

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Candace Lucas

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: December 2, 2014

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is December 2, 2014. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Candace Lucas in Greensboro—Browns Summit actually—North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Candace, could you say your name the way you'd like it to read on the collection?

CL: Candace Brown Lucas.

TS: Right, okay. Well, Candace, why don't we start off by having you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

CL: Okay. I was born in 1988, in Greensboro, North Carolina. I have three brothers and sisters.

TS: Total?

CL: Total.

TS: Not each three.

CL: No, I have three—I have two sisters and one brother; I'm the oldest out of four. I have a daughter who is seven years old now. She's in first grade.

TS: Well, when you were growing up in Greensboro, what did your folks do for a living?

CL: My mom, for the most part, was a stay-at-home mom. My dad, he bounced all over the place. He had a lot of different jobs.

TS: But mostly in this area?

CL: Yes, mostly in Greensboro. We only stayed in Greensboro; we moved from one side of town to the next side of town to the opposite side of town, so we've only stayed in Greensboro. Growing up we didn't have a lot of money but my parents always had stuff for us to do, always kept us entertained and busy so that we didn't really get caught up in some of the more negative aspects of Greensboro or whatever.

TS: What kind of things did you do for fun?

CL: We went to the park. We used to ride the bus a lot so that would take up a lot of time. We would go and play over our cousin's house. We walked, played outside; just stuff that kids don't do today that we used to do then.

TS: Did you do any inside games at all?

CL: Monopoly; we were big on Monopoly. [laughs]

TS: I was going to say, board games.

CL: Yes, we were big on Monopoly, we played it on our own[?]. We learned how to play Spades at an early age, I Declare War. And my favorite was fifty-two card pickup. I'd play it with my brothers; "Hey, you want to play this?" and drop all the cards on the floor.

TS: That's right.

CL: "Pick them up." [chuckles]

TS: It's because you're the oldest you can do that.

CL: Yes.

TS: Now, were they—your brothers and sisters close in age to you?

CL: My—The next up under me is twenty-four, so we're about two—

TS: Two years apart?

CL: Yes. With my baby brother, I think I'm seven years older than him, so we're all pretty close; two years, yeah.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Pretty close. Now, when you were growing up did you go to the same school or did you have to go to different schools?

CL: For the most part we all ended up at the same school. Only time it switched was when I got to, like, middle school or high school. I went to school with my younger sister for about a year or two, together, but mostly we were all—our ages were kind of spread out so that we—we were only at the same school one time, that's because we were at a private school that went from K [kindergarten] through eighth grade.

TS: Okay.

CL: So that's the only time we were all together.

TS: What's schools did you go to?

CL: Oh God. I went to a lot. I went to Rankin [Elementary] and Hunter Elementary [School], [unclear] both in Greensboro. Middle school I went to Lincoln Middle School [The Academy at Lincoln] in sixth grade, Kiser Middle School in seventh grade, eighth grade I went to a private school, [?] charter school, ninth and tenth grade I went to Ben L. Smith [High School], and eleventh and twelfth I went to James B. Dudley High School.

TS: Now, did you like school?

CL: I did like school. I actually did very well in school. I graduated from high school with over a 4.0 GPA [grade point average]. In elementary school they wanted to move me up and I really got mad at my mom because she wouldn't move me up.

TS: Oh, you wanted to move up.

CL: I'm like, "I could have been finished." But I did really well in school. Reading and math have always been my strong first subjects. Even in college I did better with those two subjects. And science, I just do it because I have to do it. [both chuckle]

TS: Mostly the reading and the math.

CL: Yes.

TS: Now, did you have a favorite teacher at all?

CL: When I was in fifth grade at Hunter Elementary School I really had an awesome teacher who made me excited about learning. His name was Mr. House[?], I will never forget that even though it's been fifteen, twenty—

TS: Mr. House?

CL: Mr. House. I'm not sure of his first name but I remember—

TS: Which school was he at?

CL: Hunter Elementary.

TS: Hunter, okay.

CL: Yes, in fifth grade.

TS: Do you remember what he did that impressed you to make you excited about learning?

CL: You could just tell that he really cared about his students. He went the extra mile to get you excited, to get you involved. I remember there was a field trip to Washington, D.C. and my parents couldn't afford it, and he went, like, above and beyond to help me find a mentor, and a lot of different things to help me go on a trip and he came to our house and, like, sat down, talked to my parents, and talked to me, and was like, "Well, Candace is such a great student, I really don't want her to miss out on it." Just—I felt like—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: He was really invested in you.

CL: Yeah. I felt like he really went above and beyond.

TS: That's nice.

CL: Yes.

TS: Now, so as a young girl, what—did you have any sense of what you wanted to do when you got older?

CL: I actually wanted to be a lawyer when I was younger, so that's why I went into the military, to get some experience; I was a paralegal. But being in the military, I saw that lawyers don't always help people. Sometimes they're—I think the bad guys are sometimes—I'm not going to say I have a soft heart, but some of the things the people get in trouble for I feel like I could understand why they did it or what caused them to do it, so I have a hard time prosecuting people like that.

TS: So the prosecuting attorney part wasn't so—wasn't as attractive?

CL: No.

TS: What about being a defense attorney?

CL: I liked that, too, but then again, you have people that are really stupid things and you're like, "Why did you do that?"

TS: [chuckles]

CL: So I switched over like, "No, I'd rather be a teacher;" teach children the right way to do things, and help them with other things. I feel like teachers aren't only there for academic reasons. I feel like teachers help you with life skills as well.

TS: Yes. Now, when—So you thought you wanted to be a lawyer. What—Did something inspire you to that?

CL: I don't know. It's just maybe superficial, but growing up, like, the lawyers, they always seemed to have their stuff together, they were always quick to have a comeback, and it just looked very—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was this, like, on TV or did you—

CL: *Matlock*. [American legal drama, starring Andy Griffith in the title role of criminal-defense attorney Ben Matlock]

TS: Okay.

CL: On TV. [chuckles]

TS: You've got to love him.

CL: Yes, *Matlock* on TV.

TS: That's awesome.

CL: Yes, I loved it.

TS: So okay. So now—At what age did you think that the military might be a route to help you?

CL: Eighteen.

TS: Eighteen?

CL: Eighteen.

TS: What'd you think before then?

CL: I would never go in the military. People in the military are crazy.

TS: Yeah?

CL: You have to do too much stuff. I'm not getting up and going to work at 6:30 in the morning every day.

TS: Did you know anybody in the military before then?

CL: My mom's husband—my stepdad at the time—he was in the military.

TS: What service?

CL: He was in the army.

TS: Okay.

CL: And my cousin, she had joined the Marines a year before I was eighteen; so when I was seventeen she joined the Marines.

TS: What was her experience like?

CL: She didn't like it.

TS: Did that influence you to think maybe it wasn't the greatest thing then?

CL: I just thought she had that experience because she was in the Marines, so.

TS: [chuckles] She picked the wrong branch.

CL: Yes.

TS: Okay. Alright, so you're thinking, "I'm never going to do that." And then what changed to make you think more towards the military?

CL: I was eighteen, I didn't really think I was ready to go to college. I knew I would do well in college I just wasn't ready to go. And superficially as it may seem, I had to get out of my parents' house. That was the fastest and easiest way to do it.

TS: Now, did you look at all the services?

CL: I did but—I looked at the [U.S.] Air Force and the [U.S.] Navy as being too soft, and the Marines, like, looking at my cousin I was like, "Maybe I'll do the army."

TS: Do the army?

CL: Yeah.

TS: Now, when you—So when you went—Did you go and talk to a recruiter, did they come to the high school, or how did that work?

CL: I actually took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] test to just get out of class one day, and I ended up scoring very well. So they came to school to talk to me, and then from there they came to the house to talk to my parents. And then I pretty much started training to get ready to go into the military with the recruiters.

TS: Had you been in, like, physical fitness shape up at the—I mean, were you active [unclear]?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CL: I think I was only because we only had one vehicle, so a lot of places I would have to walk to get to, so—not by choice but just—my life, I was just naturally active or whatever. I used to walk to work every day. I would walk to the grocery store or wherever, so that pays off in the long run when you think about it.

TS: Had you been working in high school?

CL: Yes. I got my first job when I was seventeen; I worked in Atlanta, Georgia, over the summer at my grandfather's restaurant.

TS: Oh yeah? What's his restaurant?

CL: Brown's Family Restaurant.

TS: Is that actually in Atlanta?

CL: It's actually in Atlanta, it was on Peach—well, all those streets are named Peachtree.

TS: That's right, they are. [both chuckle]

CL: But it was somewhere down there. I worked there all summer. When I came back to Greensboro I ended up working at Taco Bell, and I worked there up until the week I went to the military.

TS: Okay. Now, you said your stepfather had a background in the army. Did you know—And one cousin, was in the—

CL: I have no idea what my cousin's MOS [military occupational specialty] was, but I know my stepfather, he was a medic in the military. But other than that, that's as far as my—

TS: Background went on that?

CL: Yes.

TS: Did you—What did people think when you said, "I'm going in the army"?

CL: "You're too girly to go in the army." Like, "You're not going to make it," and just a lot of negativity, like, "Why are you going in the army? You're too smart to go in," or just—nobody really was like, "Okay, I believe you can do it. Just go ahead and do it."

TS: Who was saying they thought you were too girly?

