

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 472-006**  
**Interviewee: Sidney Bailey**  
**Interviewer: Ryan Findley**  
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Ryan Findley: All right, and we're going. Can you say your first and last name?

Sidney Bailey: Sidney Bailey.

RF: When you were younger, what made you decide to join the army?

SB: Really wasn't to college. Had to do something in my life. So, most of my family members had been in the military, and I decided to join.

RF: What did they do once they were in the military?

SB: What'd they do? Let's see, well, my dad is a Marine. Stepdad was Air Force. My dad didn't do much, he got it because he was blind in his right eye. My stepdad was in Air Force police, so he had himself a German shepherd and everything. Was pretty cool. Had grandfather's in the Navy. Uncles, they were—I don't know what they did exactly for the most part. Just know a lot of military in my family.

RF: Was it a family culture or was it something that you felt forced into, or was it just something where your family members decided to serve and you felt that you also needed to serve that part?

SB: Wasn't forced into anything. Basically, needed a direction of my life, and like I said, college wasn't a thing for me. Decided since I had a lot of military in my family, I'd just go in. I picked the army because the fact that I'm not a Marine. [laughs] Couldn't do the Marines, don't like water much, so wasn't a Navy thing, and I was not smart enough Air Force, apparently.

RF: Do you feel with your son going to college now, do you feel like there's things that you gained that he's not going to be able to gain through college experience? Do you feel that friends in those sorts of things that went through college that you gained more life experiences going through the military rather than going through traditional schooling?

SB: Well, my son, the college things is good for him. He actually was going to go to the military but decided not to. The things I think he's not going to get out of college is the life experience—cold, hard truth of things. But he also has already had some life experience.

What was the rest of it?

RF: What do you feel that you gained that he won't gain?

RF: Well, I gained a lot of stuff. I learned a lot of things when I was in the military. I mean, real life is a lot different than what you see on TV and what people perfect it—think it is. I've learned a lot of stuff. I learned how to be a mechanic, which is helping me in my job today. I've learned a lot of things while I was there. I went to different countries and stuff. Went to a different country, learns some different cultures. I basically learned everything I know now like my organizational skills. I still follow through with a lot of stuff I learned in the military.

RF: Do you feel like there were things that once you got out that it took time to adapt to, that you feel that you didn't get experience from it? Because I know that when you're within the military, something that isn't necessarily taught to you or something you just don't have to deal with on a day to day life is bills. And those sorts of things, because as you're there, you don't pay—you don't necessarily pay for rent. You don't necessarily—food and those sorts of things. Do you feel like there was a big gap in between getting out and learning that, or you do you feel that it just kind of came as easy in life as it does with everything else?

SB: It kind of came fairly easy. It was a little bit—a little difference when you get out of the military, and you basically have to start, you gotta find a job and you gotta do this. Because military, you're guaranteed a paycheck every month. You have housing. You have all that. When you're not in the military, yeah, you gotta start over basically. It's like starting fresh from high school. Find yourself job. Place to live. Make money. You have bills, vehicle breakdowns, things like that. It's a bit of a culture shock to have to start over, basically.

RF: Do you feel that once you got out that you were well equipped to—do you feel that your experience in there and with being able to have that in your past, that it is something that has helped you further on in life, that having that experience has helped you get a job or that it's helped with anything like that? Or do you feel that it's something that's just more so looked past rather than looked at and appreciated?

SB: No, I think my military background has helped me out of bit. I mean, it does help you with a lot of things, finding jobs because there are places out there that look for veterans before they look for other people. Like I said, it has helped for this. But before I went to military, I pretty much was self-sufficient anyway because growing up my sister and I basically had to do everything. So, I kinda already had the structure of being an adult type thing from a young age. But yeah, the military has helped in the sense that, yeah, you can find new jobs. It does help with the fact that people do appreciate when they do see that you are a veteran. There are a lot of people out there do appreciate it and say thank you. That actually gets me right in the heartstrings, of course, because there's a lot out there that don't.

RF: What was your experience like while you were in the Army?

SB: Well, at first it wasn't so fun. I mean, basic training was a hard part.

RF: Where did you do basic training?

SB: I did basic training and AIT, which is the advanced individual training, in Fort Dix, New Jersey.

RF: And you're from California?

SB: I'm from Southern California. So, I flew across the United States to go to basic training and become an army soldier. It was a bit of a shock. I mean, I have been to the East Coast before, but, yeah, spending part of the summer and then the winter in New Jersey, I would not wish that on anybody.

RF: Yeah. Was it something that while you're going through basic training, could you appreciate everything that you were going through? Or was it something where the mentality behind it—did everyone realize that you were going through it to help with something further down the road? Or was it more viewed upon as just something that was shitty and that everyone had to do?

SB: Well, my view of it—I know there is other people have different views—basic training, it was tough and there were times when I wanted to quit, but I kept telling myself deep down that this is only going to be beneficial for me in my life. If I quit now, then I won't succeed at anything. In my mind and my family, we're not quitters. We may not finish everything, but we don't quit. I think basic training was—it was hard. I'm not going to say it wasn't hard, but it got me in shape. It got me in shape. It gave me an avenue of where I'm going to head in my life. I actually planned on staying in for a career, but different things happen.

RF: Did you feel that it was harder mentally or physically or a combination of the two?

SB: Actually, physically for me. Mentally, it wasn't because I kind of knew how they acted and what they wanted out of you and what they expected from you. More or less physically. Because when I went in, I weighed—I was like 20, 25 pounds overweight, and it was hard for me to run and do pushups and stuff. But by the time I got done, I was lean and mean. I appreciate that because now over the years I've learned, you can't just eat whatever you want and sit on your butt. You got to exercise and stay healthy.

RF: Then while you were in the army, after you got done with basic, what role did you serve within it?

SB: I actually went in and I was a mechanic, a light-wheel vehicle mechanic, which is translates into basically diesel mechanic. Worked on Humvees, did basically everything there is, except for tearing down an engine. I worked on Humvees—five tons, two-and-a-half tons—even helped out with tanks. I also drove the wrecker.

