that take care of us. The air force-- they're the brains, I would say. They're all about computer stuff. Safety. Like they don't care how long it takes to get a job done, it just has to be done safe. And the marines are like "get it done no matter what". But we still have our safety plans. But the mission needs to get done.

DD: So, what are some of the ranks that there are because you mentioned ranks?

C: In the marine corps, there's private for E1, E2 is PFC, E3 is lance corporal, E4 is when you hit NCO, a non-commissioned officer, which is leading small groups, and then you have E5 which is sergeant which is when you take on a lot more of responsibility. You're in meetings with officers and the higher ups, you're running the whole platoon. Then E6, you're staff sergeant and that's when you move up to staff NCO and it's also a big job because you're moving into the big-boy ranks. Then you got E7 which is gunny and then E8 is master sergeant or first sergeant. Then E9 is master gunnery sergeant or sergeant master. Sergeant master is as high as you get. You're leading companies and you're involved in important meetings with the highest general.

DD: What rank were you?

C: I was at E5. I was sergeant when I got out. I had a couple other sergeants with me. Me and my friend, Austin, ran the whole platoon. We just had an officer and the higher ups above us.

JW: How did you work your way to that rank?

C: Well, when I got out of boot camp, I got out as an E2 because I ended up getting two other people to join. But at the schoolhouse the hardest thing not to do is get in trouble because it's easy to have fun and make one stupid mistake. But once I hit E3, you know, you have

to do online classes for the marine corps. So, you do seven online classes; that's worth a hundred education points. So, I did that. I ran a perfect PFT, which is a personal fitness test. The perfect for that is three miles in under minutes, 20 pull ups and 100 crunches. I got a perfect on that. For my CFT you do an 880 in boots and pretty much your cammies without your blouse, so you got your boots, your trousers, and a shirt. You run an 880 and then we have our little obstacle course thing where you're low crawling, carrying ammo cans, carrying people, dragging people, and you have to do that under a certain amount of time. Then you have your ammo can lifts, which they're probably about 30-35 pounds and within two minutes you have to knockout ninety-nine. I worked hard for E4 and then the whole time I was corporal was when I was in Iraq. I did a bunch more classes out there and I took on responsibilities that were above my pay grade already. Once it was time for me to get promoted to E5 there was no problem. It was like "let's do it".

JW: Was there a ceremony for that?

CR: Yeah. Everyone gets outside even though it's hot because it's a good time when people get promoted. They read off your warrant and then you choose people who you want to pin you or put the rank on you. Then they pin it and everyone shakes your hand and gives you the congratulatory speeches. Then work goes right back.

JW: How did you transition from a sergeant, telling people what to do, to civilian life?

C: It was definitely different because I already look younger than I am so a lot of civilians, they talk to me like I'm 18 or 19 and it makes me so mad because when I talk to them back like "I know what you're talking about, I've done this before". Then they're like "okay, my bad", There's no structure in civilian life too -- he tells you how to do this, you do this. It's like everyone is on their free-- own will, it's weird. But it's weird definitely, running a whole platoon and coming out and you start over.

DD: Did you decide to finish once your time was done and go directly into school or did you take some time?

C: No, I went directly into school. I got out in June and fall semester I was starting. I didn't want to waste anytime and get used to not being in school. I like new experiences, so college is a new experience for me. I didn't go to college before, so I was like "this is my chance now. I wonder what it's going to be like".

DD: What were some of the things you struggled with when transitioning from active duty to school life?

C: The classes for sure. The classes in the marine corps are a little unorthodox in a way. You go in you sit down, you're eating and everyone's joking but everyone still pays attention. We also didn't have to watch what we said. Here, it's like, "hey you have to be politically correct, like right now." It was like "hey we're all marines in here, talk how you wanna talk." In civilian life you almost can't have your own opinion because then you get attacked. I had to get used to watching my language. I had to get used to not waking up

and having to go do something like right then and there. Now I can wake up and walk around the house a little bit. I don't have to worry about running my platoon or a PFT or CFT today. It's definitely less stressful once you realize the differences, but sometimes I wish it was the marine corps.

DD: Have the marine corps ever helped you transition from being a marine going into a civilian lifestyle?

C: Yeah we all have to go to a Transition Readiness class. It's about a week long and you go over interview skills. You have to dress in normal civilian clothes, they tell you all the benefits to use, how to use them, and how to act in a different environment and realize your not still in. We all had to go do that before we get out.

JW: Can we trail back just a little bit? What got you through your time in the marines? Was there any motivation to get through it?

C: Definitely my family because that's one of the reasons why I went in. All the new stuff I got to do. Where I'm from no one's doing this. I broke the cycle. Our family-- there was no one reaching out and doing new things and when I realized I didn't want to repeat this cycle I decided to go to the military and break it. That was probably the best part that got me through it. Every time I turned around there was something new to do. I drove a tank. Everyone doesn't get to do that and that was just for fun. I got to drive and ride in so many cool things. You know what it's not that bad. But definitely my friends in there also got me through it because every workplace has its downs but it's the people who you work with where you're like "this makes it bearable." You have that family and it's all worth it at the end.

