WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Jude Eden

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 6 February 2016

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is January—No, it's not, it's February. I think I wrote January on some of the paperwork. It's February 6, 2016. I'm at the home of Jude Eden and I'm in Winnabow?

JE: Winnabow.

TS: Winnabow, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina of Greensboro. Jude, could you state your name the way you'd like it to be on the collection?

JE: It's Jude Eden.

TS: Jude Eden. Alright.

JE: Action!

TS: Yeah, action, there we go. We're ready. Jude, why don't you start out by telling me a little bit about where you're from, when you were born?

JE: I was born in [12 July] 1977 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

TS: How is it that you were in Halifax?

JE: My dad's from Berkeley, California, my mom's from Boston, Massachusetts, and they met in Boston. My dad was finishing up his Ph.D. and he first went to Montreal [Quebec, Canada] to teach and then ended up at Dalhousie University, which was in Halifax, and then he was offered a position when I was ten at Hillsdale College and so we moved to Michigan when I was ten. But we were always going to my grandparents in Cape Cod because my mom was—being from Boston, so I grew up between Halifax, Hillsdale, Michigan, and Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

TS: How old were you when you went to Michigan?

JE: Ten.

TS: Ten. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

JE: Yeah, I have a brother who's four years older than me.

TS: Four years older?

JE: Yes.

TS: Okay. What was it like growing up in Hillsdale? What kind of town is it? Is it a city?

JE: Hillsdale is tiny, yeah. There's nothing there. It has, like, a tiny center with a few businesses and then a lot of farms surrounding.

TS: Right.

JE: And there's not much but the college.

TS: It's in the southern part of Michigan.

JE: Yeah, south-central Michigan. A lot of beautiful country in that area.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: [unclear]

JE: Yes, especially—

TS: Cider mills and—

JE: Especially in the fall, it's just—Yeah, lots of maples. Beautiful. But, I don't know, it was kind of tough. Both Halifax and just growing up generally. I have curly red hair; Jewish curly red-headed kid. My older brother is autistic—he's a high-functioning autistic—so I'm kind of like the curly red-headed Jewish kid with the weird older brother. We were both bully fodder.

TS: You felt like you stuck out a little.

JE: Oh, yeah, for sure. I couldn't not stick out if my life depended on it. [both chuckle] So.

TS: And you'd moved there, so. But you were ten.

JE: Yeah, yeah. I used to get picked on a lot, but I was also—I was just a day-dreamy kid. I also—like, I would just—I didn't really think about fighting back. I tried it a few times when I was little, like, kind of defending my brother, and they made short work of shoving me around and getting me out of the way, so it was kind of a futile exercise to try and defend my brother. And I kind of didn't really have any street sense for fighting or sticking up for—

TS: Right.

JE: Nobody to teach me that. Stuff your older brother might otherwise teach you.

TS: Right.

JE: But—So—But I was always—I fell in love with music when I was ten. I was introduced to the cello at nine, actually. Actually, that was in Halifax and I started playing the cello, then that carried with me to this day.

TS: Oh, you still play?

JE: Yeah, yeah. And even have a couple of albums under my belt.

TS: Really?

JE: Yeah.

TS: That's really cool.

JE: Yeah, so.

TS: You're in a little tiny town, kind of.

JE: Yeah.

TS: In a rural part of Michigan, in that area.

JE: Yeah. They had never seen a Jew before.

TS: No? Did they talk—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: [chuckles] Yeah, so I was either targeted for having curly red hair, and just being weird—

TS: You have beautiful hair.

JE: —just being weird in that sense, because one of these things is not like the other so let's make fun of it.

TS: Right. It's the eighties, right?

JE: Yeah.

TS: In the eighties.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: So you're—

JE: Red-heads don't have—Red-headed children [today] don't have the burdens that we kids who grew up in the seventies and eighties had for bullies and ridiculous haircuts and things. [chuckles]

TS: I was going to say, hair was something in the eighties, for sure.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: It was definitely something. What kind of things did you do for fun? You played the cello. Did you do anything else?

JE: Yeah, I mean, I liked—I loved theater. My parents were always, like, putting me in activities because they were, like, "That girl needs activities. She needs—Put her in something [for all?] that energy.

TS: Oh, because you had a lot of energy.

JE: Yeah, and just—

TS: What kind of activities were you doing?

JE: From when I was little they tried Girl Scouts, they tried tap-dancing, they tried ballet. Like, none of it sort of stuck with me but—and too bad they didn't put me in martial arts classes; I didn't discover that—martial arts until—or I didn't get into it myself until I was in college and they had it as part of—actually it was a gym class [Physical Education credit—JE clarified late] in the college was that they—the grandmaster of the local Taekwondo school taught—

TS: You enjoyed that later?