RF: I know that you spoke earlier of how it's helped to you later on now. Do you feel that a lot of those positions can actually translate into real life, or do you feel that yours more so because there's more of a direct influence from being a vehicle mechanic and then coming out into the real life? Do you feel that with other positions within, there's an actual translation once you get out of it?

SB: Oh, I believe so, yeah. I mean the mechanic thing helped me out with what I do now. I work on small engines. It's a little different than bigger engines. But that has helped me out in that aspect. Also, I haven't done this all my life. Since I got out, I haven't done mechanics; I've done other things. My leadership has gotten—being it being in a leadership role in the military has gotten me into jobs—got a manager position at Ace [Hardware] and other things in the past. No matter what you do in the military, I think the military, no matter what, it's beneficial in anybody's stance. Now, like I said, I'm not a college person. I didn't want to go to college—sit down and do college for four years. So, that's why I went to military because I'm more of a hands-on type person. I wanted to learn something.

RF: Yeah. And work ethic wise, too, I think that it can translate more into real life because just going through college it doesn't mean—it doesn't mean shit that you're going to gain work ethic out of it.

SB: Yeah. Because going through college, you have to do what you're supposed to do. Do your paper work—all this other stuff—but you don't have somebody on you all the time saying, “Get those push-ups done. Do this, do this, do this,” directing you into the person you should be when you get out.

RF: Then when you were still in, where all were you based out of? So from basic up to once you were finally out, where all had you been to?

SB: First off, went to New Jersey. Spent the time there in basic in New Jersey. From Jersey, got to go home, but I went from Jersey to Korea—my first duty station. Spent a little over a year there. That was an experience. It was interesting. It was fun. Not much to do over there except party and have fun. Then once I left Korea, I actually I put in for Germany, but they wouldn't let me go. So, I ended up going back to the States, went to Colorado and finished off my last two years in Colorado.

RF: And what did you do while you were there?

SB: I was a mechanic, light-wheel mechanic. We were in an engineer battalion with heavy equipment—all sorts of good stuff. I was in with the mechanics, and then we kind of consolidated down and got rid of a lot of other heavy equipment type stuff. Actually, we had boats. We actually had boat mechanics there at one time.

RF: In Colorado?

SB: Yeah, and then they consolidated everything, so we just kind of worked on, like I said, Humvees, two-and-a-half tons, tanks—things like that.

RF: Was that just at the base in Colorado, or where in Colorado was that?

SB: That was in Fort Carson, Fort Carson, Colorado. I had a blast there. I met a lot of good people there. My sergeant from there is still—I'm still in contact with him to this day. He's the one who lives in Alaska and does the hunting and makes tomahawks and stuff. He's a nice, awesome guy. His kids even know me. Still know me to this day. It was a blast. I mean, if I could've went longer, I would've went longer, but they just wanted to keep me as a mechanic and I didn't want to stay as mechanic in the army. I wanted to do something different. So, I decided to just get out.

RF: Then while you were still within the army, how did you feel that society and people not within the military felt—what was the feeling around all of it? As a country, how did you feel that others viewed people being within the military?

SB: Well, when I was in, I was in the '90s during the Saudi Arabia—Desert Storm. At that time, I believe that the American people actually were behind us more than they are, I think, today. I think today they're a little more not behind the military, not behind the soldiers. Always complaining about this, because I don't get into politics, but the current president is doing a bang-up job. It goes back to I'm a veteran. We have our health insurance thing is kind of a screwed-up situation. The former president screwed that all up, and the new president has been doing an excellent job getting more places that we can go. That was one of the biggest things coming out of the military was health benefits and stuff. I've heard many, many people. We got homeless veterans killing themselves. I think we should be spending more time—the American people now should be spending more time on our homeless veterans than refugees and people from other countries. Back when I was in, though, it was more or less they were all behind us. I think the country was behind us, even though our president wasn't doing everything right at the time. But I agree—I mean, I believe that's what the country was behind us. The country loved—they were always supportive. I didn't have any issues. I didn't have anybody coming up to me, saying, "What are you doing now? What are you doing in the military?" Blah, blah, blah. Nowadays, I have people ask me, "What do you think if I go in the army?"

I tell them, "Hey, that's your choice." Nowadays, I probably wouldn't let my—I don't want my son to go. I would still support him if he decided to go, but he's got a couple of friends that are in there—one's in Korea right now. I told him, I said, "Have fun. Enjoy."

RF: When you were based in Korea, what kind of—because you were there for a little over a year you said—what kind of duties and day-to-day things—what kind of things did you go through in the day? What would a day look like?

SB: Oh, you get up at 6:30 in the morning. They get you up. You know, you're up 6:00, 6:30 in the morning. Do PT, gotta do your PT first thing. That's military standards. Do your PT for about an hour, hour and a half. Then you go and eat. We'd do all that, and then we'd go up to our motor pool and just start working. We'd have a list of stuff to work on. Just start working on stuff. It's pretty laid back. It wasn't anything technical. I wasn't in any war or anything. But the one thing about Korea when I was in is the younger crowd in there—the college students—didn't like us, didn't want us there. The Korean college students—they didn't want us there. They thought America was taking over their country, and they didn't understand the fact that we were keeping them safe from North Korea.

RF: How do you feel that the rest of Korea besides them felt about it? Could people see the benefit of you guys being there, or was it mostly negative?

SB: No, the majority of the population in Korea knew that the Americans were there, are there to keep them from being the Communist side of their country. It was the younger crowd because the younger crowd didn't understand—it didn't understand what the Korean War was all about. They didn't understand, and they don't—They learn it, but they don't care. They're just like, get out of our country. I think the older crowd, the older people know we're there to save—to keep them safe. Because if we were to leave, if the United States were to leave Korea, then North Korea would overtake and that country would just be nothing. I mean, it happens in other countries, too. It's a lose-lose situation. But for the most part, most of the Koreans were very polite to me and everything. It's just you had to watch out because the college students would try to throw tear gas at you and everything else and try to just push you away. We'd just kind of chuckle and keep going.