DD: What were some of the other things that you experienced besides driving a tank?

C: I got to drive this big bulldozer. I told you guys I got to do the helo-dunk. I got to work on helicopters. I got to go to Jordan for a month, well not even a full month. I got out there and I got to jump off the ship into the Red Sea, so that was fun. I got to shoot a triple seven howitzer which is a big artillery gun. Which was it was sort of over-hyped because you set up all this and you put all this heavy round and then you just pull a sting. But it was still cool to see it go off.

JW: Like an exaggerated canon or something. What'd you get to shoot it at?

C: I shot one in Iraq and one in Twentynine Palms.

DD: What were some of the places that you've been?

C: I didn't get to move around too much. I just went to Jordan and Kuwait and Iraq Yeah most of the time I was on the ship, working with civilians, trying to work with their low ramps so we could transfer our vehicles back and forth. We would sell out for like maybe two weeks sometimes we'd go three weeks. Which ship life-- the only bad part about sea life is the sleeping situation because you got three beds on top of each other. I can't tell you how many times I've woke up and hit my head. It was bad. The food was not really that good either. Actually the civilian ship I was on the food was actually pretty good, but it

was a civilian ship. When you go over to the navy ship, they have to mass produce this food so you just know it's coming out of bags they're stirring it up up with water and it's clumping up and it's like "here you go." You're so used to it you're like "alright whatever" and you eat it all.

DD: At first how was the food because I know I tried it and it was disgusting?

C: In boot camp the food was actually not bad because you didn't have that much time to eat and the food was at least decent at least I think so. Then you get to MRE's and everyone's first MRE is usually like "oh this isn't that bad" and then they eat another one and they eat another one and another one and you're like "this is trash." Because there's literally like no taste, everything's pretty much expired. Once you get to the school house and your duty station you have to do chow hall. Sometimes the chow hall has good days sometimes it doesn't. It just all depends. There's been days that I go to the chow hall and I eat like three plates and there's been days where I go and I'm like "I'll just order pizza."

JW: Was there any indoctrination, like when you went to the marines and there was that total change of mindset?

C: Not in me. I was already in a whole different mindset before I joined the marine corps. But a lot of them were fresh kids who were just leaving their parents house and they had to all of a sudden be responsible for something. I saw them change from the beginning day of boot camp they were childish, doing immature things until the end when they were like "okay I need to step my game up. But for me I was already used to everything. I was used to being responsible for other people, I was used to cleaning up, I was used to getting yelled at. I was nothing new. I definitely did change a little bit. I think about a lot of things differently than I used to. I'm kinda more unbiased in ways because of the different cultures I've been around. It keeps me from being stuck in a one track mind.

DD: How did that help you open up and not be on the one track mind?

C: When you're around a bunch of different people--normally in civilian life the group of people you hang around with is people with common interests as you, they have the same morals, the same beliefs. But in the military you're all just stuck together and you can fight or you can just be friends because at the end of the day and something happens we all need to have each others back. We fight in the military, it's not all rainbows and sunshine like we fight. But at the end of the day it's like "alright bro let's go grab a beer." It keeps me from judging people because I know in different cultures different things are different. People grew up in different places so they think different. I'm not going to try to force my beliefs or opinions on anybody. I'm just like "okay I know where you're coming from."

JW: The military broke you out of this kind of shell of yours?

C: Yeah.

JW: For your interest in physical therapy is this just another way of trying something new, like the military helped you try new things?

C: Yeah in a way I'm trying something new because it's a new experience right after college but at the same time it's something I'm going to stick with after that. Because once I have that then I can still go do new things, go to new places. I need that one constant so once I get to that new job, physical therapy, that's going to become my constant and I can go and spread out other ways.

DD: Once you do physical therapy do you think you'll be helping other veterans?

C: Oh yeah, for sure. I know already we're hurting for physical therapists on base. They talk to a lot of vets that get out and go to school they're like "hey if you're going into the medical field and you get done we could use you." So I'm either thinking about being a physical therapist and being on base and helping out the marines and other military members or go the pediatric way and work with kids. I know they need physical therapists to and I enjoy being around kids and I enjoy helping people. Helping kids there's no better feeling than that.

DD: So did you grow up around many little kids to make you want to be a pediatric therapist?

C: Yeah. There's a lot of kids back home. Before the marine corps, my cousin, she had kids and I would pretty much raise them while she would go work and everything before I went in because I wasn't working at the time. I have a niece now and she's like everything.

DD: What is something you appreciate having to go through the experiences that you've had?

C: Definitely made me a better person for one. All in all I appreciate the fact that the marine corps doesn't allow you to give up on yourself right away. If you fall off yeah you might get messed with a little bit but at the end of the day they're there to pick you up. They don't just throw you out into the wild and be like "hey go do it." Family is like the biggest thing for me and people that aren't even your blood treat you like family. There's no better experience than that.

DD: So you form a big connection with everyone around you.

C: Yes.

DD: What do you miss most about being in service?