JE: Yeah, yeah, and I wish I had been a little karate kid when I was—I wouldn't have been so—[both laugh]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You could have handled those bullies.

JE: I wouldn't have been—Yeah, I wouldn't have been bullied so much.

TS: Yeah. Well, did you like school?

JE: Oh, yeah, and it's—what was interesting and sort of fascinating, or plenty of times frustrating, was growing up with a college professor for a dad and a mom who's just in—she was a Literature major at BU [Boston University].

TS: Was she working too?

JE: She was working when she met my dad.

TS: Yeah.

JE: Yeah. But she was just an incredibly intelligent woman and just—I mean, she reads books on, like, neuroscience just for leisure. She's reading a [chuckles]—a biography about [Friedrich Wilhelm] Nietzsche's [German philosopher] life or something like—She just is—I mean, I will inherit thousands and thousands and thousands of books.

TS: I bet.

JE: And for my brother, that was—he couldn't have been put—placed better in a home for—we call him the walking encyclopedia because his punishment as a child was that he could only have two language dictionaries at a time.

TS: [chuckles]

JE: He had read all of [William] Shakespeare [English poet, playwright, and actor] by the time he was nine.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

JE: He was, like—taking away books was his punishment.

TS: Which you don't hear ever.

JE: Yeah. Yeah, so—And there's a lot of—a lot involved with sort of, like, socializing him, because what autism is is very much introversion and sort of not being able to other-focus, follow conversation, take a measure of things kind of happening around you, and

so that was constant work. He's older than me and I—but in many ways I'm kind of an older sister in a lot of senses.

TS: Right. In the way you had to handle [unclear].

JE: Yeah. But they always—I mean, I loved theater. They had put me in theater classes in the Harwich Junior Theater in Cape Cod, which was just this loved, beloved theater, one of a kind in—down the road from where we lived. My grandparents bought a house in '47 there when it was the cheapest vacation around.

TS: Oh, right, right. Changed.

JE: Yeah. They bought property in Harwich—West Harwich—instead of Dennis because Jews weren't allowed to buy property in Dennis at that time. It was like—It was like that, you know what I mean? Of course, West Harwich is many times more beautiful than Dennis is to this day. [chuckles]

TS: Right. Yes.

JE: For a little irony.

TS: Had a staying power that was unexpected, right?

JE: Yeah. But—Yeah, I had lots—I was doing—I was always doing, like, orchestra, band, theater all through school, so I was a band geek, I was a theater geek, kind of just imaginative and day-dreamy and—but—

TS: Did you have, like, a favorite subject you liked in school, or a teacher; anything like that?

JE: No. I mean, I did like a lot of them. I found myself at odds with a lot of them. Growing up in, kind of—with an academic family, I actually dropped out of high school at sixteen because I started to—having this comparison of Hillsdale, which has a really high academic standard, like, kids from A schools who are straight A students often find themselves C students at Hillsdale. It's really tough. And I realized—I started to realize once I was in the public high school from fourteen years old that this was—I wasn't really getting taught a lot, I wasn't—

TS: Not challenged?

JE: Yeah, not very much. So I always sort of found myself—sometimes I would just—I would argue things just because I felt—

TS: To be contrary?

JE: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I was always kind of a misfit. I mean, when I was in the sixth grade they used to sing the *Punky Brewster* theme song when I would— [walk into class—JE added later]

[*Punky Brewster* was a television sitcom that ran from 1984-1986, about a young girl being raised by a foster parent]

TS: I don't even know what that is.

JE: Because—You remember Punky Brewster. She was always wearing, like, all these different colors and all this—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Not really. Really? Okay.

JE: Oh, that was—she's—*Punky Brewster* was a treasure of any eighties child[?].

TS: I'll have to look up *Punky Brewster*. I feel like I missed out.

JE: Yeah. But she was always dressed like a misfit and just kind of did her own thing and I was kind of like that and kind of a misfit, non-conformist always, but.

TS: You dropped out at sixteen. What then did you do? What was your parents'—

JE: I was home-schooled for a little bit, but because of the attachment to the college, I was able to—I started taking classes and doing, like, things at the college right away. I was doing home-schooling with my mom—

TS: Okay.

JE: —which was primarily the—some of the academic stuff. We focused on, like, American History, the Revolution, and Literature, primarily. Because I felt—and the big reason for dropping out was I just didn't feel like I was being prepared for college, let alone Hillsdale College.

TS: Well, it was more you switched to do home-schooling it sounds like, rather than dropping out.

JE: Yeah.

TS: You took a different path, right?

JE: Yeah. I didn't drop out until, like—But it is the same process. But [both chuckle] you drop out of school.

TS: Well, I mean, today, though, there's a lot more options for you for things like that.

JE: Yeah. Yeah

TS: But maybe at that time there wasn't.