RF: When you guys got free time in Korea, was it just going and getting to experience everything or what did—from, for a full week, I know during the week it was mostly—

SB: It's all work.

RF: —having to do things. Weekends, would you guys get free time or what?

SB: Well, yeah, we'd able to go wherever we wanted to go. I mean, they have an amusement park in Korea—indoor amusement park with roller coasters and stuff. Me and my buddy and his wife went there. We took a weekend and went to that. It was awesome. Indoor shopping mall. I mean, it's huge! There's things to do. It's just you can't really—you got to drive to places or ride buses and things like that. Unlike Germany, where my nephew was at, he could get on a train and go to France, get on a train and go to Turkey. He could go to all those place and experience different things. Korea, you can still do that. We were gonna take a trip to Okinawa, Japan,

once, but we would have to get on a plane. Other than that, yeah, just basically walking up and down the strip. You got all sorts of vendors out. It's different foods and stuff and different culture you got to try. We'd have Americans come over to, like the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders came there and did a show. Paula Abdul was there the night before I left. She was doing a show the night I left. So, you get you get a lot of American type stuff over there.

RF: Yeah. And is that something that you think is more so—because I know back in that time that there were a lot of entertainment type things that were directed towards the troops. Is that something that it was one of those circumstances where it was?

SB: Yeah, it was more directed towards—yeah, it was more directed towards the troops, to the American soldiers. I know that some of the Koreans knew who these people were and this and that, but it was mostly they're doing it for the troops. Because the cheerleaders, they did a show up at Camp Casey, which is up by the DMZ [Demilitarized zone]. Up by North Korea. They just do it for the troops. It's kind of like back in the day of Vietnam and that, and Bob Hope would always do special stuff for U.S.O. for the troops. That's kind of what they do is they come over with the U.S.O.

RF: I know now that there's definitely—and like what we talked about earlier, the different culture of how people view our troops now. Like back when you were in it, it definitely was more so of a people were appreciated and there were certain things like that that would go on. When you would go through it, what would pay look like compared to jobs that you had done before? Previously getting in and then right after getting out, because I know that you get paid as you're in there and living in those sorts of things. When you were living in Jersey and then when you were back in Colorado, what would the places where you stayed—the dorms or apartments or whatever they referred to them as—

SB: Barracks.

RF: Wee they nice? Were they something that you were okay with living in, or was it just something where you lived in it and it's just was the place where you slept?

SB: Actually, they were at the Korea ones, the building, it was basically each room had two beds—two for two people. They were actually pretty cool because we had our lockers in the middle, so it would separate both sides. We had our privacy. It was actually pretty cool in Korea. The Colorado one was really, really nice because we had bathrooms on in our room, and they had the same thing, two people in a room, sometimes three if they had to bulk up a little bit. But yeah, we had a bathroom in our room, so it was really nice in Colorado. Korea, you had to walk down the hall and use the main bathroom. But for the most part, I never really stayed in anything that was rundown. Everything was pretty much comfortable. In Granite, you have to use wool. They've got the wool blankets that itch like crazy, but you can get your own blanket.

RF: What was food like?

SB: Actually, the food was pretty damn good in the mess halls. Korea was pretty good. Actually, the cooks we had there, oh my god! I mean, the omelets and breakfast was just impeccable. Overall food really, really good. There were days where you get special treat—steak and shrimp and stuff like that. For the most part, yeah, it was really good food. I didn't really—the good thing about it is you don't have to pay for it because it's all paid for because you live in post. I mean, if you live off post, you get money for that stuff. But I always lived in the barracks. Eat for free. Live for free. Your extra money—whenever you get money for—you do for having fun and stuff.

RF: I know now that when you joined, was there any sort of a signing bonus or anything like that or not really, because we were in more of a state of war than we are in now?

SB: No, there really wasn't any signing bonuses. They were still trying to get people to join, but it wasn't a rush, rush, hey, we need people more or less because they enough that our troops were already built up enough to where they weren't itching, trying to get people. Nowadays, I think—

RF: [unintelligible].

SB: Yeah, yeah. Nowadays I think they are more or less trying to get more people to sign up for the military and throwing those bonuses in there. The only thing that really they threw at us was the G.I. Bill—the college thing—and I still have that to this day, haven't even used it. Never used it.

RF: I know that now that some of the signing bonuses, because we have National Guard people and all those guys that would come and visit us in high school and even still in college, that some of them are offering a signing bonus of \$15,000 and all those sorts of things. What do you think that does to a 17, 18, 19-year-old kid when they get that much money? Do you feel that it after going and serving and getting paid a good amount of money and all those sorts of things, do you see that being a positive to help them? Or do you think that it's going to be—it's going to cause people to have an excess of money and not necessarily know what to do with it and spend it wrongfully?

SB: I guess it all depends on their mentality. How they are raised and how they view—if they were taught right to manage their money and stuff like that then I think it's a beneficial for them, for those younger guys and men and women that are going in the service. If they don't have any idea of how to save money and budget their money, they're going to blow it on just stupid stuff, and it's going to come back and bite them in the end. When I joined, we were paid as a private, I believe I got \$1,150 a month. That was when I lived off for a month. Now, I didn't have any bills or anything, so it was like, great. The higher your rank, the higher the pay goes every month. When you start getting things, like you got vehicles and other things going on that \$1,150 a month doesn't look very good if you're private. Now, you're a sergeant making twice

as much or whatever it is, then it starts to look a little better. It's just like in the workforce when you're out of the military now, I started at the bottom, had work my way up in the company I'm in now, Ace Hardware. Had to work my way up. I started off as a supervisor at a low pay, and now I'm working doing mechanics and I think I make it a decent wage. Of course, everybody says they should make more, but of course, that's how it is. Like I said, with a younger crowd, if they know how to manage their money and they know what to do with it, then that's a good way to get them to come into the service. What they do with it is another story. It's on them.