C: My friends. One hundred percent my friends. That was the best work environment I could ask for because we all grew through the ranks at the same time. Even when I was corporal and we got our new join drop to the fleet those were like our kids. And you see them progress through the ranks so I hit sergeant and now they're becoming corporals and sergeants and I see them still using the ways that I coached them or helped them. There's been times where a lot of them still hit me up and if they need anything I'm here for you. When they hit me up I do whatever I can.

DD: Do you miss the responsibilities you had in the military?

C: Yeah in a way. I miss running a group of marines. Like PT-ing them which is working them out. I miss being in charge of something. It's weird like now I work at Polo and I've only been working there a short time so at first I was the new guy and now I'm like the fitting room champion. I'm in charge of other stuff, I get to teach so it's kinda like going back--

once you have people underneath you and you get to watch them become part of you that's like watching your child grow up. It's amazing it's a good feeling.

DD: Do you ever plan on taking a minor because you enjoy teaching others?

C: No because I'm more hands on and I'm not a lecture type person. Though I did instruct a corporal course class which is a military education that NCOs have to go through to get to the next rank. So I did instruct a class and I enjoyed it so I got to kinda feel what it was like but I'd rather do something hands on. If I'm working with someone with physical therapy I can still reach them in different ways.

DD: Do you have to serve a certain amount of time?

C: Yeah four years is the minimum. For aviation jobs it's five years. For officer you get done with college then you go for five years. There's ways to extend though I wish I could but the deployment filled up. So four years is the most basic.

DD: So how many years did you take?

C: I did four.

DD: What were some of the benefits you got out of it?

C: Medical benefits for sure and obviously they're paying for my schooling and so that makes me not have to work so much and worry about paying for school, paying for my apartment, paying for bills. Even the vet center is a good place.

CR: You go in there, and it's almost like your back in, because you're around the same environment. They offer a lot of benefits, they help you with your essays for when you transfer, they help you if you need a job; there are job listings up in there for military. There are ways for vets who are wounded, they got help for them in there. We even get to print free paper in there so it's like it's nice.

DD: So, what's the vet center like inside there?

CR: You walk in, you got your quiet space by the computers so some people can actually get some work done, and then you go into the back room and it's kind of just like a lounge area where everyone just can talk about the past or is talking to each other. And there is not a lot of people on their phones; it's just people enjoying each other. It's a good environment.

DD: So, they're not all tech savvy in there? It's more people communicating one on one with each other?

CR: Yeah, we all just prefer to like, joke with each other. Like honestly we're going to text people you know, but it's not like people don't think about snapchat or Facebook or Instagram in there. We just kind of talk and that's rare nowadays; cause

in the military your all sitting and when there is nothing, if there is no work to do for some reason and no one is taking a class everyone is just sitting in a room and you can't just be like, oh I'll just stay on my phone this whole time. No, because you're not. You don't even have your phone in your workplace, at least you're not supposed to, so you're forced to talk. A lot of people don't do that anymore; just sit there and talk.

DD: So that's probably
a big advantage you had taken out of the military?

CR: Yeah, for sure.

JW: Are you still in
service?

CR: No, I
mean...technically in a way. So, when you enlist you have to sign up for four active and four inactive duty, but I still have like three years where they can call me and be like, we need you to come in and I'll be like okay. So, technically they still have me for three years but I'm out at the same time. So, I'm inactive reserve, which is just kind of just do your own thing.

DD: So, do you still
consider yourself a part of the Marine Corps Reserve?

CR: Not entirely.

I would say I'm living the civilian life, but I still have their back.

DD: So, you would be
called in if...?

CR: If something were
to come up. Like if we were to go into another war or something, but other than that, no I wouldn't really get called in.

DD: Is there a time
reserve for people in the reserve?

CR: Uhm, so once
your eight years is up then they can no longer call you. Even if there was like a draft, you already served your time; you don't have to go. They would probably still allow you to go but they can't make you anymore.

JW: With student
life, your grades are you still like a very good student?

CR: I don't know, I
consider myself an average student I guess. It's still a little hard for me thinking like, because usually once I get home in the military, if I have a report or something I can do like a paper or like fifty math problems.

So, it's just different realizing that I'm back in school.

DD: So, what are the grading systems like in school in the Marines and from now being in a student life?

CR: The difference in grades?

DD: Yeah

CR: It's not really too different besides for some classes a 'C' is passing, but in the military a 'C' is failing you need to get an A or a B. There are some times in the military when you can get a 70 for something but most of them are 79 or above; unless you had to redo it. Once you do a class in the military it stays there, you can look at it, you can go back to it, but if you mess up you can retake it with no issue. Here, you know you fail you're paying for it again, then you kind of just have to sit through long lecture for months on end about stuff you already went through just because you didn't get it entirely the first time.

JW: So, the work load is different though?

CR: Yeah.

JW: Okay.

DD: So, what were some of the different lectures? Where the lectures kind of similar to the lectures in school or completely different?

CR: It depends, because you have a bunch of different classes at Marine net and that's where we do all our classes; we have math marines, English marines, algebra. It's like all the basic classes just for

marines; so, it's kind of a little, I would say dumbed down a little bit and then you get those done and it goes towards your next rank. So, it makes them want to do it, you know then for classes like, the lectures we would just have their stand in. I gave classes on patrol, I gave classes on technology.