JE: Yeah, at the time, home-schooling was very persecuted, as a matter of fact. But I did some of my academics at home and then I was in, like, the college orchestra and taking one class a semester and then more. And by the time I actually applied to Hillsdale and went as an eighteen year-old I already had, like, a sophomore's credits; I was a sophomore. But I ended up just going the normal length and graduating at twenty-one instead of graduating early—Like, I could have grad—done it at twenty but Hillsdale is such a—

TS: Cut back on credits a little?

JE: Yeah, and I just—I loved the learning. I always—When I was a kid, I always found it—I wasn't an avid reader even though everybody else around me was. I found it really hard to find books that I liked to read and so—

TS: What kind did you like to read?

JE: Like adventure. I don't know. There's—They just made a movie of one that was recently and it was from my childhood. It was, like, the—What was that story? I don't know. There were a lot more of them, though, that sort of—maybe not as large as *Harry Potter* but they're kind of adventure stories that—Yeah. And—

[*Harry Potter* is a series of fantasy novels written by British author J.K. Rowling]

TS: Like Narnia world?

[*The Chronicles of Narnia* is a series of fantasy novels written by C.S. Lewis]

JE: Yeah, yeah. But I really fell in love again with reading and writing once I left the public school and we were kind of focused on it.

TS: You could pick the topics that you liked, right?

JE: Yeah, yeah. And so, studied a lot of literature, poetry. I mean, studied a lot of—like, studying the American Revolution was, like, reading George Washington's letters; reading the correspondence of [Alexander] Hamilton.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So primary sources?

JE: Yeah, and really getting into what they were saying, not like just the sort of textbook paragraph.

TS: Right.

JE: Not in depth at all today.

TS: Not the narrative that someone was, like, telling you—

JE: Yeah.

TS: —but you could understand what's going on more—

JE: What they said, yeah. So [unclear] was a really rich, rich experience.

TS: Yeah, it sounds like it.

JE: And it was—I—once I left the public school system, I was always kind of, like, picked on or—When it came to being older, like, fifteen, sixteen, it was just sort of being outcast. It wasn't being—

TS: Right. Isolated in some sense.

JE: Some, yeah. And I didn't really—I didn't really care that much so I found leaving public school very freeing and had tons of friends and everything like that, but it was just, like, "Okay, I don't fit in there." Like this is—Instead of trying to hit your head against the wall and, like, "Why do I not seem to fit into this environment?" It's, like, "Oh, it's the environment's fault." [chuckles]

TS: Very interesting, yeah.

JE: Like so many of us[?], once you realize you're kind of—

TS: Did your parents kind of recognize this? They're pretty academically minded; coming out of school would seem a little bit different. But recognizing maybe that you needed something different.

JE: Yeah. By the time I—

TS: And you had a brother who had different needs too.

JE: Right. And that was actually the reason for not doing it sooner, was actually at the end of my freshmen year I think, I asked my parents about, like, "Can I—This isn't doing it for me. Can we think about home-schooling?" And at the time they said no because they were still—Josh has so much—it's so much responsibility with Josh that they felt like it would be too much for my mom while my dad is teaching full-time.

But by the time I finished my sophomore year it was like a relief to them to take me out. Because I would come home complaining every day, or we would just be being fed this government party line with, like, Channel One Television [digital content provider shown in schools], and everything that they were teaching was sort of—kind of one-sided and watered down. In my, like, ninth grade, there was AP [Advanced Placement] English, and they were doing an abridged version of, like, the *Odyssey*, and I was like—I had read the *Odyssey* so I was like, "You're not helping kids by watering everything down."

[The *Odyssey* is one of two major ancient Greek epic poems attributed to Homer]

TS: Right. "Why is it abridged?"

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Right. That's really interesting. While you're doing this, you're in this other environment and you're kind of doing college classes, so you're an adventurous young girl, right?

JE: Yeah.

TS: Imaginative.

JE: Yes.

TS: Did you have a sense then of what you thought you wanted to do, like, "When I grow up," sort of thing?

JE: I actually fell in love with photography at sixteen.

TS: Oh, yeah?

JE: Yeah, and I—In—The photography and art section of the college library at the time was in the lowest level [of the library] and I used to just spend hours down there poring over Irving Penn and Dorothea Lange and Edward Weston and Ansel Adams. I just—I wanted

to be the next Irving Penn. I just thought that was so magnificent. And my parents had gotten themselves—As a wedding present to themselves in 1970, they had bought a secondhand Leica camera.

TS: Oh, nice.

JE: And so, that was what I first started shooting with and didn't realize for many—for a long time I didn't realize, like, that the focus mechanism was off on it and it was, like, thousands of dollars to repair because it was an antique camera. So I had all these great dreams, and then I was coming out with, like—sometimes the photograph, sometimes it would be in focus, sometime it wouldn't, and I'd be, like, "I'm focusing all the time. What's happening here?"