RF: Yeah, because I know a lot of people that the second that they'll get that signing bonus, they'll buy a brand new car and they'll go and do all of these sorts of different things. Then they'll leave for two years and go and get stationed somewhere. So, then it's just money that is just blown and wasted. But then another thing also is I have a friend that went through the first training for army and he is a—whatever it's called, where you go through basic for those two months or three months or whatever that period is, and then once you're out of that, then your—it's not active duty, but it's—whatever the term is for that, where it's not active duty, but he went through it.

SB: Reserves.

RF: Yeah, reserves. So, do you think that that's something—do you feel that if you just went through basic training and then stopped right there, do you think that there would have been benefit, downside to that on things that you learned? Do you think that it's still a positive for learning like the mentality of all of it and work ethic? Or do you feel that the amount of time that you served was a benefit, just having to go through it for years?

SB: All in all, I think if I'd have done just the reserves, I probably wouldn't be where I'm at right now, I don't think, in my eyes. I know there's other people who have gone into, did the basic training, did the reserves, and that's a good thing for some people. If you go into basic training, you come out and you go into reserves, but you may have a heck of good job that pays you, and by law, they have to let you go for your training—for your weekend training and stuff like that. So, you're making good money because you're not only getting rank in the military and getting money in the military every month, but you also have a paying job that you can have a family and this and that. There are disadvantages. You may get called into reserves to go somewhere or do something that you're not—you didn't expect. Me, personally, I wanted to do active duty because I wanted to travel. I like to travel. I wanted to go places. Granted, I only went to Korea and Colorado, but it was still going.

RF: And still experiencing something different from everyday life. Because when you were growing up, I know that you lived in California. Did you ever live anywhere else other than California?

SB: I've lived in Michigan, Illinois, and California in my childhood.

RF: How long did you live in California for?

SB: California? I was born there, lived here. We moved when I was little, but I was probably there for 17 years.

RF: Okay, so majority of your life in California. Did you feel that once time came around, obviously there were kids going off to college, probably a good portion, just like it is now where kids that college isn't for them and just decided to start working. Did you feel that it was just something to do rather than staying home and just doing the same stuff every day and that joining the military was then seen as a form of guidance or a form of just some sort of a path to actually be able to follow in life?

SB: Oh, yeah, definitely. I definitely saw that. I mean, at the time I was graduated living back at home. Stepdad, of course, asking what are you gonna do with your life type thing? I basically said, "I want to join the army." And I did. I think it was the best thing I ever did. I would've liked to stayed longer, but it was probably the push I needed. I'm one of those that I procrastinate and put things off, and I don't like change and things like that. But I was like, 'well, I gotta do something with my life. I'm not going to go to college and not going to try to work a dead-end job the rest of my life.' So, I pushed myself, and I just went for it. I think one of the best things I ever did.

RF: Yeah. Did you feel that once you got to basic from just coming out of high school, working jobs here and there during high school and those sorts of things when you got to basic? Was there any state of shellshock or anything once you were there?

SB: Oh, yeah.

RF: The, "Oh, shit. I'm doing something different," because did you know anyone? Did you know a single person once you go there?

SB: I didn't know a single person. Actually, the only one I knew were the ones who left the state of California from LAX with me to go to New Jersey for basic training. We didn't even know each. We just knew each other's names, and that was about it. Didn't know anybody. The minute we into New Jersey, I think was like 2:00, 3:00 in the morning. They did an inventory of all our personal items and then they took them, and it was a culture shock, yeah, because they basically the next day had you up in line shaving your head, getting your uniforms. It wasn't—

RF: It wasn't a slow transition.

SB: Mine was note a slow transition.

RF: It was going from—were you 18 or 19 when you got there?

SB: I was 19 years old.

RF: So it goes from 19-year-old normal kid into just the jump of all of it within—

SB: Within a matter just 12 hours. Like I say, we got there, they took our personal items, did inventory of them, made us, said, “Go to bed,” woke us up about 5:00 in the morning. Boom, got us—and you get in that line, you guys, everybody sees those videos of military things and you're in line and you got your uniform in hand. That's exactly how it was. You get shot in each arm for immunizations. Then they shave your head, which didn't bother me. But you're sitting around, everybody's bawling. It's kind of a freaky situation because I'm on the other side of the United States, 3,000 miles away from home. I've been that far away home, but not with—

RF: Just alone.

SB: Not in the military.

RF: Not alone, but alone. Then something that you mentioned, that is also another question that I had was how do you feel that media being that news or movies, TV, those sorts of things, how do you feel that they portray military versus how you felt that it actually was? Is there any things that you see that are correct or wrong?

SB: A lot of that you see in movies, movies are movies. That's Hollywood. But there are a lot of things that happen in these movies that do happen in the military. Drill sergeants yelling at you, that happens quite a bit. You got to make sure your fingernails are clipped, all that stuff. They don't punch you. They don't hit you anymore. They're not allowed to. They can direct you by putting your hand on you saying, “Do it this way.” That was one of the things that I think a lot of us were scared about because we watched all those old movies in the past and watched these drill sergeants rip these guys up one side, down the other. So, that's kind of a frightening thing, thinking, ‘oh, that's what's going to do to me.’ It's somewhat like that. Movies, they depict them a little different. The media. Back then, the media wasn't a big thing. Right now, I know there's a lot of fake news out there and a lot of different media things going on out there. You don't really see a lot of military on the news these days. Not a lot of military stuff going on between the army, Air Force, and all that, which technically is a good thing, because then they don't misconstrue what's going on or this and that and there's not much war-type stuff going on. The media has a tendency to screw things up and this and that; politics screws things up. I'd still defend this country no matter what. I'm proud of being a veteran, proud to be an American. What better thing? I went to military. I became a soldier. I was born on the 4th of July. I mean, what more patriotic person can you get? But like I said, the media likes to twist things around, so I don't really go with what I hear on there. I kind of listen to what I listen to from other aspects.

RF: I know that with you being stationed in Korea, obviously you were around a lot of Americans, but you were still over in another country for a year. I have friends and family

members that have spent extended times over in other countries while being over there. Did it make you appreciate the structure of things that we have here in America and the patriotism?