We, as sergeants we have classes that you have to give your marines every year and there is classes like drinking classes, and we have to know about this stuff like there is no one gets that in this feeling world, like no one gets like hey these are your down factices they just see like a commercial. But it's like instilled into the military, you get it like, pretty much all year round. And they become redundant but at the time they're like needed.

DD: So, do some of the general classes like your English and math classes, do they transfer over to

your student courses now?

CR: Yeah, a lot of

from my classes from the marine core I got like 29 credits, and that's from all the schooling I went to because they teach like a lot of the basic stuff you learn here in college. And so, when I transfer, I don't have to transfer like all 60 credits I do like 40 something and they will take credits from my marine core and at it on that transfer. And yeah like most the classes you get they're a lot of them like the English classes, they're hard. And when you pass it you get a bunch of credit, and some people don't even have to do English because we have a lot of college courses with the marine, and I didn't get to do that, but a lot of people will knock them out so when they come here a lot of their GED classes are done.

JW: Are you planning
on transferring to a university?

CR: Yeah, I haven't
decided which university yet but I do want to.

DD: Do you have
options yet?

CR: I don't know if I
want to stay here in California. And I plan on buying a house in a couple of years so, I want to move somewhere where I could get more property for my money. If that doesn't happen, I will probably go to San Marcos maybe. But if not then I don't know where I am going to go.

DD: So, you're still
kind of looking for universities outside the state?

CR: Yeah

JW: That's pretty
quick buying a home right now isn't it at this age? Do people usually buy homes at this age?

CR: Well I'm going to
transfer to a university, then by the time when I get done with the university I should be, Jesus like 26...27? And then I'll probably have more schooling, but around 26 or 27 I'll probably be buying a house.

JW: Oh wow, I was
thinking I'd wait until I was in my 30's to buy a house.

CR: With the, you get
a VA loan. So, we get to take a house loan out with no interest whatsoever, so you only pay back what you took. And they work with vet's so it's easier for us to buy homes. A lot of people within the military

actually own homes in different states and then they just rent them out or when they go like to that state they just live there.

JW: Are you getting a

house as like, because you talk about family a lot. Do you want to have a family? And like have...is that like one of your dreams or something?

CR: Yeah, eventually

you know. So, once I get, not a bigger house because I would live there by myself but, first starting it will be me and my brother Dominique (me and my other brother have custody of him) my other brother, he has his fiancé and his daughter so I'm like; he can stay with me its fine. So, it will be just me and him, and if anything happens from there you know I'm welcome to a family.

JW: Do you have a

background in carpentry? Do you know how to, I mean did they teach you that in the marines?

CR: Uh, no. Not in my

MOS but there is an MOS where they build in the middle of nowhere. And I mean, it's worth it; they built the showers, you know they built bathrooms if we need them, so it all works. So no but I know enough, and I got a bunch of friends and we just all build together.

JW: Well, sounds like fun.

CR: I got a lot of

friends here in California who are going into carpentry, electrician jobs, stuff like that.

DD: So, you kind of

just pick things up from them?

CR: Yeah, that was

another thing. When I was in the

military when something was wrong with my car, I had a friend, his name was also Austin, but it was Deshler like he was the platoon mechanic. And he wouldn't charge anything he would just be like, oh get me a six pack and he was the cheapest you ever get because he just loved working on cars. He didn't charge like nobody, he would be like, no my boy and not charge anything.

No one is going to do that out here, no one is going to be like, buy me a six pack out here and I'll work on your car. Like that was payment for pretty much a lot of stuff, like hey just buy me a six pack, buy me a pack of smokes.

JW: You got a lot of

networking with that didn't you?

CR: Yeah, mhm.

JW: Did it help with anything else? Other than odd jobs you needed?

CR: Yeah, I mean

anytime I needed help with stuff, there is stuff that I'm not good at that they're good at. So, we always have that information flowing between us. Since I grew up faster than they did, if they needed something like "hey where do I go to do this or where do I go to pay this" I could tell them. Even simple stuff, like I taught them how to iron since some kids don't iron at their house, their mom does. And so, I would teach them stuff like that, I would teach them how to cook basic meals. So, like that was a flow of information I always had there.

DD: So, you basically became like they're older brother to them.

CR: in a way, yeah, but I don't know it was weird. I don't know how to describe it.

JW: Here's a question, and I don't know what it means, but do you qualify for the GI bill?

CR: So that's uh, the GI bill is if you go through the service for at least 36 months, you qualify for the GI bill, and right now I qualify for the post 9/11 GI bill so they pay for my classes and they also pay me money just to survive, like to live. It's basically if you serve a certain amount of time, you get a certain amount of college paid for.

DD: So, the longer you serve the more money you get for college?

CR: No. Like, no matter where, once you get past three years they're going to pay for 36 months college. But if you serve 10 years, you are able to pass it down to your child or your wife; you just say "hey I'm not going to use this, I'm just going to do 10 more years of this and use it for school afterwards and give it to my daughter." You can do that.

JW: That's nice.