TS: Right. But that was something you couldn't quite figure out.

JE: [chuckles] Yeah, yeah.

TS: Thought more that it was you than the camera.

JE: Yeah. But I loved doing portraiture, I really loved doing candid photography, and so that was my plan, actually. That was—I started taking it seriously. I majored in Literature and minored in Political Science, and they didn't—they had one semester of a photography class, and after that I did—I sort of was able to create an independent study with the same professor to continue—to continue on. He was the—He is the painting and drawing professor and does photography and stuff like that. His name was Sam Knecht.

TS: That's at Hillsdale?

JE: Yeah. But I thought—I had sort of fallen back in love with reading because at—when I—at sixteen, basically, because I just couldn't—I guess—I don't know why I didn't feel like I—a sense of freedom like I did then to, like, do whatever I wanted, to read whatever I wanted. I mean, obviously the stuff was all there and available, I could have gone to any library and I—and I did, but I didn't—I wasn't able to just be like, "This is what I'm going to—"

TS: Right. Well, you had these other pressures on you that were maybe overshadowing the—

JE: Yeah. You're in this school system where you have your six classes and you—

TS: Yeah.

JE: So it was really just lots of—lots of reading. And I thought that English Literature would be—if I wanted to teach kids or—that that would be something that I could fall back on if my photography dream didn't pan out. I had no idea about running my own business, which is half the battle of any artist. And I still find that—actually, that's why I'm not in

photography today, is because I don't like doing it for my bread; I like doing it, like most things, on my own terms.

TS: Creative.

JE: Yeah, on my own terms and on my own schedule. And I like to do it because I like to be creative, not because I sort of—this is, of course, twenty years in retrospect.

TS: Right. Sure.

JE: Yeah.

TS: What did you do after you graduated from Hillsdale, then?

JE: I took a year off and then went to the Hallmark Institute of Photography—

TS: Where's that at?

JE: —which is in western Massachusetts.

TS: Okay.

JE: It's in Turners Falls, Massachusetts.

TS: You got back to New England.

JE: Yeah, yeah. And I knew I wanted to do photography. I knew—I didn't like Michigan. I mean, Hillsdale's this little bum town and I—from a child, I always wanted to go back to Massachusetts.

TS: Right.

JE: And that was where better friends were, and more fun was, and I just liked it better. Of course, the beach and all the fun stuff.

TS: Yeah, who can blame you?

JE: And we were kind of a family that was always—my mom always loved, like, the off-season where you kind of—we're off-season lovers. I love Cape Cod in the dead of winter. I love it in the dead of fall. I like the cold; I like the snow; I don't mind the slush. I kind of—I mean, of course, it gets monotonous after a while.—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Right. But get away from the tourists.

JE: Yeah. Yeah, I love the, sort of, solitary beach.

TS: How long were you there?

JE: Hallmark is a ten month professional program, and then I went down to New York City to—I was trying to apprentice, so you try to become a photographer's assistant. Some people go off and start their own businesses, some people—some of us were kind of, like, the top tier of the—that graduating class, expected to go to big cities and do great things, and I was one of the ones who went to New York and that was 2001. I graduated in the spring—late spring of 2001, and then was pounding pavement in New York City and just trying to find work enough to stay in the city.

TS: Okay.

JE: To pay for my cellphone so the photographers could call me. [chuckles] I worked at a bagel shop; I was a running messenger; I was a hostess at a—I was splitting time between, like, crashing at—with friends who were in the city or in Brooklyn or whatever, or my cousin's house in Long Island. So sometimes I was there for a week or three days and sometimes I was back there [Long Island—JE clarified later].

TS: You're just doing whatever you can to make sure that you're surviving.

JE: Yeah, yeah. Trying to get—I almost landed a job being an equipment manager for a shop, and they told me I had the job and so I quit my other jobs, and then they—and then they said, "No, we don't have the job."

And I was, like, "Well, shit. I just quit my other job because you told me I had the job." The stuff like that, and I could always manage—I couldn't manage to find a job and a place to live at the same time. [chuckles]

TS: Right.

JE: Which is frequently true for folks trying to—

TS: Pretty expensive there, though.

JE: Yeah, and all the while I'm trying to find a conceptual photographer who—They tend to be in fashion and advertising and I really am hot for conceptual photography. So really trying to find that person that you could learn from about more, to kind of continue on with that education, but be working in the field.

TS: Like a mentor.

JE: Yeah, a mentor. And I did have one good mentor but—who loved me but didn't hire women as assistants, so—

TS: Why not?

JE: I don't know. He was gay and I assume it was just because he was more comfortable with male assistants.

TS: Interesting.