SB: Oh, god, yes. Definitely. Because in Korea, a lot of people don't know this, but when you're a Korean male in Korea, you grow up—mandatory that you either do, you've got to do four years in their military or you can do two years in the American military. But it is mandatory that they do that. So, they can go to college. But after college—if they decide to go to college first, they have to go to the military after that. They decide the military, then college, it's mandatory. That's just how Korea is. Japan's the same way with their men. The men must go into the military no matter what. So, most of the guys I talked to, most of the Korean soldiers I talked to, which they call them katusas—the Koreans affiliated with the United States Army. Those guys, I asked them, and a lot of them are geniuses. I had a rocket scientist in my frickin' unit. I asked him a question, I said, "What did you go to college for?" I said, "Did you go to college"

He said, "Yeah," he went college.

I said, "What'd you go to college for?"

He goes, "I'm a rocket scientist."

I'm like, "Excuse me?"

He's like, "Yeah, I'm a rocket scientist."

I said, "You mean you're a genius? You have a brain?"

He goes, "Yeah."

I said, "Then why are you in the army?" Then he explained to me that it's mandatory.

RF: So actually forced upon them.

SB: It's forced upon them where it's not forced upon us as a nation.

RF: Then when they join, because you said the option to be there four years with the Korean or two years with the American.

SB: Well, no what they have to do is if they go to college, if they decide to go to college and they have to do mandatory, two years with an American military.

RF: Does that mean that they—

SB: If they decide not to go to college, they have to join the ROK Army—Republic of Korea Army—which is ten times worse than any one of our military. They are such hard asses. So, they basically, you either go to college and then go into military for two years, or you go into ROK Army. Most of them choose to go to college and the United States Army.

RF: When you say United States Army, that means that where you were based at they would come—

SB: They're already on our post.

RF: So, they would just go through everything with you guys or are they separated?

SB: No, they'll go through their own basic training, through the Korean basic training, but then they're affiliated and they're attached to units in the United States Army. Then they do everything that we do. So, we had Korean mechanics, we had Korean drivers, we had Korean everything. And they have their own uniforms. They wear their own uniforms, their own rank, everything.

RF: So they're together, but then also separated—

SB: Yes, they're part of the Korean Army, but they're affiliated with us, so they learn and train with us. They go to training with us. They go to everything. But their basic's done through the Korean Army.

RF: Did you see any negatives of having the Koreans? Because like you said, some of the college students having a negative viewpoint of it. Did that get washed away once they would join in with you guys, or did you see any negatives of having Korean natives along with people that they didn't necessarily want within their country?

SB: There was a few. There were a few rebellious Korean soldiers. You could tell they would stick to themselves and their little groups of stuff, and they wouldn't talk to any of us. Yeah, they were standoffish, and you try to talk to them and things like that. They were a little bit negative but not a lot. The majority of them were pretty cool hanging out with them. Funny people, I have to tell you, the Koreans are very funny people. They do some weird stuff and make you laugh. Like I said overall, though, it was a good experience. I learned a lot of stuff over there. I did learn a little bit of Korean. There's a lot of different smells.

RF: Yeah, I never knew that they would join in with you. So with them being affiliated with then what you were doing day to day, was there a lot of—even though you were on an American base within Korea with Koreans, was there even with it being, I would assume, a majority or a good amount of them Americans, was there still a lot of Korean influence while you were on the base?

SB: Not really. No. Well, where we were at, the company I was in, we did have a little Korean lady that had a little hut up front that everybody would go to. She made her noodles and stuff like that. Really wasn't a lot of Korean influence on the base. It was just like being in the United States. Everything is all basically American. When you go off the post and go into their cities Itaewon and Seoul, you go up their strips and all that stuff, you'll get the different cultures and you get their culture, but you also have American culture implemented in that—

RF: Yeah, just from an American base being there.

SB: Yeah. You get the Korean culture, but they don't push it on you or anything. They like the fact—a lot of the store owners and stuff and bar owners love the fact that the military's there because they spend their money. [laughs]

RF: Also hopefully they could see the purpose that you guys served with them being there.

SB: Majority of them do. They see the purpose why the Americans are still there, helping keep their country safe. That's what we do here. We're trying to keep—that's all we do is we keep our border safe to keep—

RF: Yeah, we weren't over there in a state of terror or anything. It was more so just as protection. And it's not played out in the media as much now, but back five, 10 years ago, when we would go over into Pakistan, Afghanistan, those sorts of places, do you think that it was a similar viewpoint, or do you think that it was seen more negative? Because I know it was a very similar circumstance where North Korea, South Korea—they're both Koreans while different in a lot of ways of functioning and freedoms and stuff—it's a similar thing in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where it's Israeli extremists versus people that function just like people do here in America in freedom.

SB: I think the Pakistan-Afghanistan type stuff, it was viewed a little bit more negatively in my eyes, because of the fact that we are sitting there going, "Why are we doing this?" That always goes back to the Vietnam War too. They always question, "Why were we in Vietnam?" Well, they were trying to keep civil peace within a country. If we wouldn't have gone to Korea, then that whole country would be Communists, and they wouldn't have any free. They wouldn't have any freedom to walk around and go to college or anything. They would be under a dominant rule. Same thing happens where when we went to Afghanistan and Pakistan, all the "-istans", Iran. You got you. All we're trying to do is be the big brother and help all these countries out. Well, in my eyes, the Pakistan-Afghanistan thing, I don't think we should have been involved in that to be honest. I think it was more of a negative thing then. Now, you can go back to the Saudi Arabia thing that was we're trying to keep the oil from being taken away and this, and this, and this. But nowadays, we don't have much going on out there, which is good. And I honestly think the main reason, and I [unintelligible] say this, is the main reason that we don't have the issues that we've had in the past for overseas wars and stuff is because of who our president.