CL: All of my friends, a lot of my family. A lot of my family really wanted me just to go to college and—because all of that stuff was going on with Iraq, they didn't want me to go.

TS: What year was this that you joined?

CL: Two thousand six.

TS: Okay.

CL: Yes.

TS: So they were worried?

CL: Yeah, they were worried.

TS: But other than that—other than being worried—did they support you for the choices you made for the army?

CL: Later on down the line they did, but not, like, my first year in they didn't really. They didn't really start supporting me until I went to Iraq.

TS: What did you think about that? I mean, what were you thinking at the time?

CL: For me, it was just, "Well, okay, yeah, I believe I can do it. I need to go ahead and prove you wrong so that you can see that I can do this and I'm—"

TS: Oh, so maybe they didn't think it was something that you could handle?

CL: I think some of that too.

TS: Okay.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Well, tell me a little bit, then, about—did you do a delayed entry or did you go right in?

CL: I went right in.

TS: Okay.

CL: Because I knew somebody else that did the delayed entry program, but I was just like, "Nope, either I'm going to go or I'm not going to go, I can't sit around here and wait six months or a year. I just—If I'm going to do it, I'm going to go ahead and do it." So I think I started training for, like, maybe a month or two. Then after that, time to go.

TS: And you just went in. So you went—You told me when you went in; it was August?

CL: August.

TS: Oh, summer.

CL: The first week of August.

TS: And you ended up—Where was your basic training?

CL: Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

TS: Fort Jackson, nice and toasty.

CL: Very hot.

TS: In August.

CL: Very hot. I remember the first day of basic training, we get off the bus—and I'm not a sweater, so my drill sergeant, he would be yelling at me, "You're not sweating enough! Drink more—"
I'm like, "I don't sweat." Like, "Don't get me wrong, I'm working hard, I'm just not a sweater."

TS: Right.

CL: So they would yell at me for not sweating enough.

TS: [chuckles] Tell me what that was like; your initial memories of, like, that experience when you're—like, when they're trying to tear you down, sort of thing.

CL: Basic training, it was—it was an experience. It was hard to the extent that I had to get used to working with teams.

TS: With a team?

CL: Yes.

TS: Okay.

CL: I don't really like the thing that if you do something bad we all get in trouble. That was the hardest thing for me to understand, which I understand now, like, being in the combat experience, I understand that, but in the moment, in those nine weeks, I'm like "no."

TS: Had you been, like, more individualistic?

CL: Yeah, indi—If you do something wrong, I shouldn't have to suffer because you did something wrong. I will take responsibility for my own actions and you take responsibility for your actions.

TS: Well, that must have been hard.

CL: It was very hard. I did—I wasn't used to the—that we always had to have somebody with us when we went somewhere, whether it was to the bathroom or to go eat or—we always had to have somebody with us. I was—I'm used to just doing my own thing; like, I go when I want to go, I don't want to wait for you or have to—So that—Yeah, I'm very individualized I guess.

TS: Yeah, independent.

CL: Very independent.

TS: Well, you're the oldest, too, in your family.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Now, did you—Were you having second thoughts about it at all?

CL: At one point in time inside the military I was like, "No way. I'm tired of this. I'm tired of working out all the time. I'm tired of getting smoked [to be disciplined through extreme

physical exercise or activity, conducted by a drill sergeant during basic training]." How do I say this in the civilian world?

TS: Smoked.

CL: Like, you know what smoked is, yeah.

TS: I know what smoked is. I think people know what it is.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CL: "I'm tired of getting smoked; like, I'm over it. I'm not—I'm leaving."
My drill sergeant's like, "If you want to leave the gate's right there."
I get up. He's telling me [unclear] back down here. He's telling me I could leave
and I get ready to leave and—

TS: He's cursing you out.

CL: Yes. My drill sergeants were crazy. I know everybody said that Fort Jackson is soft but
my drill sergeants were crazy. I remember we had this drill sergeant, he was Hispanic of
nature, he threw a freaking desk at us and was like, "It doesn't matter. You can report me.
I'll come back in the military," and such and such.
I'm like, "What?"

TS: He threw a desk at you?

CL: Yeah, he threw a desk at us.

TS: What happened to have him throw the desk at you?

CL: I don't know. I think we were just regular, but I think some days they come in just really
irritated and it just—I'm like, "Crap. What should we do?"

TS: Now, were you in the open bays? What kind of—

CL: We were in open bays.

TS: Okay.

CL: Like, they would come in and just—if your locker's not secured or if your bed's
not—they would come in and just trash it. Like, I felt so bad for the people who would
leave their lockers open, because they'll just come in and tilt it; "Whatever, you should
have locked it."

TS: Did you—

CL: No, they never got me. I always locked it and I would always spin my combination lock around to make sure that you can't just pull it open to unlock it because—nope, I never did that.

TS: [chuckles] How did you do, like, academically and physically; how was that going?

CL: Physically I did well. Academically I did well too. Like, basic training was more so about, like, the physical part of it; land nav [navigation], being able to shoot, being physically active, all that stuff. AIT [Advanced Individual Training] was more academic and I did well in both of those. I don't know what it's called at AIT but I graduated with the equivalent of honors—

TS: Okay.

CL: —or whatever, at AIT.

TS: And AIT is—

CL: The training for our MOS.

TS: And your MOS was—

CL: Paralegal.

TS: Paralegal, right. Now, did you sign up for that when you went in?

CL: Yes.

TS: You said, "This is the job I want"?

CL: Yes, I signed up for that.

TS: Okay. So you get through—you got through your basic, you've gotten through your AIT, and—How did it feel to be in uniform?

CL: It felt weird.

TS: Did it?

CL: The wear it every day, all day. You can't sleep in pajamas, you've got to sleep in your PTs, and you always have to be—it was just, "Why do I always have to be in, like, full uniform?" There's never, like, half of the uniform, you have to wear the whole thing all

the time, and it just was like, "I'm over it." But you always know what you're going to wear, I guess.

TS: [chuckles] You don't have to pick it out, right? They tell you.

CL: No. "Am I going to wear ACUs or ACUS? I don't know."

TS: Was there any particular experience in basic or AIT that you liked; like, a story that you have that you'd like to tell?

CL: I remember when we first got to AIT, we were fresh out of basic training so we had, like, the hardcore discipline, like, we were quiet when we were standing in line, like, not moving. And then we were with some people who had already been at AIT and were getting ready to graduate, and they just were moving all over the place and excited. We're like, "Where is your discipline?" Like, "What are you doing? This is not how you act in formation." So we're, like, just talking so bad about them. And then I look back, like, our—when we were getting ready to graduate we were doing the same thing; we just were like—now I see why they were so happy and excited and moving—like, you're done; I'm just regular going to my [unclear]. Like, being in college you have all these exams and then you're finally just going to work and it's done.

TS: So you're, like, letting off a little bit of steam or something?

CL: Yes.

TS: Where did you get—What was your first assignment at, after your AIT?

CL: I went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

TS: Now, did you get to do a dream sheet and say, "Here's the places I'd like to go" at all?

CL: No.

TS: No? Not at all?

CL: No, not at all. Yeah, I was actually supposed to go to Germany but I ended up getting pregnant. I was in airborne school and they kicked me out of airborne school because they found out I was pregnant.

TS: So you got to go to airborne school? How far along did you get?

CL: It was only, like, three weeks. I think I was two weeks.

TS: How did you like doing that?

CL: You know what? It wasn't that bad. I had a hard time because they want you to practice just falling. I can't just let myself fall. I don't—That concept doesn't work well with me. Like, if I fall by accident I understand, but purposefully letting myself fall—

TS: So they're teaching you how to hit the ground when you—

CL: Yes. I can't do it. I had a hard time doing it. They were like, "Just fall."
"No, I can't."

TS: Yeah. How'd you get selected for that?

CL: Just signed up for it. As long as all of my PTs were good and my AIT grades were good they let me sign up for it, and they ended up putting me in the program.

TS: Where was that at?

CL: Fort Benning, Georgia.

TS: Fort Benning. So you did that right after AIT?

CL: Yes.

TS: And then you became pregnant?

CL: Yes.

TS: And then is that when you got orders to Fort Campbell?

CL: Yes.

TS: So what happened then when you became pregnant? How did that work in the military?

CL: We took a drug test actually.

TS: Okay.

CL: So I wasn't on drugs but I was pregnant so—

TS: That's how—

CL: [chuckles]

TS: Is that how you found out?

CL: Yes.

TS: You didn't know.

CL: Yeah, and I still didn't believe it. I took, probably, another ten or fifteen pregnancy tests, and a couple of blood tests. I was like—But yeah, [unclear].

TS: Yeah. So then—So you had your daughter.

CL: Yes.

TS: At Fort Campbell?

CL: Yes, at Fort Campbell, which when I arrived there it seemed like everybody and their mom and their sister and their aunt was pregnant. I think at one point in time Fort Campbell had some many pregnant people they [unclear] for all the moms to be.

TS: [unclear]

CL: Yes. So yeah.

TS: How was your treatment while you were pregnant? I mean, did you get good health services and all that kind of stuff? You're making a face. It's hard to capture that on audio.

CL: [laughs] Realistically, from talking to, like, family and friends, I think that I had a sucky pregnancy experience.

TS: As in physically or—

CL: As in physically, as in healthcare provider, as in all of that stuff, because—but I think at the end of the day, it is a military hospital, where—don't get me wrong, they do cater to pregnant people, but it's more so oriented for male soldiers and more, like, typical problems, not pregnancy. And then there were so many people that were pregnant you didn't really get the time and attention that I think you needed or deserved.