JE: But it was just like—and he's—this guy was a contemporary of Andy Warhol and his name is Duane Michals and he's—it was totally avant-garde photographer for *Bazaar* in the sixties and—*Bazaar* and *Vogue*—but he was doing these, like, conceptual—he would do—double exposure but in a narrative with storytelling and sometimes writing on the—writing on the negatives or writing on the photographs and just—

TS: Wow.

JE: —kind of experimental in his own—in his own right.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That would have been fun to be around.

JE: Yeah, yeah. He was—We would have great talks. He was a mentor of mine since before photography school, but then I had the chance to meet him during, and then after. And he tri—It's funny because I never—part of why I didn't succeed in New York was because I didn't like—I wouldn't take a hand up because I didn't want to owe anybody anything, and—because I had sort of had a bad experience with sort of having to pay later for something; somebody helping you out.

TS: Sure. Unintended consequences [unclear].

JE: And I was very stubborn about that. You can't be like that when you go to New York City to try and—to try and succeed there so I was—

TS: So you've got to use whatever tools are available.

JE: Yeah, and he actually said, "Do you want me to call Condé Nast?"

TS: Oh, yeah.

JE: Which is the big magazine conglomerate. And I was, like, "No, no." Because I didn't want him to feel like I was using his friendship to sort of get ahead. And of course I should have said, "Yes, by all means."

TS: But you're—what?—twenty-two?

JE: But then again, I didn't want to work for a magazine conglomerate. But, I mean, how foolish of me. I was just stubborn and foolish and sort of—

TS: Well, it's a lot easier to look back.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Thinking I needed—Thinking I needed to be this, like, purist, make it on—

TS: Oh, right.

JE: I'm today's woman; I'm pursuing a dream; I'm not going to owe any man or anything like that.

TS: Interesting.

JE: But in October of that year—or September—that was—the towers were attacked—

TS: 9/11.

[The September 11 attacks, also referred to as 9/11, was a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the United States on the morning of September 11, 2001. The attacks killed 2,996 people and injured over 6,000 others]

JE: —and all work stopped—or all superfluous work stopped, which much of photography is, except for, of course, photographing what was happening at the time. I narrowly avoided being in the city, like, that morning.

TS: Really?

JE: Because I was—had been staying with a friend of mine who was on Fulton [Street], which is two blocks from the towers, and she woke up to it and was there and actually—

TS: How did you find out about it? Where were you?

JE: I was at my cousin's house in Long Island and woke up to it. I came downstairs and she was watching— My cousin, who was in her eighties, was watching it on television. And her daughter was—worked in the second tower. She managed to get out, we found out later.

TS: But you didn't know at the time.

JE: We didn't know at the time, and I knew instantly that this means war. And although I didn't sign up right then and there, I knew that—I felt that it was right that we should go to war over this.

TS: Why did you know right away that it would be war?

JE: Well, because they were—that it was an act of war to fly the planes in and so it would naturally have that—it would have to be answered. But I didn't even remotely think about, like, joining the military, even then.

TS: Right.

JE: In other words, I thought it was right if we went to war over it.

TS: But you weren't thinking of being a part of it?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: But I wasn't thinking—Yeah, I wasn't even remotely thinking that I would be part of that, let alone part of the military, let alone in wartime. But—And I actually stopped speaking to my folks over it for several months while I was there because I was still trying to stay in New York, and sort of still trying to just hang on, and it was also just an unbelievable time to be in New York City.

TS: Oh, I can't even imagine.

JE: My folks at one point said, "Why don't you think about joining the military?" And they actually—I think it was my mom who suggested it, and the air force.

And I was, like, "What are you, crazy? Why would you even say such—" I thought they were telling me that I needed discipline. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, really?

JE: Yeah, so I was totally insulted by the idea that they would say, "Why don't you join the military?" Because I knew—I don't want to say that they thought photography was a pipedream, but they kind of thought it was a pipedream and—

TS: Well, they saw you struggling.

JE: Yeah, and they weren't, like, "Why don't you do something decent with your life?" Not at all. They have always been completely supportive of basically whatever I wanted to do in life. And I've always been very self-reliant, and they taught me to be self-reliant, and

there's no, like, leaning on them to do what I want to do with my life, but—unless I wanted to, I guess.

TS: Right. Well, why did they think the military would be a place for you?

JE: Well, as it turned out, they thought *I* would be good for the military. [chuckles]

TS: Oh. Okay.

JE: Strong-willed, capable. And once I realized they weren't insulting me, I thought, "Oh, okay."

TS: But it took you a while to come around.

JE: Yeah. I was like, "What the fuck are you doing suggesting I join the military when we've just been attacked?" And like, "What are you suggesting?" And I just, in my sort of [chuckles] haste to interpret their meaning—but eventually what happened was I just—staying in New York City just became too difficult. I was starving, I was—Like I said, all the work had stopped so it came—anything unessential, any—I mean, photographers were going out of business because it was just such a—such a shock and had such impact. So I ended up going back to Cape Cod. I had lived at the house in Cape Cod—my grandparents had been long gone but—between college and photography school, and then decided to go back there and regroup. And I think we had put the house on the market there for a bit so it was standing empty.