RF: As much as he loves media exposure and loves being vocal on media, he's been better than most people because I know when not to get political and I don't side with anyone in any particular way. But like when Obama was in office and the last Bush, that Bush was more so for the troops, but Obama when he was in there was a lot more—and this was me growing up as a younger kid, and I would see a lot of negative things in the media and we almost went back to like the Vietnam state of mind, where people in the military are killers and they're over there just to hurt people. But then like when you were over in Korea, were there ever anyone—I know that you were a mechanic—but involved in your station at all, was there any sort of involvement or interactions with any negative sides or was it just peacekeeping?

SB: It was all peacekeeping. I mean. We coexisted with the Koreans anyway, and we co-existed just fine. Occasionally you have your little skirmishes here and there. Somebody gets drunk, does their thing, but for the most part, the Korean people were very polite and very accepting of us. It's just those rogue college students. Honestly, like I said, that the president we have, Trump, is—he's not the best, he's not the most perfect person in the world, but he's done a lot of good for this country. When it comes to the military, you don't—like I said, the last four years or three years, you haven't really seen too much going on war-wise. He's put peace to a lot of it. He's had talks with people. Now, the North Korean thing, that could have been a publicity stunt. I don't know, but you don't hear much coming out of them right at the moment right now, do you?

RF: No.

SB: Before, maybe three years ago, you heard a lot coming out of North Korea. Now, since he's talked to him and they've done their thing and this and that, you don't hear a lot. The guy has done good for this country, and I continue to support him.

RF: And you being a veteran, I know, that veterans more so—veterans and people within the military are more, there's more of a direct translation between, I would say, me and you on who gets voted into presidency, because as we've seen with Trump coming in, he has definitely—have you seen your benefits and health insurance and all those sorts of things? Have you seen improvements with it since he's been in office? Have you seen that him being within has helped anything within the V.A., or have you seen positives with it or—

SB: Oh, yeah. I've seen positives everywhere because the fact that prior to some of these bills that have passed, V.A. can only go to V.A. affiliated places, and sometimes it's hard for some of us because our V.A. hospital's in Helena. Some people live in places where their V.A. hospital is 10 hours away. And what are they gonna do? If an outside clinic can't take care of them because the V.A. says no, so that person ends up—a lot of veterans end up dying because of that. Now, where he's, they passed these bills, now, we can go see outside dentists, we can go see outside everybody pretty much. Then they just passed this thing where they're building a brand-new clinic here in Missoula, Montana, so that most of us veterans don't have the drive to

Helena. I don't know about the rest of them, but I know a lot of veterans are older and probably retired, but for those of us who are still working, you got to take a day off of work to go to Helena for an appointment, you're losing money because you're not get reimbursed from the military. So, I think he's done a lot for the for the V.A. in healthcare and healthcare overall. I don't have outside healthcare, but I'm noticing a lot of people that do are starting to get better healthcare, and it's getting a little bit better. They're not forcing you to have to sign up for something and then you get in trouble and penalized. Like Obamacare. If you don't sign up by such and such time, you'll get penalized. It's like, why should you get penalized for not having insurance. I can't afford insurance, so if I get sick and that's my own fault. I honestly believe that Trump has done a great deal of good things for the V.A. and for medical in general.

RF: I'm sure that with you being a veteran that you can definitely appreciate someone who has a very strong sense of military because he isn't seeing military as anything in a negative light. He's just seeing it as we have an issue in this country that not anyone really talks about, and it's veterans. There's more veteran suicides per day than there is any other rate of suicide period of anything else. There's more homeless veterans. There's more veterans that die of illnesses—

SB: Because they can't get the medical attention they need or they get turned away.

RF: How do you feel about that being someone who is a vet, and you being within a pretty healthy state? How do you feel about those that aren't within the same state that, like you said, having to drive to Helena if someone's homeless?

SB: I feel very deeply for it, because the fact that I can't do anything to help them myself. Being a veteran, if I could, I would. I'd drive somebody to the hospital if I could. My father-in-law happens to have disabled veterans. He's a payee for them. He takes care all their [unintelligible], and he tells me all sorts of stories about some of his veterans. He had one veteran that he called "Tumbleweed" because he liked to just go from town to town. His name was Thomas. Nicest guy in the world. Didn't have any family. He was invited to Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas dinners, everything. The man served his country, did a great job. The V.A. at the time this was found about five to 10 years ago because Thomas has passed, but I listened to some of the stories. Then, of course, my son's great-uncle was in Vietnam. You sit and listen to their stories and stuff. He listened to them, and then he was like, "Okay, when it comes time for medical, are they gonna be taken care of?" Well, Thomas got told one thing by one medical place, and then my father-in-law, basically, he stood up for him. I give the guy all the credit in the world. He stands up and stands behind his veterans.

We need more people to do that and not just push us away because we didn't join the military to be treated this way. We joined the military to keep everybody in this country safe and have a free life.

RF: To serve your country rather than have your country turn against you.

SB: To keep enemies for coming over here and taking over our country like they've done in other countries. That's what we go to the military. A lot of people say, "I went into military for this and this and this." I went in to serve my country, get an idea of what I wanted to do in life, and trying to further education in a sense. Anybody that stands behind the military and stands behind the veterans and tries to help them are always good in my book. If you're ones that push them away, I can guarantee if I walk into a place and they have negative things about military this and that, I will turn around and walk out, and I will never shop there or go there ever again. And I will tell all my friends and family not to do it. I wear my military hat. I have my army hat on. I wear this, and I get people left and right saying, "Thank you for your service." That makes me feel real good because they are acknowledging the fact that I did something that a lot of them don't have the courage to do.

RF: I know even just within the class that I'm in that there are some people in there, and I'm not trying to put anyone on the spot or anything negative, but some of them don't like the, "thank you for your service," and they don't like just—especially on Veterans Day, where it's the one day where everyone will say "thank you," and then all the rest of the time that it's just not verbatim, but basically it's the rest of the 364 days of the year, it's "we don't give a fuck about the army. We don't give a fuck about the military." But then it's the one day a year where they actually appreciate things. Do you also—and obviously you are a little more cheery about it and you didn't go through any sort of, you didn't go through combat. So it wasn't any sort of anything like that, and you went through not in a time of peace, but not through some huge negative thing. Do you see where something like that can happen or what do you think about people that get mad about people saying "thank you for their service," because me being someone that doesn't—I've never gone through it. I don't see it.