CR: That's what a lot of lifers do, they'll just stay in and give it to a family member.

DD: Are there veteran services within the school that help you?

CR: Yeah well, the vet center and it's not just the vets they help it's the kids of the military and the wife's the vets gave their military GI bill too. And it's not just

welcome to vet's either, you can just you can walk into there and check it out like no one will be like get out of here you don't belong. Even the dependents of service members, they're welcome. They enjoy their time they are part of the family now.

JW: What would you

change about the services to improve your experiences?

CR: That is a lot.

There is definitely a problem with the higher ups and the ones in a higher position with a higher rank. It's kind of softening the military, since everyone is voicing their opinion on how things should be done. Were just creating kids to be like, not mentally strong. And so, when we get there, like right before I got out we got new marines and they're like, I don't want to deploy and I'm like 50% of them. I'm like, why did you join? We couldn't even treat them the way we were treated to make us ready for when something happened. Now it is just like, they are almost catering to them. And so there not like, learning how to be their own person because they can just complain and get what they want. There basically a child. And so, I would like to change at least for it to go back to what it used to be creating marines, not professionals.

DD: How are your

fellow students within the marines different from your students in MiraCosta?

CR: I don't know, it's

weird like, we all sit together in Strona's class, and we don't try and stick out or anything. You know we do the same work as everyone else, but when we hear something that relates to the military we like to be like, oh hey did you hear that? You know, if I'm in the class and I hear about the military, it's like an inside joke, but if there is no one there than there no one to share it with. The ones I do sit by in stroma's class it's a good vibe, and there are no harsh feelings over there.

DD: If you could bring

one trait back from the military to Mira Costa what would it be?

CR: Probably

integrity? A lot of people lack integrity nowadays. They take advantage of good things in life and they don't really care about anyone else so I would say integrity, unselfishness. Because there are a lot of selfish people.

I don't understand how people can dislike the military when there are people in the military that I don't know but I would drop my life for them.

I don't know how you can't respect anyone who does that. Whether they just go in for college, because I had marines who just went in for college

but when they went to deploy they didn't go, oh nope I'm not going to do this because I'm trying to hold out for college, no they went and did their job. And you don't find that much especially out in the civilian world where it's everyone for themselves.

JW: So, you knew that before going into the marines, you were ready to lay down your life?

CR: Yeah. I was ready

JW: You were so young?

CR: Yeah, but at the same time it was like, why not. I know it sounds weird but before you get in you think about it a lot but once you're in your like, yeah. I would do anything for these people. Like because there is people you came from nothing, and there is people who came from money. There were people who were rich within the military and you have to like ask, you know why did you join? And they just said, I wanted to do something. And you can't not respect that. Like you can't call he's just joking he doesn't care, no you can't not respect that.

DD: So, you met people from all different sorts of background within the military?

CR: Yeah. I mean, I even got cool with some of the Iraqis when I worked in Iraq. We had a lot of interpreters who worked with us and they became pretty much family too because I was together with them for 7 months. Every month we would go eat with the Iraqis, just because they would cross our flag line and we wanted to make sure we stayed in connection with them. They would cook for us, dance; it was a good time.

DD: So, you kind of connected with everyone, and even though you weren't related you became brothers?

CR: Yeah, those are my brothers.

DD: So, what are some of the relations you have with them now?

CR: Well, one, I think all but two of my friends got out. Three, three. One uh his wife finally just got here from Virginia and uh, he's still in. he reenlisted and so I get to see him every now and then when I travel down, well go and see a movie or something. Uh, my friend Austin, he is back in Indiana with his pregnant girlfriend. And I'm the godfather like I was there, they met each other out here and she's cool. She's a part of the family now, and my roommate he

went back to college he's about a year older than me, and my other two friends, tag and abuse both stayed in. and so I get to see them, well I don't get to see Tagin much because he moved back to North Carolina but I get to see a couple of them every now and then.

DD: So, what are the reunions like when you all meet up with each other?

CR: Well, there is a lot of drinking, (laughing) I mean because that's what we used to do, we used to hang together pop on a game or something and drink. We didn't even really have to go out, like we could just have fun, because it was just the guys we'd drink, play games and have fun. So, when we get together, that's, like the last couple of times we got together it was a wedding. One of our staff sergeant got married. And then one of my other boys he just got out, Consuela he just got married, and it's just more drinking you know? We took him out and we just, hey it's just us tonight, girls we got to do our thing.

JW: Is there anything you want to add to the video that you can just think of?

CR: I think the biggest part that made it easier to go in was that I convinced my older brother to go in. and we was going to go in the buddy system. But a spot opened up and he's 2 years older than I am so I told him you go ahead, and when I went through boot camp I felt bad for him because I talked him into it but then afterwards we looked at it and were like, we broke the cycle. Were no longer back home in Springfield Illinois like everyone else. We took that chance and went for that new experience instead of just going for the for sure thing saying that yeah, I could work here for the rest of my life but why? I have to say; my brother and my other brother Dominique was that key of getting through it just working hard to get to where I want to be.

JW: Would you do it all again?

CR: 100%yeah

JW: Really?