TS: Okay.

JE: And so, eventually it—I crashed with friends while we decided if we were going to keep it on the market or not, and once they said, "No, it's a bad time," and eventually I was back in the house. Just working—and actually a photo—fulltime photography work just fell into my lap.

TS: Oh, really? Where at?

JE: It was just for a—nothing sexy. It was for a wood furniture company. I was just photograph—

TS: It was a job.

JE: —Yeah—photographing products for their flyers and catalogues and their website and that kind of thing. But it was fulltime work and it was doing photography and I needed to just stabilize because I had just been doing whatever kind of—I mean, can you imagine being a running messenger in New York City in January? Although it was a—it was a—

TS: Actually, no, I can't.

JE: It was an unusually warm winter, as the case was, in New York City then, but.

TS: Still.

JE: Yeah, that was tough. And so, I was, like, "Okay—"

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: As a messenger, were you riding a bike?

JE: No. I was on foot so I was just using—I was just literally running or trotting from place—block to block, or taking the subways, delivering packages and shit like that. And I worked at Murray's Bagels, this bagel shop. I worked at a Tex-Mex restaurant. I was afraid to waitress at the time because I'm clumsy. [both chuckle] So I didn't—I was sort of terrified—a lot of people—if you want to make it in the city you end up waitressing or something. I was terrified of doing it. I think I tried going into, like, a biker bar one time and they sort of looked at me and sort of smirked and didn't say much and the interview wasn't that long.

But, yeah, so I went back to Cape Cod, regrouped, and kind of just was doing this steady gig. Got back into music and I was with friends, and I was photographing my friends who are artists and musicians and stuff and it was kind of—it was a great life in a way, but all the while this was building up to 2003, and it was late 2003 when I decided to join. And then I went to boot camp in the spring of 2004.

TS: What kind of things fell in place for you to now see that the military was a place that you wanted to go?

JE: Over that period of regrouping and kind of getting my feet back under me and getting a normal kind of life again, I guess, I just found myself increasingly at odds with my same cadre of people, my artist, musician friends who were all very anti-war. And I thought very thoughtlessly so, because of course there's a need to fight wars sometimes. It—Imagine if we had said, "No war against Hitler," which some did; I mean, that would have been catastrophic. So of course there's a need for war and I understood that, even though beforehand I had never considered—such a non-conformist, I was, like—And, actually, [when I talked about joining—JE corrected later] when I joined, my friends were, like, "You'll never do that. You'll never let anybody tell you what to do," all this kind of thing.

But over that time period of seeing the news, watching this develop, I thought, "This is—This is a fight that we should be fighting and, hey, I'm capable of doing it. I think I want to do—I want to put my money where my mouth is and actually go do it. I think this is an important fight to fight." For me, as a woman, I looked at how they treated their Iraqi women, and the prospect of being attacked by people who, in their culture, view women as less than cattle and do atrocious things like genital mutilation and just

abhorrent—So I started to feel very at odds with, kind of, a lot of the group that I was hanging with. And I also felt compelled to do more than just talk about it.

TS: Was there any background in your family with being in the military at all?

JE: No, I'm the first one.

TS: Really?

JE: Yeah.

TS: Not parents or—

JE: I think my uncle—I think—but I think he dropped out at boot camp or something. I think he tried the Marines and dropped out of boot camp, but everybody else, no. There's either—I mean, my parents actually—they were conservatives by the time I was growing up but they—my mom had picketed the Vietnam War in Boston, and my dad had been in the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, and—when he was in college—in the sixties and stuff.

[The Free Speech Movement was a student protest which took place during the 1964-1965 academic year of the University of California, Berkeley. It was the first mass civil disobedience on a U.S. college campus]

TS: He was of age to go to Vietnam?

JE: Yeah.

TS: Was he in college and got a deferment?

JE: I think he pretended to be crazy so that they wouldn't select him.

TS: Oh, really? So they went from opposing the war, then to more conservative kind of views?

JE: Yeah, and that was very gradual, but they really were, like, after [President James Earl] "Jimmy" Carter [Jr.] they said, "Never again." So they—That was, like, politically and voting-wise, their turning point. But also—

TS: Like a Reagan Democrat into something different?

[A Reagan Democrat is a traditionally Democratic voter in the U.S., referring especially to white working-class Rust Belt residents, who defected from their party to support Republican President Ronald Reagan in either or both of the 1980 and 1984 elections]

JE: Kind of, but—

TS: I mean, that was an unusual—

JE: It's also—the reason I say it was also much more gradual was, like, my dad's a political philosopher so he was—

TS: Oh, right. Sure.