SB: It goes that goes also with the fact, I mean, some of these guys, these veterans that say, "Don't thank me for my service," I honestly think that they're just being, they just don't want the accolades. They're just like, "Okay, I served my country. I did what I had to do. There's issues I don't want to be brought back up." There are a lot of guys that have PTSD and don't want to talk about it. I'm cheery about it, yeah, because I didn't go to war but I also did have friends that went to war. And I'm not even sure there's one guy even came back because I haven't heard from him in ages. I probably lost some buddies over in war. Me personally, I like anytime somebody shows me any type of gratitude toward me for anything like my job, anything, it goes a long way. I know there's people out there that don't like it. It's like when people call me sir. I know it's a sign of gratitude. It's a sign of respect due to the fact that I was in the military—I was not an officer. I don't like being called sir, but I do—I don't go and get crazy with people. People I know, I sit there and tell them, "Don't call me sir." But customers, I get customers that'll say, "Thank you, sir. Thank you." I'm very polite. Honestly, I don't think even if I was in any combat situations, I don't think I would turn people away. Everybody should thank veterans every single day, not just one day. Every single day you should thank a veteran.

RF: Yep, Every day is a day of being thankful for people that have served rather than funneling it down to one day. The same thing goes with, and it's not related, but like Martin Luther King Jr. Day and all those sorts of days where it's not—

SB: Yes, because the man was not just for one color. He was for everything. He was for 'let's be altogether. Let's be united. Let's not be a segregated country.' It's still to this day, it's a segregated country. It'll never change—in my lifetime, it probably won't change. All in all, if you served in the service, if you served in the military—it doesn't matter how long you serve too, because I tell people I only did four years, and that's "Four years. You served your country. You did it." Whereas other guys have been in 20 years, seen two, three wars, been to Afghanistan, been to Pakistan, been here, there and there—been through the shit and seen it all—I salute those guys more than anything because they're day in, day out, put their life on line and they got families at home. You know, they have wives, kids that may never see them again. I don't know if you know, but one of our radio hosts here in town, his son joined the Marine Corps and he was killed in combat. Now, Denny Benard (?). His son was—no, yes, it was Denny Benard. His son is a Marine, and he was killed in action. So, I mean, it can hit home, close to home.

RF: Even like with our boss, Jason, where that his as close to home with him as it possibly could.

SB: Exactly. You got family members that died. And that's not just the military; it's anything else. Any job, you know. Youour firefighters, your police officers, all your first responders, those guys, they might—some of them never served in the military, but they still do the same things that what the military's doing, they're keeping this country safe. So, we should not--all this crappy media about the police and police force and stuff. Not everybody's perfect. There is a lot of corrupt crap out there.

RF: It goes with absolutely everything.

SB: There's cops that have short fuses that do things they shouldn't do. Well, that goes back to the media. Media turns everything around. Makes it look like either the cop was bad or this guy, he deserved to get shot. It's like, no, you don't deserve to get shot, unless you're shooting at somebody else.

RF: End of the day, everyone's human, and anyone can make any mistake. There's people that—

SB: Because my family, I've got not only military, but my ex-wife, uncle, he a was chief in the fire department here of Missoula. Then I got my best friend's nephew was a firefighter here in Missoula. Randy, he was a firefighter. My best friend was a firefighter. His brother is a paramedic in California, so doesn't mean you have to go into the military to do something. But if you're gonna pick a career and it's going to be something like police, firefighter, give it your all, and every day you walk there and you put your life on the line. You could die in a fire. A cop could be shot, run over. A firefighter could be shot, burned, run over, whatever. Give credit

where credit's due. That's what I say is just give credit where credit's due. True, this country is the best country any in the world, really. I mean, granted we got our problems. We got our issues. But where else can you—

RF: We live in a state of freedom.

SB: Where else can you go hunting and kill an elk to feed your family or kill a deer to feed your family or go floating down a river in the summertime? No restrictions or anything and nobody saying, "You can't do that." You go to other countries, and it's like you can't do that, you can't do that, you can't do that.

RF: It's saying that I like and that not all like or appreciate, "But home of the free because of the brave." Brave being military. Brave being police. Brave being everyone—

SB: First responders.

FR: Everyone that functions to help it to where America can stay where it is.

SB: It's true. I saw something one time. It says, "A man with a helmet and a gun should make more than a man with a helmet on a football." And that's my opinion. I'm out there keeping your guys so you could play football and make millions of dollars. We're out there shooting these bad guys to keep your bad guys from coming over here. So, yeah. With all the stuff in the media, I don't agree with the Kaepernick thing at all. Granted, he's a good quarterback, but I've never agreed with the kneeling thing. These owners of these football teams are cracking down and saying, "If you do it, you're done," and that's great. Your views and beliefs are your views and beliefs. But as a professional sportsperson, that's your job. Okay. If I were to come to my work and say, started spouting off bunch politic staff, this, this, this, I wouldn't have a job. That should be the way of anything. I don't care if you're the best basketball player in the NBA, if you do something that's against the rules, you should be let go. Honestly. That's your job. It's not school. You're not in school. "Okay, I'm going to school, and I get to play football." No, you're making money to do this and making a lot of money. So, your beliefs and views, keep them to yourself. Okay. Keep them off the field. If you want to do it on—if he wants to go and they want to go and say something in the media, this and that, more power him. As long as you're doing it on the football field because that's your job. Just do your job. Love this country, and that's all you need really. Support your military. Support your cops.

RF: Then one last thing before we get wrapped up is this is a clip from *The Hurt Locker*, I'm assuming you've seen it before, maybe.

SB: Oh, yeah. A number of times.