CR: Yeah. I actually almost reenlisted. The only reason why I didn't is because I knew I didn't want to do it for 20, I wanted to start college right away so I'm not too far behind. To where like, this new young grad student gets a job because he's younger. So yeah, I just wanted to start school.

JW: I think what we found, well what I found for the theme of this so far was breaking out of your

shell, break the cycle, try something new and new experiences, and maybe like an aspect of family? That's really strong for you? Do you agree?

DD: I have a question,

you said you encouraged your older brother to join. How was that?

CR: So, at the time

me, my older brother and him which was our eldest brother Dominique all worked at counter market and me and Eddie were both moving up, you know he loved his job, everyone around there loved him. When we heard a lot of people talking about the military he actually joined me to check it out and we were both sitting out there together and he was like, are you really going to do it? And I was like, yeah. And I was like why don't you do it? So, we both went back in and signed the papers. And that was it from there on in.

JW: Did you have an

aspect of leadership while you were in your first job before the military?

CR: Yeah, I mean I

wasn't big, I was in charge of two people because I worked the night time post manager. I would fill out papers telling how much stuff we need. Simple stuff like that and tell them when to go on breaks, so it wasn't nothing big but I still had a small aspect like how to take care of other people.

CR: You go in there, and it's almost like your back in, because you're around the same environment. They offer a lot of benefits, they help you with your essays for when you transfer, they help you if you need a job; there are job listings up in there for military. There are ways for vets who are wounded, they got help for them in there. We even get to print free paper in there so it's like it's nice.

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DD: So, they're not all tech savvy in there? It's more people communicating one on one with each other?

CR: Yeah, we all just prefer to like, joke with each other. Like honestly we're going to text people you know, but it's not like people don't think about snapchat or Facebook or Instagram in there. We just kind of talk and that's rare nowadays; cause in the military your all sitting and when there is nothing, if there is no work to do for some reason and no one is taking a class everyone is just sitting in a room and you can't just be like, oh I'll just stay on my phone this whole time. No, because you're not. You don't even have

your phone in your workplace, at least you're not supposed to, so you're forced to talk. A lot of people don't do that anymore; just sit there and talk.

DD: So that's probably a big advantage you had taken out of the military?

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JW: Are you still in service?

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DD: So, do you still consider yourself a part of the Marine Corps Reserve?

CR: Not entirely. I would say I'm living the civilian life, but I still have their back.

DD: So, you would be called in if...?

CR: If something were to come up. Like if we were to go into another war or something, but other than that, no I wouldn't really get called in.

DD: Is there a time reserve for people in the reserve?

CR: Uhm, so once your eight years is up then they can no longer call you. Even if there was like a draft, you already served your time; you don't have to go. They would probably still allow you to go but they can't make you anymore.

JW: With student life, your grades are you still like a very good student?

CR: I don't know, I consider myself an average student I guess. It's still a little hard for me thinking like, because usually once I get home in the military, if I have a report or something I can do like a paper or like fifty math problems. So, it's just different realizing that I'm back in school.

DD: So, what are the grading systems like in school in the Marines and from now being in a student life?

CR: The difference in grades?

DD: Yeah

CR: It's not really too different besides for some classes a 'C' is passing, but in the military a 'C' is failing you need to get an A or a B. There are some times in the military when you can get a 70 for something but most of them are 79 or above; unless you had to redo it. Once you do a class in the military it stays there, you can look at it, you can go back to it, but if you mess up you can retake it with no issue. Here, you know you fail you're paying for it again, then you kind of just have to sit through long lecture for months on end about stuff you already went through just because you didn't get it entirely the first time.

JW: So, the work load is different though?

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JW: Okay.

DD: So, what were some of the different lectures? Where the lectures kind of similar to the lectures in school or completely different?

CR: It depends, because you have a bunch of different classes at Marine net and that's where we do all our classes; we have math marines, English marines, algebra. It's like all the basic classes just for marines; so, it's kind of a little, I would say dumbed down a little bit and then you get those done and it goes towards your next rank. So, it makes them want to do it, you know then for classes like, the lectures we would just have their stand in. I gave classes on patrol, I gave classes on technology. We, as sergeants we have classes that you have to give your marines every year and there is classes like drinking classes, and we have to know about this stuff like there is no one gets that in this feeling world, like no one gets like hey these are your down factices they just see like a commercial. But it's like instilled into the military, you get it like, pretty much all year round. And they become redundant but at the time they're like needed.

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CR: Yeah, a lot of from my classes from the marine core I got like 29 credits, and that's from all the schooling I went to because they teach like a lot of the basic stuff you learn here in college. And so, when I transfer, I don't have to transfer like all 60 credits I do like 40 something and they will take credits from my marine core and at it on that transfer. And yeah like most the classes you get they're a lot of them like the English classes, they're hard. And when you pass it you get a bunch of credit, and some people don't even have to do English because we have a lot of college courses with the marine, and I didn't get to do that, but a lot of people will knock them out so when they come here a lot of their GED classes are done.

JW: Are you planning on transferring to a university?

CR: Yeah, I haven't decided which university yet but I do want to.