TS: So they were overwhelmed by the number of women who needed the care; even gynecological care.

CL: Yes.

TS: Okay.

CL: I would have appointments and I would be in and out in, like, twenty minutes.

TS: Yeah? Now, what did they do for your duty while you were pregnant?

CL: I still did regular duty. I think, like, my last month I went to half days where I would leave at, like, 1:00 [p.m.], but that still—I guess that's good because—considering you did PT [physical training] at 6:30 [a.m.] and leave at 1:00 instead of 5:00, so.

TS: So you still were doing your PT?

CL: Yes, just did a modified—we still would run, we still would walk. Because people think that when you're pregnant you can't—if you were doing it before you can still do it when you're pregnant because your body's used to it. So yeah.

TS: So you did that. Okay. Now, how was your experience just for a job at Fort Campbell?

CL: To be honest, I liked it. My first year or two I really loved being in the army. I loved my bosses, I loved my NCOICs [Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge], I loved the people I worked with. I had no complaints. I didn't start disliking the military until I got ready to go on my second deployment, because that's when I really started to be in the military, I really started to see other people who had been in ten, fifteen, twenty years, and they were deployed. Here I am, only in two, three years, getting ready to go on a second deployment. Like, "What's going on here? This doesn't add up." So that's when I really started to dislike it. And then two of my chain of command changed as well and they were just very different from what I was used to when I first started being in that particular legal office.

TS: Before it changed to ways that you weren't as happy with, what—can you describe a typical day for yourself?

CL: We would get up, do PT for about an hour, hour and a half. We would go home for about an hour, take a shower, eat breakfast, come back to work, do our legal separations or whatever legal actions that we have to do. But I felt like my first year or two it was more camaraderie, we felt more like a family versus just coworkers. So I think that had a lot to do with it too. We would go on lunch break together and just—we talked more than just military stuff when we were there the first year or two.

TS: Who was in your office with you?

CL: I had a lot of people. I had—My NCOIC was Sergeant Dunbar—or FSC, Sergeant First Class Dunbar. We had Sergeant McCauley, Sergeant Finedoe[?].

TS: Are these all men, or some women?

CL: All men, yes.

TS: Did you mostly work with men?

CL: Yes, I was in infantry brigade.

TS: In infantry brigade?

CL: Yes.

TS: Which infantry were you in?

CL: We were at 101st Airborne Division, 1st Brigade.

TS: One hundred and first Airborne, 1st Brigade?

CL: Yes, 101st Airborne Division, 1st Brigade.

TS: What was that like?

CL: To be honest, it didn't bother me, because, like—I don't know. I guess going through basic training and AIT you get used to, like, being with men all the time, and I feel like—me, personally—I never had anybody, like, go overboard, as far as any sexual assault or anything. I think it's all a way of how you deal with things and how you respond to things. I never was that girl that you could just say whatever and I'd not respond back to you. Like, I'm not going to, "[make laughing noise]."

TS: What kind of things would people say?

CL: Just like sexually oriented things. Because being a woman in the infantry brigade, or just a woman around males period, because in basic training you didn't get to go anywhere, you didn't get to—So of course, things would be said and it's just up to you to approach them, or to let them slide off your shoulder, or—It's just—I think it's all of how you handle the situation.

TS: So you think that women have to, like, set boundaries for the men?

CL: I do. I think so, because if you don't set it what's to keep them from crossing that line? And a lot of people just think—Or a lot of women think it's okay for them to just say whatever, and I feel like when they think that they think they can do whatever, and that's when you end up in a bad situation.

TS: I see, okay. So you set the boundaries that you wanted to set.

CL: Yes.

TS: And so, you're getting along—So some people have said different things about the work environment, like, that they've enjoyed; like, it's like a family. And sometimes they say that the guys they worked with treated them like a sister.

CL: Yes.

TS: Did you feel that way?

CL: I did. Like, all of my—For the most part, all of my friends at Fort Campbell were guys, and I was like their little sister. They used to watch over me, they would make sure, "Hey, are you doing okay? Do we need to go somewhere?" All that stuff.

TS: Right.

CL: They used to check on me all the time. And then I was the same way, they're protective over me, I was protective over them, it's like, in a sisterly type of way.

TS: Now, were you—Did you—Were you married at this time?

CL: No.

TS: Okay.

CL: I didn't get married till I was out of the military.

TS: Till you were out of the military?

CL: Yes.

TS: So the whole time you were in the military you were single? Okay.

CL: For the most part, yeah.

TS: So you had this kind of relationship with—Were there any other women in your office?

CL: There was one but she was [unclear]. I think that for a typical female, even though we're, like, girly and like hair and nails and all that stuff, we still—we're like one of the guys; that's just what we do.

TS: What kind of stuff did you guys do on your off time?

CL: I didn't do anything. We watched—

TS: No?

CL: No. We went to Walmart. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah?

CL: Went to go eat. We went to the mall every once in a while, but we didn't really do anything. Like, we weren't into the club life or—we used to go hang out at Walmart.

TS: Did they have an NCO Club there?

CL: They had an NCO Club there but we didn't go to that. They had, like, off post clubs that we would go to.

TS: I see, okay.

CL: But for the most part me and my friends, we hung out at Walmart; like, that was our favorite place to go; we'd go to different Walmarts in Fort Campbell.

TS: [chuckles]

CL: "We ain't been to this Walmart, let's go there." Or we'd go—We, like—We'd try to make it a thing that we would all eat dinner together Sunday, but we didn't—We'd go the movies, but we didn't really—I feel like, looking back, we didn't really have a social life. I used to be at somebody's house or somebody's dorm just sitting back, eating pizza, and watching TV.

TS: That's a social life.

CL: Yeah, but—

TS: That is one.

CL: It's horrible.

TS: [chuckles] Well, now, what—what are your housing conditions like at Fort Campbell?

CL: At Fort Campbell we all stayed in the barracks. They're kind of like dorms. Well, they're probably not as nice as dorms, but yeah, we stayed in dorms.

TS: Now, is this with your unit? You all stayed—

CL: Yeah, with your unit. So we all were—Me and my friends were all spread out throughout Fort Campbell, but you stay in barracks with your—that your unit provides. Most of the barracks you have two or three roommates and you share a bathroom. It's not really like a—Yeah, it's just a bathroom.

TS: Like a suite, sort of?

CL: I wouldn't even say a suite.

TS: No?

CL: It's just a shower, a toilet, and then, like, a kitchen sink. But there's no stove or no—Now, they might be nicer now but when I was there it was just—

TS: That sounds pretty plain.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Now, was it a coeduca—or coed dorm?

CL: The building was coed but your roommate was always the same sex as you.

TS: Was the floor coed?

CL: No. The way my building was it was an outside area, so our door led straight outside, so it wasn't like your—

TS: So it's almost like a duplex, sort of?

CL: Like an apartment building.

TS: Oh, okay.

CL: We just—

TS: And then with the doors all along—Okay. I see.

CL: Yeah.

TS: I can see one of those.

CL: It was kind of—Actually, our whole room, for us two people and our bathroom, would fit in this room that we're in right now.

TS: Pretty small.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CL: You had a little twin size—I don't think my bed was twin size. Well, it probably was but it just—there was no space in there.

TS: Yeah. Now, at what point did you get orders to deploy?

CL: My unit, they deployed a week before I had my daughter, so I was on orders, pretty much, when I had my kid. I left her when she was three months old and I went to Iraq. And I didn't find out till, like, a year or two later I wasn't supposed to leave until she was six months old. Yeah. But they had me on orders pretty much as soon as I gave birth. I remember walking in to PT one day, they're like, "When are you due?"
"Today."
"Oh, okay. You're going to be in Afghanistan in a couple of months—or Iraq."

TS: What'd you think about that?

CL: It was horrible. Like, I remember I was like, "I can do it. It's not that hard." But when it came time to actually drop my daughter off—because my mom kept her in North Carolina while I was deployed. When I actually went to the airport it was horrible. I just knew that I was ready for it but I was not—like, I was crying and screaming. I think at one point in time I, like, passed out from just—I was hysterical. And I was crying and stuff so bad my dad, he started crying. I was like, "What am I supposed to do here?"

TS: It was pretty traumatic.

CL: Yeah. You think that you're ready for something and then it actually happens, you're like, "I wasn't ready."

TS: No?

CL: No.

TS: So what—How did you deal with that when you were in Iraq?

CL: My mom used to send me lots of pictures. I would try to get on the phone as much as I could. But other than that, it's—not to sound harsh—just suck it up and moved on.

TS: Yeah? What was the experience like for you when you were in Iraq? Where'd you go?

CL: I was at COB [Contingency Operating Base] Speicher; I was in Tikrit, Iraq. COB Speicher is C-O-B, and it's Speicher, S-P-E-I-C-H-E-R, I think. It was a long time ago.

TS: [chuckles] That's okay. Tikrit, though?

CL: Yes, T-I-K-R-I-T.

TS: What was that like? What was it—like, the physical environment like?

CL: To be honest, it wasn't that bad.

TS: Okay.

CL: It was kind of like being stateside because at the point in time I went you weren't really getting attacked, you didn't really have to go on missions all the time. It wasn't—It was pretty much built up. It wasn't—

TS: This was in 2007?