RF: This is one that we watched in class, and I hadn't actually ever seen it before because I don't watch movies or anything and I'm not cultured or experienced. But it's one that actually when

we first watched it all that I could possibly think was, “Why the fuck are we watching this?” Then once we watched it and I'll just hit play on it, and if you've seen the movie a couple times, it will save you a few times. So it's just for people that can't see the screen. It's the one where the guys looking in the cereal aisle.

[long pause]

SB: I remember this one.

RF: Yeah. The guy from The Avengers.

[long pause] I know that it was a short scene, but the point of our instructor showing it was showing that when people get back, especially from being within service and like we're talking about being on base and people that are within the military for years and years and years, where once they get back into normal life, it's wondering—because as you're there, you don't get to pick between 15 different things to eat for dinner, and it's just showing. It was something that actually brought a lot of—it's something that made me start to actually realize where a lot of things were coming from, where there's so many choices within everyday life that—

SB: What do you choose?

RF: Exactly. When you're in the military, it's something where most things are chosen for you. When you get free time, obviously, you can go and do whatever you choose.

SB: It's a regiment. You're in a regiment. You do the same thing every single day in the military. You see the same things. You go to the mess hall. You have your options, but like that scene. He's looking at all the cereal. He's like, “What do I choose? What do I choose? I don't know.” Too many choices. Way too many choices. Like you were saying is in the military, it's a regimen. You're used to it. You go to chow hall, eat what they give you or whatever they got. Boom! you're done. When you get out, yeah, you're looking around; you're like, “Wow, what choice do I...” You watch these movies like that one. He got out, went home, but he quickly wanted to go back. There are a lot of guys that are like that, that that's the only life they know is war and that's all of this in their blood. When they come home, they can't re-acclimated to civilian life. Now, again, it didn't bother me because I was only in the four years for one. But, for two, but I missed certain things. I missed the ocean. I missed this; I missed that. Then once you're out and you're sitting there, you're like, “Okay. Well, what do I do today?” Because you're so used to that regimen. You get up at a certain time. So, let's say you're a civilian. You wake up at 6:00. You jump up; you're like, “Okay, I don't have P.T.” You can either exercise like you normally do, or you figure out what you're going to do for the day. It's like I'm so used to I get up, I eat, I go to P.T., I eat, I get dressed, I go to work. Well, if you're in the transition and try to find a job and things like that, it's confusing; it's rather frustrating because you're sitting there going, “I don't understand this world. I understand that world. I understand my military world.”

RF: Another thing that one of the guys in our class is a veteran also, and we're talking about a little—it's a piece of a story in a book that we read out of. One of the things that really hit close to home with him was there was a guy that his best friend was killed in action. And once he finally got out of all of it is he was missing the camaraderie. When you're stationed over in Korea for a year or even when you're in Colorado for two years and being on base is you make a lot of friends when you're in all of that. Then once you're done, then you're from California. This person's from New York, and that's it.

SB: I know exactly what you're saying, because, when you're in—it's just like high school, you go to basic training, they give you a yearbook. You get a book and people are signing it and putting their names down in there and saying, "Stay cool. Keep in touch," da, da, da. Twenty years down the road, you're looking at this book, going, "I wonder if he's still there?" I have to say, I have kept in touch with probably I have maybe five friends on Facebook that I was in the military with. One lives in Wisconsin and his wife live in Wisconsin. Those are the ones I was in Korea with. Another one I was in Korea with lives in, I think, Oklahoma. A guy I was in basic training with, he still lives in Georgia. So, I mean, they're spread out now. You don't really communicate, communicate. I mean, there's another guy that lives in Maine that I was in Colorado with my sergeant. So, I keep in touch with my sergeant. I keep in touch with him, Ed, and there's a couple others. But I haven't seen them since I left Korea and Colorado. I've been gone—I mean, I left Korea in '91, and I left Colorado in '94. I haven't seen them in 20, 30 years, but I keep in touch with them. It's like, but so if I ever get around to getting to those states I would like to visit with them.

RF: Do you have friends across the country—

SB: That's actually happened throughout. Even Korea—Korea, Vietnam. I know there's a lot of guys—my best friend's dad watched his best friend get blown out of his boots in Korea—or in Vietnam. He said that was probably one of the worst things he'd ever seen. It was his best friend. Actually, that's who my best friend's mother was married to was his dad's best friend at the time when he died. The first thing the guy said, he said, "If I don't make it back from here, I want to take care of my wife. Take of Vern (?) and my wife, my daughter." Then they ended up getting together and they had three boys. Things worked out. Same thing you're saying is like a lot of people, they keep in touch with certain people, but you make so many friends while you're in. Then you lose track of them and you're thinking 'where's this guy? What he's doing?' You think to yourself sometimes, 'wonder what he's doing these days, or what she's doing these days?' There was a couple of girls that I was in with. I still to this day, I ran into one of them in Colorado while I was stationed in Korea. She was in Korea, and then I saw her in Colorado. We were both in Colorado together. We went to the bowling alley, and I went—I was freaked out. "Hey, what's up?" I haven't seen her since. Yeah.

You meet a lot of people. You become friends with a lot of people. Like I said, they go their separate ways, just like I said, high school. If you go to high school, you got all these friends in high school, three or four years. Some go to military, some go this way, some go that way. A lot

of them disappear out of the city that you live in, with the exception of Missoula, Montana, because I've seen a lot of people stay here because they don't want to leave this city, because Missoula's actually a really nice city to live in. Montana's a nice state if you want to get away. I know a lot of people just want to get away.

You leave high school. That's like my 30-year reunion was this year; we didn't even have a reunion. I told my friend that don't even really care if we went because I really didn't want to see anybody. I said, "There's only three people that in my graduating class that I actually care to talk to," and he's one of them now. The other two I talked to on Facebook. and that's about it. But military-wise, yeah, there's a few guys I wish I could get in touch with. I've tried to find a couple of them. I'm afraid one of them might not be with us anymore, but. It's sad because he was a really cool guy. Drove a 1969 Barracuda in Colorado. It was a bad car.

RF: Was it the purple one?

SB: Yeah, it was maroon. His was maroon, white interior. Bad ass car.

RF: Perfect. I think we got everything.

[End of Interview]