JE: I mean, he had read [Karl] Marx by the time he was fifteen. I mean, imagine being—growing up in Berkeley in the sixties. So he had read a lot of the German philosophers by the time he was even getting to college. Most college kids are starting to read that stuff once they get to college if they choose philosophy.

[Karl Marx was a German philosopher and revolutionary socialist who published *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*, anti-capitalist works that form the basis of Marxism]

TS: Right.

JE: So my dad in his fourteen years until his—he achieved his Ph.D. in Political Science from Harvard, and then thereafter it's all in—his fields of expertise are everything from [U.S. President Abraham] Lincoln—Lincoln, FDR [U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt], [United Kingdom Prime Minister Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-] Churchill. Nietzsche; his thesis was on [unclear] and nihilism so it's not as simple to say that Jimmy Carter did the trick.

[German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche provided a detailed diagnosis of nihilism as a widespread phenomenon of Western culture]

TS: Right, right. It was a gradual process.

JE: Yeah, yeah. Very much so. Do you mind if we take a break?

TS: No, no. Yeah, sure.

[Interview paused]

TS: Alright, I think we're back. Are we rolling? Yes, okay. Tell me why, then, you decided to join the Marine Corps. Why did you pick the Marines?

JE: Because the other branches were too easy.

TS: How did you know that?

JE: Well, I took some time to educate myself about the Marines and there were helpful little documentaries, like, *Making Marines*. [chuckles] I think that was—what?—National Geographic or something did one. But—

[*Making Marines* is a 3-hour documentary film from 2002 that follows recruits as they join the U.S. Marine Corps and complete three months of boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina]

TS: Well, some people have said, for the women, the army was actually tougher than the Marine Corps was for women. Some people have said that at that time.

JE: Oh, really? Like in the 2000s?

TS: Yeah.

JE: For boot camp? Like, boot camp was tougher—

TS: Not necessarily boot camp.

JE: Or just being in the service in general was tougher?

TS: Yeah.

JE: Huh. Yeah, I wouldn't know. Actually, yeah, I talked to—I should specify. I talk—I was never really interested in the army. I don't really know why, I just—I talked to—

TS: Too generic, maybe?

JE: I don't know. I just—I had no reference; like, I didn't have friends who were in the service to tell me.

TS: Right. [unclear]

JE: I did have a friend at Hillsdale, in college, who actually left to go to the Marines but I didn't really have—I didn't really have a picture—and I had thought that the military itself was—you have to conform, and that was just very—[chuckles] that was the opposite of me. So—And I did have a feeling like you—I mean, I probably had the—I guess the Hollywood arrogance of thinking that people join because they have no other prospects, or that they get brainwashed once they do; regardless of why they join they get brainwashed. Now, of course, I think nothing could be further from the truth. They're just a portion of the general population.

But, yeah, I talked to an air force recruiter and I talked to a Marine recruiter, and I kind of knew why I was going in. I knew—I wanted to feel like I was using more of my capability and my brain than I was at the time. I wanted to—I wanted to deploy. I kind of would tell anybody who would listen that—all along the way—like, "If there's a chance to put me somewhere where—" and that's kind of why—probably if I hadn't done that I might not have been on checkpoint duty or whatever like that.

TS: When you signed up you let the recruiters know that you wanted to deploy, wanted to go?

JE: Yeah, yeah. And I just—I decided, even though I had my bachelor's, I decided to enlist because I just thought that would be a more well-rounded thing for me to do, having been kind of a day-dreamy, bookworm-y type, or musician. Not your street smart—Like I had al—I had been jogging since I was fifteen and I had been doing martial arts since I was nineteen in college. I got my black belt at twenty-three. I kept doing martial arts seriously, of all types of—mainly Taekwondo, some Capoeira, some Krav Maga, some—but—

TS: But for the most part, it would be out of your, like, wheelhouse, right?

JE: Yeah, that's a good way to describe it. But when I talked to this air force recruiter and I kind of told her all this stuff—I wanted to feel like I was doing something greater day-to-day, greater than myself and in service to the country, and I wanted to serve, I wanted to fight this fight in particular—and she was, like, "Oh, well, the air force will be easy for you," blah, blah, blah.

I'm like, "Did you just hear anything that I said?" [chuckles]

TS: Apparently not.

JE: And the Marine recruiter was—He was all over it. And, of course, he was excited to have a female that had— [they] have to work so much harder to recruit females that they were glad to have one walk in and say, "I want to go there." But I just—

TS: With your background—you're educated—I'm sure you could pick a lot of jobs.

JE: Yeah. It seemed to me like the enlisted was where the action was, and there was kind of this separation between the officers and the enlisted. And I honestly didn't—I felt like I was a leader-type. Or maybe I'm just a non-conformist type and I mistake that for [chuckles]—I mistake being a misfit for being a leader, who knows?