CL: Two thousand eight, yeah.

TS: Two thousand eight. Do you know what month it was?

CL: February?

TS: Okay.

CL: So it wasn't that bad at all. I don't think it was that bad. Like, my NCOICs told me, "Oh, well, when we first got over here—" like, three or four years ahead of time—"we'd have to go to the bathroom in a bottle," or, "We didn't have this."
"Oh, it's 2008 now [unclear]."

TS: So what—Okay, so your—It was okay conditions. So you had, like, a—

CL: We had bathrooms, we had showers, we had good living arrangements. Our DFACs were good.

TS: The what were?

CL: Our cafeteria.

TS: Cafeterias?

CL: Yes, dining facilities.

TS: Now, weren't they all run by other commercial—they weren't army run?

CL: No, I think they were ran by—I don't want to say—

TS: Contractors?

CL: Yeah, but they were, like—I don't want to say necessarily Iraqis, but, like, maybe some people from Asian descent. So not like Americans ran the DFAC, it was a different group of people; I'm not sure what they were though.

TS: What was the food like?

CL: It was good, compared to American DFAC food.

TS: Oh, really?

CL: It was better than—

TS: It was better?

CL: Yeah. Surprise, surprise. But they would have, like, different days they would do different food. It would be taco night, or Philly cheesesteak night, or steak night, so the food wasn't bad at all. I think I probably gained weight in Iraq, believe it or not.

TS: Did you really?

CL: Yeah.

TS: You said before we turned on the tape that you were a paralegal for your MOS but when you got to—when you were deployed you did a lot of other different types of jobs.

CL: Well, that was in Afghanistan.

TS: Oh, Afghanistan.

CL: In Iraq we only did—Because Iraq wasn't—it was regular. I felt like it was regular.

TS: Like a regular job?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CL: You would never know that you were deployed unless you go outside, "Oh crap, it's a sandstorm." But other than that, like, it was regular Iraq.

TS: Was it really?

CL: Yeah.

TS: I haven't heard that before from anyone actually; I don't think.

CL: To me, it was—I went—Like I said, I went later on but—and I was at a bigger FOB too.

TS: Okay.

CL: I was at one of the biggest FOBs in Iraq at the time.

TS: That's the one in Tikrit?

CL: Yes. Yes.

TS: Did you—Okay, so, like, a typical day there would be like a typical day back at Fort Campbell?

CL: Yes. Well, it—the days were—we started work earlier and we ended later, but other than that, you didn't have nothing else to do so who cares?

TS: How many hours did you work in a day there?

CL: Probably, like, twelve.

TS: Twelve? Pretty typical? Was it—How many days a week did you work?

CL: Every day. Well, like, the last couple of months we started getting days off, but—

TS: Mostly seven days a week, twelve hours a day?

CL: Yeah.

TS: Well, that's typical; that's what I've heard—

CL: Yeah.

TS: —in deployments overseas, generally.

CL: Yeah, twelve hour day.

TS: Now, did you ever get any time off to do anything?

CL: Like I said, every once in a while I would get a day off of the week, but to be honest, there wasn't nothing really to do there but read and order stuff online.

TS: Really?

CL: [both chuckle]

TS: Did you order stuff online?

CL: I ordered lots of stuff. I used to order books. Like I said, I like to read; I would order books all the time.

TS: Yeah. Did you ever get packages—care packages or anything?

CL: Yeah. I'm a big cookie junkie so my mom would send, like, peanut butter cookies and sugar cookies. And she would send me, like, breakfast stuff. Like, it was these waffles that you didn't have to put syrup or anything on, you just put them in the microwave and you can eat them. So she would send—Stuff that you can't find over there she would send to me.

TS: Simple to send and eat.

CL: Yeah.

TS: How long were you in Iraq?

CL: About a year.

TS: About a year? So you're there a year, the first year of your daughter's life.

CL: Life, yes.

TS: And how's your mom doing?

CL: She's doing good. Her and my daughter have a very close relationship because they were—even though my daughter was so young, they were like each other's, like, support system, because I was her oldest and that's her first granddaughter, so was she was [unclear]. Because me and my mom have a really good relationship, so she was missing me and my daughter was missing me so they, kind of, just held on to each other.

TS: So they formed a special bond at that time?

CL: Yes.

TS: Now, is there anything—Like, I asked you with basic training stuff, is there any special story that you have from Iraq that you sit around and tell people? No? Nothing?

CL: No. I remember me and my sergeant major, we were at work and we were just bored; like, we were bored. We did the experiment with the Coca-Cola and the Mentos.

TS: Okay, what does that do?

CL: So, like, apparently you put a plain Mentos in a bottle of Coke and you shake it up and it'll shoot off like a rocket.

TS: Oh, really?

CL: Yeah. So me and my sergeant major, we did that. But, like, we just—it's one of them things is [unclear].

TS: What kind of—So for workwise, what kind of things are you doing for work? What kind of—

CL: We still were getting people out of the military, doing Article 15s, or—I don't know what it is. [unclear]. Like—

[Article 15 is a section of the Uniform Code of Military Justice allowing commanders to carry out discretionary punishments without judicial proceedings]

TS: Disciplinary type actions?

CL: Yeah, disciplinary actions. We did Power of Attorneys. We did a lot of separation and divorce papers over there.

TS: Did you?

CL: Yeah.

TS: What did you think about that; like, with the Article 15s and the disciplinary stuff? What kind of stuff were people getting in trouble for?

CL: I think activities that you do when you get really, really, bored. And then, of course, like, believe it or not, there's still people who find ways to get alcohol and get marijuana, so we would still do those type actions. But for the most part I think it was just stuff—And then we used a lot of Article 15s for people having sex, because you're not supposed to have sex while you're over there, or be in, like, a closed area with just a member of the opposite sex, so we did a lot of that stuff. But—

TS: So they got Article 15s for that?

CL: Yeah.

TS: Both the men and the women?

CL: Yeah.

TS: Was it pretty equally handed down?

CL: Yes.

TS: Okay. How was—Did somebody catch them or—

CL: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CL: And then we'd have, like, sworn statements from them; "Well, I saw you go in Such-and-such's room and the door was shut."

TS: Some people were telling on other people for that?

CL: Yeah.

TS: That's interesting too. [chuckles]

CL: Yeah, you'd be surprised. And I think it's one of those things where if they're not doing anything then you shouldn't be doing it either, so.

TS: Oh, like resentment.

CL: Yeah.

TS: In some sense.

CL: I think so.

TS: Okay. So you're there for about a year. You didn't really—You didn't have, like, a two week break or—

CL: I did. We got a two week break. I came home to North Carolina. To be honest, I didn't really do anything on my break either.

TS: No?

CL: I just—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Probably that was a decompression time that was difficult, I would think.

CL: Yeah. I took pictures with my daughter, but other than that I stayed, hung around family, didn't really do too much.

TS: Didn't see a lot of friends or anything?

CL: No, because at the time I had been in the military for about a year, and since all my friends were in college and just—we'd just grown apart.

TS: Right, had different kind of world views and things like that.

CL: Yes.

TS: That's the other thing I was going to ask you about. Did you formulate any new world views about things that—I mean, any political views about what was happening in the world? I mean, here you are in a war.

CL: I mean, I feel like I understand why we go to war. I understand it's important for some things, some issues, to be resolved. But I think some of the reasons behind going don't make a lot of sense. I feel like people could handle stuff better if you're truthful about everything versus exaggerating on certain things and making them—

TS: What sense [unclear]—

CL: I feel like politically.

TS: Oh, okay.

CL: Period. And also, like, we're supposed to be helping the country. We used to give out so much money to those people for, in my opinion, no reason, because [unclear] we might mess up your house or your car or whatever, but, like, it doesn't cost \$20,000 to get a car there like it does here; like, it's so different. So the amount of money that we would give those people, I think it wasn't realistic.

TS: It was disproportionate to what the—

CL: Very.

TS: Okay.

CL: Very. And some of the things that we cared about, I felt like you really shouldn't hear about, but—

TS: Like what?

CL: Like their irrigation system, or building new homes for them. Like, who cares? I'm not trying to be rude, but if you don't want to build it for yourself, why should we come over

and want to build this for you or do—if you weren't worried about it before, who's to say we build it and then what happens when we leave?

TS: What do you think about what's going on now there?

CL: Now I still—I hold the same views. Some of the stuff that we do is unnecessary. Now I can understand that they were initially doing it before we got there. And then, like, people always saying, "Oh, the war's going to be over. We're getting all the troops out."

"Really? Like, the war's been going to be over for how long now, and we're still sending people over?"

Like, I have a friend now that's about to go to Kuwait in a couple of months. Don't get me wrong, Kuwait's not bad, but it's the fact that she's still asked to go.

TS: Right.

CL: So what war is really going to be over? So I don't know.

TS: So it's hard to say how we've been successful or anything like that?

CL: I agree, you can't really tell. I feel like a lot of people would still be here without—if we didn't do these things and that. Don't get me wrong. It may be a victory, but sometimes a victory's not really a victory.

TS: Winning the battle but not the longer vision.

CL: Right, exactly.

TS: When you got back—When you came back from your deployment, you go back to Fort Campbell?

CL: Yeah, I went back to Fort Campbell.

TS: And how—Now, is this when the leadership structure kind of changed?