DD: Do you have options yet?

CR: I don't know if I want to stay here in California. And I plan on buying a house in a couple of years so, I want to move somewhere where I could get more property for my money. If that doesn't happen, I will probably go to San Marcos maybe. But if not then I don't know where I am going to go.

DD: So, you're still kind of looking for universities outside the state?

CR: Yeah

JW: That's pretty quick buying a home right now isn't it at this age? Do people usually buy homes at this age?

CR: Well I'm going to transfer to a university, then by the time when I get done with the university I should be, Jesus like 26...27? And then I'll probably have more schooling, but around 26 or 27 I'll probably be buying a house.

JW: Oh wow, I was thinking I'd wait until I was in my 30's to buy a house.

CR: With the, you get a VA loan. So, we get to take a house loan out with no interest whatsoever, so you only pay back what you took. And they work with vet's so it's easier for us to buy homes. A lot of people within the military actually own homes in different states and then they just rent them out or when they go like to that state they just live there.

JW: Are you getting a house as like, because you talk about family a lot. Do you want to have a family? And like have...is that like one of your dreams or something?

CR: Yeah, eventually you know. So, once I get, not a bigger house because I would live there by myself but, first starting it will be me and my brother Dominique (me and my other brother have custody of him) my other brother, he has his fiancé and his daughter so I'm like; he can stay with me its fine. So, it will be just me and him, and if anything happens from there you know I'm welcome to a family.

JW: Do you have a background in carpentry? Do you know how to, I mean did they teach you that in the marines?

CR: Uh, no. Not in my MOS but there is an MOS where they build in the middle of nowhere. And I mean, it's worth it; they built the showers, you know they built bathrooms if we need them, so it all works. So no but I know enough, and I got a bunch of friends and we just all build together.

JW: Well, sounds like fun.

CR: I got a lot of friends here in California who are going into carpentry, electrician jobs, stuff like that.

DD: So, you kind of just pick things up from them?

CR: Yeah, that was another thing. When I was in the military when something was wrong with my car, I had a friend, his name was also Austin, but it was Deshler like he was the platoon mechanic. And he wouldn't charge anything he would just be like, oh get me a six pack and he was the cheapest you ever get because he just loved working on cars. He didn't charge like nobody, he would be like, no my boy and not charge anything. No one is going to do that out here, no one is going to be like, buy me a six pack out here and I'll work on your car. Like that was payment for pretty much a lot of stuff, like hey just buy me a six pack, buy me a pack of smokes.

JW: You got a lot of networking with that didn't you?

CR: Yeah, mhm.

JW: Did it help with anything else? Other than odd jobs you needed?

CR: Yeah, I mean anytime I needed help with stuff, there is stuff that I'm not good at that they're good at. So, we always have that information flowing between us. Since I grew up faster than they did, if they needed something like "hey where do I go to do this or where do I go to pay this" I could tell them. Even simple stuff, like I taught them how to iron since some kids don't iron at their house, their mom does. And so, I would teach them stuff like

that, I would teach them how to cook basic meals. So, like that was a flow of information I always had there.

DD: So, you basically became like they're older brother to them.

CR: in a way, yeah, but I don't know it was weird. I don't know how to describe it.

JW: Here's a question, and I don't know what it means, but do you qualify for the GI bill?

CR: So that's uh, the GI bill is if you go through the service for at least 36 months, you qualify for the GI bill, and right now I qualify for the post 9/11 GI bill so they pay for my classes and they also pay me money just to survive, like to live. It's basically if you serve a certain amount of time, you get a certain amount of college paid for.

DD: So, the longer you serve the more money you get for college?

CR: No. Like, no matter where, once you get past three years they're going to pay for 36 months college. But if you serve 10 years, you are able to pass it down to your child or your wife; you just say "hey I'm not going to use this, I'm just going to do 10 more years of this and use it for school afterwards and give it to my daughter." You can do that.

JW: That's nice.

CR: That's what a lot of lifers do, they'll just stay in and give it to a family member.

DD: Are there veteran services within the school that help you?

CR: Yeah well, the vet center and it's not just the vets they help it's the kids of the military and the wife's the vets gave their military GI bill too. And it's not just welcome to vet's either, you can just you can walk into there and check it out like no one will be like get out of here you don't belong. Even the dependents of service members, they're welcome. They enjoy their time they are part of the family now.

JW: What would you change about the services to improve your experiences?

CR: That is a lot. There is definitely a problem with the higher ups and the ones in a higher position with a higher rank. It's kind of softening the military, since everyone is voicing their opinion on how things should be done. Were just creating kids to be like, not mentally strong. And so, when we get there, like right before I got out we got new marines and they're like, I don't want to deploy and I'm like 50% of them. I'm like, why did you join? We couldn't even treat them the way we were treated to make us ready for when something happened. Now it is just like, they are almost catering to them. And so there not like, learning how to be their own person because they can just complain and get what they want. There basically a child. And so, I would like to change at least for it to go back to what it used to be creating marines, not professionals.

DD: How are your fellow students within the marines different from your students in MiraCosta?