CL: Yeah, probably about three or four months, everybody was getting orders to go different places, and getting promotions and stuff, so they were moving up into a better slots. And then beyond that three to four months we got the new chain of command, and then we started training to go to Afghanistan.

TS: After about three or four months?

CL: Yeah. So we stayed at Fort Campbell for about a year, and then it was time to go. Well, we stayed there about eighteen months, and then it was time to go to Afghanistan.

TS: Where did you do your training at?

CL: It was at Fort Campbell.

TS: You didn't go—You didn't deploy anywhere for that?

CL: Well, we—like, a month—maybe three or four months before we went to Afghanistan we went to Fort Polk, Louisiana. I don't know how long we went; it seemed like forever.

TS: How was Fort Polk?

CL: Horrible. It was horrible. It was cold, it was rainy. You don't have cell phones, you don't have stores. It was just horrible. It felt like you were—That felt more like Iraq than freaking Iraq felt like.

TS: It is pretty isolated.

CL: Yeah. Horrible.

TS: I've heard a few things about Fort Polk before.

CL: Yeah, I would never go back.

TS: So you—Now you have to deploy again, you have to leave your daughter again. Now she's—what?—almost two?

CL: Yeah, she was, like, two or three. But—I know this sounds bad, but it was easier the second time. I guess I had left her for that year and then I had taken her back home for that month, and then—I don't know. In the military you get desensitized to a lot of stuff; like, stuff that should bother you.

TS: You get what?

CL: Desensitized to a lot of stuff.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, desensitized, right.

CL: Yeah, I feel like it should bother me that I'm leaving her but I guess I've done it before, I've done it—time over there so.

TS: Well, you knew what to expect more, I guess, maybe, right?

CL: Yeah.

TS: And you knew your mother could handle things.

CL: Yes.

TS: And you had some sort of, maybe, confidence about that?

CL: Yeah, but I feel like no parent should ever get used to leaving their kid—

TS: Right.

CL: —as much as you get used to leaving them in the military.

TS: Yeah.

CL: [unclear]

TS: Now, how was your deployment to Afghanistan different from Iraq?

CL: Afghanistan was horrible. You knew you were deployed there. I remember, like, my first week or two being there, I was on the FOB [Forward Operating Base] and they was like, "Oh yeah, we never get bombed here. This place hasn't been bombed in, like, six, seven years." The first week we were there we were under attack. Like, what the crap?

TS: Mortars?

CL: Yeah, like RPGs [rocket propelled grenade]. But they weren't—They didn't really get close but I think the longer we stayed there the closer they got to—My last month there they were, like, hitting the FOB; like, a RPG hit our building. And just they—

TS: Where were you at?

CL: I was in Jalalabad, but I was at a FOB called FOB Finley Shields; but we were in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

TS: FOB Finley Shields?

CL: Yes. F-I-N-L-E-Y, Shields, S-H-I-E-L-D-S. Don't ask me how to spell Jalalabad.

TS: That's alright.

CL: You can probably Google it and find it though; we were on the news all the time.

TS: Now, was that an army post or—

CL: We had a mix of people, but our FOB was very small.

TS: Was it?

CL: Yeah, we might have had a thousand people.

TS: That's it?

CL: Yeah. But it was fairly small.

TS: So you said it was different, you felt like—not—you felt like you were in a war zone here?

CL: Yes.

TS: You didn't feel that way in Iraq?

CL: No, I didn't worry about getting attacked, I didn't worry about people sneaking in and—I didn't—

TS: No?

CL: No.

TS: Not at all? But in Afghanistan you did?

CL: Yes.

TS: Now you had different duties you said, in Afghanistan.

CL: Yeah, in Afghanistan I was on guard duty.

TS: What was that like?

CL: Horrible, because you're already tired from working, like, your twelve hour shift, and then you've got to work these extra hours to be on guard duty, and then turn around and go back to work the next day. Like, it was just—

TS: Too much? Where were you put for guard duty?

CL: At the front gate.

TS: Yeah?

CL: Yes.

TS: Are you checking people?

CL: Yes.

TS: Do you have your weapon?

CL: Yes.

TS: Are you just checking women or women and men?

CL: Everybody.

TS: Everybody?

CL: Everybody; people, vehicles; we're checking everything that comes in.

TS: Was that scary?

CL: I think the first couple times it was scary, but with anything you do [unclear]. But then you would get scared again; like, after you get attacked, then you'd be like, "This is the same time we got attacked last time." So I guess it all depends on what happened that week to make you—

TS: So you did guard duty at the gate, you did—you told me you did some other things, too. What other—

CL: I did mail.

TS: Mail?

CL: [chuckles] Yeah.

TS: Processing mail?

CL: Yeah. Going to pick it up, bringing it back, giving it out.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Where was—Oh, at a different—

CL: Yeah, it was only, like, twenty minutes down the road, so it was—

TS: But you had to go outside the FOB, right?

CL: Yes.

TS: Was that nerve wracking?

CL: The first time it was but the more you do it, like, eh, whatever.

TS: Did you go on convoy or just one truck?

CL: Convoy.

TS: Convoy?

CL: Yes.

TS: Now, you said, too, that you were a driver?

CL: Yeah.

TS: What was that like?

CL: It wasn't that bad, it was just hot and uncomfortable, like—

TS: What were you driving?

CL: I don't even remember what they were called. It wasn't a Hummer, it wasn't a [unclear]. A five ton? [unclear]?

TS: Pretty big?

CL: Yeah, big.

TS: Pretty big vehicle?

CL: Yes. So.

TS: Now, did you have any—Did you get any criticism from any of the guys for doing that kind of work?

CL: No, I think for the most part we used to get criticism because we didn't do enough. Like, "Oh, well, I'm not here every day," blah, blah, blah.
"Well, I'm sorry, that's not my MOS." Like, "That's not—"

TS: Right.

CL: "—what I'm supposed to be doing but okay. Whatever."

TS: So it was more like you should be doing more of this dirty work, sort of stuff?

CL: Yes. Yes.

TS: But you do—you were doing your MOS too; you're still doing your paralegal?

CL: Yes, we were still doing that, and then on top of that we did—like I told you, we were giving—we called them CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] funds. We would give out money to people that we may have, like, wrongfully done or whatever. We do [unclear] investigations.

[Commander's Emergency Response Program is money for military commanders to use for conducting rebuilding and reconstruction during the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars]

TS: What kind of investigations?

CL: Like, if anybody got hurt or anybody got killed or whatever, those types of things.

TS: For, like—Was it the Iraq—the Afghanistan or the Americans that got—

CL: Mostly for us we would do those. Yeah.

TS: That had to have been pretty difficult.

CL: It was—It was crazy.

TS: What kind of things would you do for the investigations?

CL: We would have to figure out exactly what took place, what were the circumstances surrounding that. What were their injuries, how did they die; like, all that. It was a lot of—Yeah. Because you got to send the report home to the family, and then, like, higher ups have to know what happened and if they were doing the right thing and what they could have done differently. Just different things.

TS: Like an after action report to figure out what happened?

CL: Yes. Yes.

TS: How were you investigating? Are you just doing, like—Are you physically going somewhere, are you—

CL: Not really. We were more so, like, getting sworn statements, sometimes pictures, just—medical records. Just things like that.

TS: Was that really difficult, though? I mean, I think emotionally that would be something that would—

CL: Yeah, but some of the pictures that you would get, and then some of the details that you would get would just be so horrible, and then there'd be, like, one of them things, like, you just saw them. You know what I mean?

TS: The person?

CL: Yeah. And then here you are right in there. Don't get me wrong, you got to be professional, but it's still like we were just at the DFAC.

TS: Right.

CL: I mean, I understand what happened but I don't understand.

TS: So people that you actually knew, that died there?

CL: Yes.

TS: That has to be really difficult.

CL: Yeah, I think it's one of those things that—this sounds so bad—that, like, you have to put to the back of your mind. It's crazy in the moment, it's still crazy when you sit down, like, really think about it, but it's one of those things you can't really do anything. I remember this guy, I just know he's going to pull through, like, he's not—I don't know. It's crazy.

TS: So you—There's someone who you thought would make it and then they didn't make it?

CL: Yeah. A lot of time you always—you're always, like, "Okay, I've seen people come back from worse. It can—"

TS: Right.

CL: And then it's like you get that call and then you're like, "Well—" you got to notify their family that—and it's like—

TS: How old are you while you're handling all this?

CL: Twenty-one, twenty-two. Yeah.

TS: Did you ever think, maybe later, like, here's the world you're in, and then the friends that you grew up with have no understanding of what you've been through?

CL: Yeah.

TS: You think about that?

CL: Yeah, I think about it more so now in college because I'm at college at a later age than most people, and I feel like a lot of people at UNCG, I'm not going to say are spoiled, but they don't get it. They don't—I feel like sometimes they are so ungrateful of the circumstances that they're in, or situation they're in, I'm just like, "Y'all have no idea," but—

TS: Is it hard to sit in a class where, like, you're trying to really learn and pay attention, and people are just fooling around?

CL: Yeah, that frustrates me a lot, more than you would think; like, why didn't you get[?] [unclear]. I don't know. It just bothers me.

TS: Because I've had—I've talked to a lot of students that have also been deployed, and some of them say they don't—the phrase "they don't suffer fools gladly."

CL: Yes.

TS: It's like they're sensitive to things, like discussions about the war, or things like that. Like you said, people don't really understand.

CL: Yes.

TS: Now, did—would you sit and just be quiet or would you speak up? Did people know you were a veteran?

CL: Somehow it always comes up. I don't know what but it would come up and, like, I won't say anything unless it rubs me the wrong way. Like, I hate when people speak about things that they have no idea about. I feel like if you don't know anything about it there's no reason for you to comment; like, just—I would rather you be quiet than you just say, Oh, well, I think—"

"No, that's wrong," because I'll quickly jump in, like, "No, that's not how it was. That's not how it is. You know what you see on TV."

TV changes a lot of things, so what may have happened can be the totally opposite of what—and then there are so many military shows and military movies and I'm like—

TS: It's not real.

CL: Yeah, it's very inaccurate, so I'm just like—Actually, it just depends on what the comment is, if I choose to respond to it or not.

TS: Yes.

CL: But some stuff—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Or maybe who it is, if you feel like—

CL: Yeah, some people are just ignorant I think, and I feel like it's too easy to actually do, like, some research before you speak on a subject, but that's just my personal opinion not my [unclear].

TS: Well, you're in a career of education and educators.

CL: Yes.

TS: Right? And so, you probably feel like they should have some knowledge of—

CL: Yeah, but these—most of the people I'm in school with, they're young.

TS: Yes.

CL: Like, they live a very sheltered life, they still rely on their parents for a lot of things, so they don't really have a view, and I feel like they really shouldn't have an opinion on the outside world when you've never really been exposed to it at all, so.

TS: Right, you haven't lived out on your own or experienced the hardships and things.

CL: Yes.

TS: Did you find—How did you find the camaraderie in Afghanistan, compared to the other places that you were?

CL: We deployed as a unit, so the same people that we had talked to. Well, we ended up staying together, like, traveling together, and so you ended up talking to people that you may not want to talk to stateside. Like I said, we stayed together so you, kind of, get used to talking to them.

TS: Now, in the dynamics of the male/female ratio, how was that?

CL: It still was the same. Like, men outnumbered the females.

TS: Because you're still in an infantry unit, right?

CL: Yes.

TS: So the other—The guys that you're hanging out with, are some of them in the legal field and some of them—

CL: No, because the way the legal field works is only one person per battalion, so only, like, seven of us in the entire brigade. So we're pretty close knit family, so we didn't really—we all were split up when we were in Afghanistan so we didn't see each other till, like, we had training and we'd go to the main FOB, but—

TS: Okay. So on your separate FOBs you're, like, the only one there.

CL: Yes.

TS: I see. And so, you're handling all the paperwork and everything.

CL: Yes.

TS: I see. So the rest of the people are actually doing the army work of—

CL: Yes.

TS: —of going out on patrol; things like that?

CL: Yes.

TS: Okay. So those are the ones you're hanging out with?

CL: Yes. I didn't really hang out with too many men in Afghanistan. I feel like—I feel like you put yourself in unnecessary situations when you hang out with the opposite sex because you are in a deployed environment, you're not able to do the things that you normally do. And I think—I think you have a higher chance of, like, something bad happening, like, as far as sexual activity or whatever, and I would just rather not put myself in—like, you think that something's okay or something's going to happen, and I just feel like that's a different type of environment to put yourself in, because you're with the same people all the time. I mean, I understand, like, a lot of—we were young, so I feel like a lot of people were used to doing things, and that you're not able to do it now you act more out of character in those situations. So I wouldn't really hang out with males too much in Afghanistan.

TS: No?

CL: No.

TS: So the—I mean, when we here in news reports today about the rape—of sexual assault and rape and things like that that happen on deployment—it's interesting it's coming out in colleges, too, right now.

CL: Yes.

TS: But that—Is that anything that you were aware of at the time?

CL: Yes. And I feel like—this is probably very wrong of me to say—but I feel like it all depends on the situation you put yourself in. I always tell people, "Don't put yourselves in unnecessary situations." There's no reason for me to be hanging out with somebody at midnight, and, like, alcohol or no alcohol involved, there's no—I feel like there's no reason for me—I feel like nothing good can come of that situation.

TS: Yes.

CL: Especially in an environment like that where you are deprived of so much, and that the tension levels are always high, not even just, like, sexual sports[?] but, like, your energy or something bad might have happened that day, or something you heard about back home. It's so much stuff that can go into—I don't—

TS: Everything is compressed, right?

CL: Yes.

TS: In a way that it isn't when you have a lot more outlets back in the States—

CL: Yes.

TS: —than you do in the deployment zone.

CL: Yes.

TS: Well—So did you get things across your desk having to do with sexual assaults?

CL: Yes.

TS: Yeah?

CL: We had a lot of them. That—And the same thing in Iraq. People still choosing to have sex when you're not supposed to, so.

TS: So just the Article XVs as well there?

CL: Yes.

TS: What was it that surprised you the most about your deployments?

CL: How much—I don't want to say it.

TS: No?

CL: No, I don't want to say it. [chuckles]

TS: Okay.

CL: Because we're on—

TS: We're on tape. Okay.

CL: Yeah. [chuckles]

TS: Okay, that's fine.

CL: Yeah.

TS: What was it that you thought was the best part of your deployments?

CL: I think the second deployment I met a lot more people, because not only were we with our unit, I got, like, outside my bubble. I'm used to just being with the legal team. We were on that FOB with people from, like, National Guard and Reserves, so I got to see their side of things, as well as you're on there with people from the air force and the navy, so I got a different outlook on a lot of different branches and backgrounds of people. And I think always in the military, you find yourself talking to people that you would never talk to in the civilian world, so.

TS: Why do you think that is?

CL: I think in the civilian world you get so used to being in, like, your community, your people that are more like you, that in military you talk to everybody. Like, "You've never been to the beach before? Who hasn't been to the beach before?" But you think, like, oh, well, there are a lot of landlocked co—states but—

TS: Right.

CL: And it is—You meet a lot of different people and you—"I like you. What's up?"

TS: Does it change your worldview of how—like, how people are, or anything like that?

CL: I think it does, but also, too, being in the military it's easier for me to let relationships go because I'm so used to moving, or you moving, or—So I guess it's good and bad. You are exposed to more things and you get used to more things. But at the same time, for me, it's easy for me to let somebody go; "Okay, you're moving, you're going to a different duty station. Well, I'll see you when I see you." Like, I'm not going to cry, and I'm sad and—

TS: This is that part that you talked about; being desensitized to certain things is part of that.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Maybe. Well, was there any—Did you ever earn a special award or recognition of it for anything that you're especially proud of?

CL: I know I got a—I got a CAB; I got a Combat Action Badge.

TS: What do you think about that?

CL: A lot of people don't get them. It's—We got it when our FOB got attacked and an RPG hit our building.

TS: The building that you were working in?

CL: That we were sleeping in.

TS: Oh.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Did anybody get hurt?

CL: Not that—No, nobody got hurt; no. I don't really—I would rather not have it, because I think all the events that led up to it, it causes me problems, so I would rather not have that. I don't sleep at night because I'm so used to—even though it's been three or four years I'm still used to getting up, get your gear on, make sure you got your weapon, make sure—go to your rally point. Like, I still have that mentality, so I would rather not have that and to have my piece of mind, if that makes sense.

TS: Right. Do you have any level of the PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]?

CL: Yeah, I have PTSD. I don't know what level I have. I have a pretty high rating.

TS: Yeah?

CL: According to the people at the VA [Veterans Administration] but I don't really—

TS: Are you getting—Are you seeing the VA, are you getting help there?

CL: Yeah. Yes.

TS: Do you feel like it's adequate?

CL: Sometimes, and then I feel like anything could set me off. Like I said, since I've been in the school environment, hearing people just ungrateful for some of the things that they're—it makes me get kind of frustrated, but for the most part I think I'm okay. But I don't see it. Other people who know me, who've known me before versus now, they can see it. Or like—

TS: They can see the change?

CL: Yes. But I don't really. To me it's just [unclear].

TS: Do you recognize your triggers?

CL: Once I sit back and look—think about a situation I will. Like, things will set me off, [unclear] like, "Maybe I overreacted to this. Was I—" I'll call my cousin, I'm like, "Tell me if I'm wrong." Dah, dah, dah.
She's like, "Yeah, you shouldn't do that."
I'm like, "Oh. Well. Sorry."

TS: Well, you're learning a new path.

CL: Yeah.

TS: You have to—It's not some—right or wrong necessarily, it's just you're learning and new path and how to cope with things.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Did you—Have you used the services at the SVA [Student Veterans of America] at all?

CL: I have not actually.

TS: Because they have a new building and all.

CL: I haven't even been.

TS: You should go check it out.

CL: I might do that. Now that I have some free time on my hands I might try that.

TS: Yeah. Now, one of the questions that I have in here is—Well, what's the hardest things that you had to do physically in the service?

CL: I don't know. I don't think anything has been relatively hard. I think I adapt to physical stuff better than I do mental tasks. So nothing has really been—

TS: So all the running and—

CL: I hate running, don't get me wrong. [both chuckle] I hate it with a passion, but I do it.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But you could do it.

CL: Yeah. I don't like ruck marches; those used to suck. Because even—I'm fairly small now but I was smaller in the military, and just with all that gear and all that weight, it's just—it was horrible.

TS: Did it put stress on your body—

CL: Yeah.

TS: —that you feel today?

CL: Yeah, like, I have really bad back problems. I have problems with my knees.

TS: Yeah, because you were carrying, probably, almost your whole body weight, I would think, at some—

CL: I don't know.