CR: I don't know, it's weird like, we all sit together in Strona's class, and we don't try and stick out or anything. You know we do the same work as everyone else, but when we hear something that relates to the military we like to be like, oh hey did you hear that? You know, if I'm in the class and I hear about the military, it's like an inside joke, but if there

is no one there than there no one to share it with. The ones I do sit by in stroma's class it's a good vibe, and there are no harsh feelings over there.

DD: If you could bring one trait back from the military to Mira Costa what would it be?

CR: Probably integrity? A lot of people lack integrity nowadays. They take advantage of good things in life and they don't really care about anyone else so I would say integrity, unselfishness. Because there are a lot of selfish people. I don't understand how people can dislike the military when there are people in the military that I don't know but I would drop my life for them. I don't know how you can't respect anyone who does that. Whether they just go in for college, because I had marines who just went in for college but when they went to deploy they didn't go, oh nope I'm not going to do this because I'm trying to hold out for college, no they went and did their job. And you don't find that much especially out in the civilian world where it's everyone for themselves.

JW: So, you knew that before going into the marines, you were ready to lay down your life?

CR: Yeah. I was ready

JW: You were so young?

CR: Yeah, but at the same time it was like, why not. I know it sounds weird but before you get in you think about it a lot but once you're in your like, yeah. I would do anything for these people. Like because there is people you came from nothing, and there is people who came from money. There were people who were rich within the military and you have to like ask, you know why did you join? And they just said, I wanted to do something. And you can't not respect that. Like you can't call he's just joking he doesn't care, no you can't not respect that.

DD: So, you met people from all different sorts of background within the military?

CR: Yeah. I mean, I even got cool with some of the Iraqis when I worked in Iraq. We had a lot of interpreters who worked with us and they became pretty much family too because I was together with them for 7 months. Every month we would go eat with the Iraqis, just because they would cross our flag line and we wanted to make sure we stayed in connection with them. They would cook for us, dance; it was a good time.

DD: So, you kind of connected with everyone, and even though you weren't related you became brothers?

CR: Yeah, those are my brothers.

DD: So, what are some of the relations you have with them now?

CR: Well, one, I think all but two of my friends got out. Three, three. One uh his wife finally just got here from Virginia and uh, he's still in. he reenlisted and so I get to see him every now and then when I travel down, well go and see a movie or something. Uh, my friend Austin, he is back in Indiana with his pregnant girlfriend. And I'm the godfather like I was there, they met each other out here and she's cool. She's a part of the family now, and my roommate he went back to college he's about a year older than me, and my other two friends, tag and abuse both stayed in. and so I get to see them, well I don't get to see

Tagin much because he moved back to North Carolina but I get to see a couple of them every now and then.

DD: So, what are the reunions like when you all meet up with each other?

CR: Well, there is a lot of drinking, (laughing) I mean because that's what we used to do, we used to hang together pop on a game or something and drink. We didn't even really have to go out, like we could just have fun, because it was just the guys we'd drink, play games and have fun. So, when we get together, that's, like the last couple of times we got together it was a wedding. One of our staff sergeant got married. And then one of my other boys he just got out, Consuela he just got married, and it's just more drinking you know? We took him out and we just, hey it's just us tonight, girls we got to do our thing.

JW: Is there anything you want to add to the video that you can just think of?

CR: I think the biggest part that made it easier to go in was that I convinced my older brother to go in. and we was going to go in the buddy system. But a spot opened up and he's 2 years older than I am so I told him you go ahead, and when I went through boot camp I felt bad for him because I talked him into it but then afterwards we looked at it and were like, we broke the cycle. Were no longer back home in Springfield Illinois like everyone else. We took that chance and went for that new experience instead of just going for the for sure thing saying that yeah, I could work here for the rest of my life but why? I have to say; my brother and my other brother Dominique was that key of getting through it just working hard to get to where I want to be.

JW: Would you do it all again?

CR: 100%yeah

JW: Really?

CR: Yeah. I actually almost reenlisted. The only reason why I didn't is because I knew I didn't want to do it for 20, I wanted to start college right away so I'm not too far behind. To where like, this new young grad student gets a job because he's younger. So yeah, I just wanted to start school.

JW: I think what we found, well what I found for the theme of this so far was breaking out of your shell, break the cycle, try something new and new experiences, and maybe like an aspect of family? That's really strong for you? Do you agree?

DD: I have a question, you said you encouraged your older brother to join. How was that?

CR: So, at the time me, my older brother and him which was our eldest brother Dominique all worked at counter market and me and Eddie were both moving up, you know he loved his job, everyone around there loved him. When we heard a lot of people talking about the military he actually joined me to check it out and we were both sitting out there together and he was like, are you really going to do it? And I was like, yeah. And I was like why don't you do it? So, we both went back in and signed the papers. And that was it from there on in.

JW: Did you have an aspect of leadership while you were in your first job before the military?

CR: Yeah, I mean I wasn't big, I was in charge of two people because I worked the night time post manager. I would fill out papers telling how much stuff we need. Simple stuff like that and tell them when to go on breaks, so it wasn't nothing big but I still had a small aspect like how to take care of other people.