TS: Pretty close.

CL: Because you got your ruck sack and all your stuff in there, then you got your IBA [interceptor body armor] and your weapon and your [unclear]—

TS: Were you comfortable with all that; like, with all the gear and especially with the weaponry?

CL: I would be comfortable, like, the first thirty minutes to an hour and then after that it's like it's hurting here, or this is sliding off, and just—

TS: [unclear] rearrange your pack and stuff?

CL: Yes.

TS: What about with the weapon?

CL: If I just had my weapon I would be okay, because I was used to carrying that around in Afghanistan and Iraq. But adding all that stuff onto—Actually, the weight was not bad at all.

TS: No?

CL: Because I had a hook and I would just let it hang, so I didn't really have to—

TS: Off your uniform?

CL: Yes. Like, on my IBA I had a clip and it would just, like, go across me just like that, that way if I had to I could just—

TS: Grab it?

CL: Yeah. But—So that wasn't bad at all.

TS: What about the idea of ever firing it? Did you ever have to do that?

CL: Not—

TS: No?

CL: No. We were always ready. Like, whenever we got attacked we would be in the ready position, but nothing would ever—It's like—

TS: Some of the drivers were telling me you would have it, like, pointed out the window [unclear].

CL: Well, I was a driver so I couldn't have—mine would be, like, laying beside me, so it would be up to the gunners up top.

TS: To protect you.

CL: Yes.

TS: I see. What about—I'm sorry, you were going to say something more about the—Nope? Okay. Now, you said that it's harder, emotionally rather than physically, and that's my next question. What was emotionally the most difficult for you?

CL: I think having to let a lot of stuff roll off your back. Like, you shouldn't feel this type of emotion because you are in the military, or like I told you before, just suck it up and deal with it. Like, I know the right way to deal with things, especially now, but sometimes it's easier just to push it to the back of your mind and deal with it later.

TS: And get through the day.

CL: Yes.

TS: That sort of thing.

CL: Yeah.

TS: I don't think that's all that different from how people deal with trauma.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CL: Stuff now, yeah. Yeah.

TS: Just a different intensity for it.

CL: Yeah.

TS: How did you feel that you were treated by your supervisors and your peers? Did you feel like you were treated fairly?

CL: I think for the most part I was. That was an aspect that I really did do well, but like I said, because I was in a legal office it is different because we know the rules, we know the consequences, so we—for the most part I think the legal group is an outstanding group of people.

TS: Because you were promoted, it sounds like, pretty fairly.

CL: Yeah. They wanted to promote me further but I have this thing; I can't deal with adults who act like children. So I didn't want to be in charge of you[?] . If you're not going to come to work—

TS: Yeah.

CL: —just don't show up to work; let it be on you. Don't—Because you're my soldier I'm—

TS: Yeah. So did you supervise anyone?

CL: I—Not on paper but, like, informally, yeah. But I just—I don't have that mentality, because I feel like you're grown, there's no reason for you not to be here on time, or not to be doing what you're supposed to be doing, so I have a hard time with that.

TS: Did you have any mentors?

CL: Yeah, I think just about all my NCOs from when I first joined the military. They were really awesome. I hate that I didn't stay under their leadership and that they moved all their separate ways. But they—I think if I had a officer like that for my whole—I probably would have stayed in the military.

TS: Yeah.

CL: But—

TS: Did you ever have a female role model at all or—not necessarily a mentor, but like a role model of someone you looked up to?

CL: Not really. I feel like it was always something within, like—in some of the female, like, they would get promoted and they would just act so different that it was just, like—

TS: Do you feel like there was a lot more competition between the women?

CL: I don't, but I've never been in competition with anybody. I feel like I'm just going to try for myself. Now, if you don't believe in me that's something different, but I've never really been a competitive person.

TS: No?

CL: No.

TS: Okay. Not even as the oldest, huh?

CL: I mean, it's just—I know I'm going to win so there's no point.

TS: I see. There you go. That's—So you have a certain drive—

CL: Yeah.

TS: —that keeps you moving. Now, did you receive any extra or special training or education during your time in the army?

CL: To be honest, I didn't, but, like, I think being at Fort Campbell, we were constantly deploying so you're always training for that next deployment. So a lot of people don't have time to go to schools. Now, when they have air assault school—

TS: What kind of school was it?

CL: Air assault school at Fort Campbell.

TS: Oh, air assault.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Did you do that?

CL: No.

TS: No. [chuckles]

CL: No, [unclear] for crazy [unclear]. [chuckles]

TS: But you could have?

CL: I could have.

TS: Yeah.

CL: It was, like, maybe a three to six week training. I don't know. But that just wasn't something—Like, don't get me wrong, I was going to do airborne when I first got in and then I had some common sense; like, "Why would I want to jump out of a plane?"

TS: [chuckles]

CL: So that changed fairly quickly.

TS: You wised up, is that it?

CL: Yeah.

TS: There you go. Well, you probably wanted to experience everything at first—

CL: Yeah.

TS: —and then as you are experiencing it you're like, "Maybe there's a better option."

CL: Yes.

TS: Could that be?

CL: Yeah.

TS: Now, how about—We've talked about this inci—a little bit. What did you think, in general, attitudes were towards women? Did it depend on——

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CL: I think—

TS: —certain circumstances?

CL: I think it depended on certain circumstances, like what your MOS was, as well as—like, it was more generally accepted from, like, the younger group of people, and then also I think it depended on your background; like, where you came from. Because some people were raised in more parts of the United States where women were viewed more liberally, versus domestically, so I think it depends on what your background was, and your age, so I think a lot of different things tied into it.

Like, I had several people who just bothered me because I was a female and they didn't think of my NC—Like I said, I had a very good NCO who would, like—I would tell him, like, "I don't know what's going on but this person keeps—" and he would go on, pretty much take care of the situation and I wouldn't have any more problems. But I think it—I think it all depends on the person, because I feel like there are several different factors that play a role into that.

TS: Right. But—So as long as you had the support of the people in your chain of command it was good to have—

CL: Yeah, it didn't bother me, because I knew that if it got too—I can handle a lot of stuff but if it gets too extreme I know I have that person to go to and he would go figure out what's going on.

TS: Got it. Well, did you—We already talked about that. How about—Did you personally have anybody that you looked up to, like—not necessarily—it could have been in the military but just, like, when you think about someone that you have great admiration for in your life. Do you have anybody like that?

CL: For the most part I admire my mom a lot. I don't really have anybody that I just look up to that I want to be [unclear] or I aspire to do the things that they did. I don't. Like, my mom, she's a very strong woman. She took care of all of us. Sometimes my dad wasn't around and she was there for us. She made sure that we were okay.

Now, as of right now, I look up to a woman by the name of Brandi Raley [owner of Black Barbie Hair Salon Greensboro, North Carolina?]. She's pretty amazing. She's not related to the military at all, but she's very successful. She has numerous careers and businesses. So I look up to her as far as, like, what a woman my age in this day and time should be doing. But other than that, I don't really have anybody that I look up to.

TS: What is it about her that you respect?

CL: She handles everything, and, like, she a mom, she's a wife, she's a business owner. She has—She wears a lot of different hats and she does them all so effortlessly. [chuckles] So I'm just like—And she gives me motivation, because I do want to start my own business, and I get a lot of advice from her sometimes, and it's just I see where I can be if I just apply myself.

TS: That's great. Now, okay, when you were in—So when you were in, and initially the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was in place.

CL: Yes.

TS: And then it was repealed, I think, while you were in.

CL: Yes.

TS: So what do you think about that whole issue of homosexuals in the military; gays and lesbians?

CL: To be honest, it doesn't bother me. Like, as long as you don't talk to me—like, not don't talk to me, but as far as, like, hitting on me, I could care less.

TS: Yeah.

CL: I have a lot of friends who are in the military who are homosexual. But I feel like you know those who are and those who are not, and I feel like that shouldn't matter. Like, is it a bullet is not going to say, "Oh, go away, they're a homosexual," or they're not shoot at you because you're, like—[unclear] it doesn't matter. You can protect me the same way as you were before, it's just your sexual status is known now. Like, who cares? I don't care, personally, so I feel like a lot other people shouldn't care.

And then, like, they talk about showering together. We showered together before and that person was like that before. What changes?

TS: Right.

CL: Nothing. You still got to take a shower, they still got to take a shower. Get in there, do your business, and get out. Like, it doesn't matter.

TS: So it's more a matter of, like, can they do their job?

CL: Yeah, and I feel like that has no—to me that doesn't matter, but there are a lot of homophob[ic] people in the military, but I feel like you knew that person was like that before. It's not like they passed the law and they just [snaps fingers] changed. Like, "Oh, now I'm going to be—" No, you were like that before.

TS: Right.

CL: "Why does it matter? Is it affecting you?"
"No."
"Are they still doing the same thing they were doing before?"
"Yeah."
"Let it go."

TS: What about the idea of what women can and can't do. Like, now they're opening up training for women in, like—in infantry, actually—combat positions. [unclear] arms, right?

CL: I mean, I think that—I feel like women can do the same thing men can do, and I—some of the excuses they use—"Oh, sometimes you get y'all's cycle." There are so many different birth controls you can take to get rid of that. And, "Oh, you get pregnant." You're right, we get pregnant, but that's for how long? And then we get right back to it just like y'all can. And y'all—just about anything else, same thing as y'all do. You may be stronger but we can still do—and to be honest I feel like a lot of women are more mentally resilient than men are. So you may have us beat physically, but mentally I think that women are a lot stronger. We're able to handle a lot more, especially nowadays.

TS: So situationally, in, like, a combat position, the woman would be able to handle herself.

CL: Yes. I think that we're able to think a lot more strategically sometimes as well.

TS: That's interesting. Well, you talked about why you decided to leave the army, and that had to do with you were being deployed twice in—

CL: Five years.

TS: —five years, right.

CL: Yeah, so it was, like, a year—only a year and a half off. Like, "You know? No. I'll pass."

TS: And did you see opportunity to, like, then use your GI Bill, or had you been using it—had you been taking any classes or anything?

CL: I had took a couple of classes but I really didn't have time to focus on them the way that I would like to focus on them. But I took a couple classes in the military, and to be honest I didn't do very good. I got, like, C's, which is not bad, but I know that I was capable of doing better, and so I'm like, "Maybe I just need to sit in a classroom and just focus on that, nothing else."

TS: Right, well, you had a lot of distractions I think.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Did you—So when you got out—You got out—I forget when you said.

CL: Two thousand eleven.

TS: Two thousand eleven. What was it like the? I mean, did you have a transitional period into civilian life that might have been not especially easy?

CL: To be honest, I jumped right into it.

TS: Did you?

CL: I did. I was, like, "You know what? Military, eh, gone. I'm going on leave and I won't be back ever." But I went—I moved right back home, starting looking for my house; looked at a thousand houses. Tried to figure out school stuff. And I think I was pretty much settled into civilian world in January. So—what? —six months? So I jumped in fairly quickly. But anything I do I jump in fairly quickly.

TS: So you didn't have a difficult transition you think? It wasn't, like—Did you go right into school or did you start working at a different place?

CL: I sat around, [chuckles] probably for, like, a month. I tried—I got out in July so school for the most part, was already set in stone for people going in August. I didn't get to go till January.

TS: Okay.

CL: Because I had to get my GI Bill and all that stuff straightened out. So it took me a while but—I already knew what I wanted to do, it's just I had to get stuff in motion for me to do it, because I don't—I don't play around. If I want to do something I am going to go—I'm going to do it, worry about the consequences later.

TS: So you had plan?

CL: Yeah.

TS: You knew what you were going to do.

CL: Yes.

TS: That's excellent. Do you see yourself at all as a trailblazer?

CL: People around me say that; I don't see it.

TS: How do other people say you are?

CL: They'll say, like, "Here you—" As of right now I'm separated, but I am a single parent. My daughter's father had little to no involvement in her life. As of right now I work about two or three jobs. I am a fulltime student. I do do an internship. And I pretty much bring home the bread and the bacon, so I don't know. [both chuckle]

TS: You're doing it all, right?

CL: Yeah. But I'm just like, "Eh," I just do it.

TS: Did you see yourself as a women deployed in a combat zone—and especially in Afghanistan—as a trailblazer?

CL: To be honest, I just feel like just do it. You knew you were in the military, you knew there were chances of you doing it, just—

TS: It didn't seem out of the ordinary? No? Is that partly because you had trained with—for this job and this position and you knew that was a possibility?

CL: That probably is.

TS: And maybe war was already going on when you joined.

CL: Yeah, it was, so I feel like, "Eh, I already knew I [unclear]." Even though my recruiters told me I wasn't going anywhere, but yeah, I kind of—I think I already knew. Like, when people who aren't in the military look at me—"Oh yeah, you did that?"
I'm like, "Yeah, but I just did it. I didn't know it was something special. Okay."
[both chuckle]

TS: Do you think your life has been different because you joined the army back in 2007?

CL: I think so. I think I look—I have a different outlook on life than a lot of my peers, and that even some people older than me, I think I think differently and I make my moves

accordingly. I think a lot of stuff is different from people who weren't in the military. So I do think that it is different.

TS: Because it seems—Just from talking to you in the short time we've talked, it seems like you are very independent minded; you definitely have a plan for yourself.

CL: Yes.

TS: And so, these are things that sometimes people learn in the military, but you—it's like you already had this.

CL: Yes.

TS: And so, how about the idea of being a very young person in the military and having a high level of responsibility at such a young age. Do you think that shaped you at all?

CL: That probably did shape me, but yeah, you're right, because a lot of people in the military—even though you did have that stuff a lot of people didn't do well with it, and I'm just—it's easier if you just knock out what you have to do than to force yourself to go against it; I think so.

TS: Yes. Just figure how to cope with it and move on?

CL: Yeah, just—Yes, it's going to suck, you can complain about it the whole time, but the faster you do it it'll be over.

TS: [chuckles] Have—Would you recommend the service to any young women that you know, or young men too?

CL: I think I would, but some people—as far as the conflict situations that are still going on, some people aren't made to deploy, and if you know that that's not what you are I don't think you should do it, because I don't think that you should—if you come up on orders you decide to get out, or you decide to go AWOL [absent without leave], or whatever, I feel like you knew that was a possibility, so if you're not ready to take on all aspects of it I don't think you should do it.

TS: So you think not everyone is cut out for it.

CL: I do, yeah. I don't think everybody—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Probably saw that, especially in the field that you were in—

CL: Yeah.

TS: —where you see a lot of things that—where people just didn't fit.

CL: Yes.

TS: Now, you talked about how you used your GI Bill for school. Did you use it for housing at all?

CL: I do get a stipend for housing, and it does help pay some of the bills, but a lot of—I signed up for a lot of scholarships and that helps, more so because with me having a child and having a home and stuff I do have more financial obligations than a lot of people that are in school right now.

TS: When you finish your schooling you might—Have you thought about using the GI—or the mortgage benefit at all?

CL: I didn't—What mortgage benefit?

TS: Oh, well, we'll talk off tape—

CL: [chuckling]

TS: —and I'll tell you about that.

CL: I don't know what that is.

TS: I'll tell you all about that.

CL: Okay.

TS: But—And you talked about your—you have had experience with the Veterans Administration; you talked a little bit about that.

CL: Yes.

TS: Is there anything more you'd like to add to that?

CL: I—It's—I work at the Greensboro Vet Center where we do counseling services for veterans, and we, kind of, first hand see the struggle that people go through at the VA. Like, sometimes getting into the door is hard, but once you get through it it's good, it helps with a lot of things, but sometimes just getting through the door is such a struggle, and you see why people get so frustrated with the VA, because it took me, like, a year or two to get in the system, and that's with me working with people in the VA.

TS: And that's with all the—knowing the ins and outs of all that.

CL: Yes.

TS: Very interesting. Do you think that's a—has anything to do with just the lack of personnel to—

CL: I don't think it's not a lack of personnel, I think it's people's attitudes.

TS: Oh, really?

CL: A lot of people at the VA have horrible attitudes and they feel like—I think of it like a processing plant; like, you get a stamp "good" or "not good," and it's just people—they don't have very good customer service skills at all. [chuckles] It comes across every time you go there. Like, don't get me wrong, there are some great people that work there—

TS: Right.

CL: —but then there are some people that you could tell they'd rather be elsewhere.

TS: That's interesting. That's too bad.

CL: Yeah.

TS: Well, is there anything in particular you would want a civilian to know or understand about what it's like to be in the military that they may not understand or appreciate?

CL: I think that civilians should be patient when dealing with veterans, because there are a lot of things that we have experienced that they would never have no idea, and I don't think that you should try to force people to talk about their experiences. I'll talk about it, you still may not understand what I'm saying, you're not going to relate at all, so don't try to—"Oh, I understand," or—
"No, you don't." Like, you don't know unless you lived it or you've been, like, right there in it, right? I just say be patient when dealing with veterans.

TS: Be patient?

CL: Yeah.

TS: Because you don't know what they've been through.

CL: Exactly.

TS: Well, what does patriotism mean to you?

CL: I think it means different things. I think it's supporting your country, like, even though you may not understand what's going on sometimes, you just have to trust that they're doing the right thing. I don't think that you should bad mouth, or necessarily go against the country because I feel like it not only hurts you, it hurts other people, and it makes the country as a whole look weak. I think that—I think for patriot—I would just say, like I said before, do your research. Don't feel free to comment on something if you haven't done your research, and I think with that, too, you also have to look at the pros and the cons; you can't just be on one thing, you always have to have a defense and a "for" of any conversation that you're having. So I think you have to think about the whole situation, not just one aspect.

TS: Well, I don't have any other formal questions. Is there anything we haven't covered that you wanted to mention or talk about?

CL: No, I don't. [chuckles]

TS: Would you do it again?

CL: I would; I think I would. Maybe change some things around, but yeah.

TS: What would you change?

CL: Deployment. [both chuckle] Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CL: But I—Like I said, I loved the military for my first two or three years. I didn't really have any complaints.

TS: Yeah.

CL: But it's when my—the blinders came off—

TS: Yeah.

CL: —is when I was like, "Wait a minute."

TS: Yeah.

CL: But yeah.

TS: Well, you spent a lot of time at the same place too; that is—

CL: True.

TS: That makes it—Sometimes people said because they get to change and go they can leave behind whatever burdens might be there, I guess.

CL: I agree, yeah.

TS: Well, Candace, thank you so much for talking with me today.

CL: Thank you.

TS: I'm going to go ahead and turn it off.

CL: Okay.

TS: Alright.

[End of Interview]