TS: Well, you're strong-willed.

JE: Yeah, for sure. And not easily cowed by bullshit, so. But I didn't—I didn't know—I didn't feel like—and I guess I kind of—this is kind of what I feel like with the officers, is, like, yes, they get an extended training, like, the Basic School, but at the same time, like, they come in and are in charge when they know nothing, and I just thought that would be a foolish place to put myself into, whereas—and then you—as you learn going through—I don't know—I think it's, like, the staff sergeants, gunnery sergeants, and—they should be the officers of the—because they have the needed experience: experience with war, the experience with—I mean, whatever the—

TS: Yes. But, in a sense, your officers are your managers.

JE: Yeah.

TS: And your NCOs [non-commissioned officer] are your leaders, of the troops, right?

JE: Yes. Yeah.

TS: And so, you've got the manager, executive level, and then you've got the NCOs—

JE: Except more—like, in the combat arms it really is; you really are led by your officers.

TS: Yeah. It depends on the type of field that you're in for that, for sure. But yeah, that's true.

JE: Yeah, so, I mean, I think that was probably a wise decision for me and—I mean, and who knows? I was twenty-six when I joined.

TS: You're not actually the first person I've ever heard that went in with a degree wanting to be enlisted for the same—

JE: Oh, yeah?

TS: Yeah.

JE: Interesting.

TS: Not many, but I have talked to a few.

JE: Yeah.

TS: I'm thinking of one person in particular. It's very interesting because it's a very similar story.

JE: And it's funny because you kind of feel like undercover when you're around—when you're a low rank—when you're a little lance corporal and you have your bachelor's in English Literature and Political Science and have studied, like, four languages and you have a black belt already. And I was also married going in. I married, like, between when I signed the line and went off to boot camp, kind of a thing,

But, yeah, I—the Marines just seemed like—in addition to wanting to fight terrorism and serve my country, I always seemed to choose the hardest way [chuckles] in life so I kind of—

TS: Well, did you care what kind of job you were going to get?

JE: The girl who wouldn't take a hand up in New York City is going to take the—

TS: That's right. Let's join the Marines. Let's go enlisted in the Marines.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Start at the low level.

JE: Yeah. But I think that was a great way to go.

TS: Did you care what job you were going to get?

JE: I was ready to go where they were going to assign me. I did well on the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery], of course, and they said, "You have your pick." And I actually picked—What was it?—aviation navigation.

I thought, "Oh, studying maps. That sounds awesome." And geography and—for the purpose of whatever military function. But that ended up falling through, like, the day I—the night I was going to fly out for boot camp my recruiter's like, "It fell through. Sign this thing." It says you're going to me an MP [military police] but I promise I'll work it out for you. You're not going to be an MP."

And I was, like, "It's fine."

TS: You didn't care?

JE: And I signed it and I completely then forgot about that. So about eight weeks into boot camp, once you've made it that far, if you're open contract—they set everybody down in a classroom, and if you're open contract, that's when they assign you your job.

TS: Okay.

JE: Because they figure if you've made it through eight weeks you're probably going to make it the rest of the way. And they called me up and I was, like, "I'm not open contract," because I had—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You were going to be an MP?

JE: All through boot camp I had assumed that my recruiter was going to be good on his word and was going to put me back in aviation navigation.

TS: I see.

JE: Or whatever. So I just was kind of like, "I'm not open contract." And so, they asked me what I was supposed to be and I said, "Aviation navigation."

They said, "Oh, a smart kid. We'll put you here." [chuckles] So I could have been a radio operator had I not said anything, and my life might have been miserable in the Marine Corps.

TS: Oh, right.

JE: But they put me into Data.

TS: Okay.

JE: So computers. They're, like, "Okay, smart kid. We'll put you in computers."

TS: So they just are looking at whatever's open, then, and what classes you can go to when you graduate?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah, they have their list. They have a list of what's available and what they need for that cycle—for coming out—the people coming out of that cycle.

TS: So it's just hit or miss really.

JE: Yeah. Just like when you're assigned where you're going to go. It's just luck of the draw whether you go to Japan or Hawaii or North Carolina.

TS: Where the openings are. Right.

JE: [chuckles]

TS: When you joined the Marine Corps, then, what did your friends and your family think about that?

JE: My folks were over the moon. They were really proud. And my mom made this poster because, like, Saddam Hussein had recently been caught or something, and so she made this poster that said: "Jude enlists in the Marines. Saddam surrenders." [both chuckle]

[Operation Red Dawn was an American military operation conducted on 13 December 2003 in the town of ad-Dawr, Iraq, that led to the capture of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein]

TS: That's awesome. That's pretty awesome.

JE: So they—I mean, they were really—They were bowled over. I mean, they were—They sort of couldn't believe it. But very proud. And what's funny is, Anderson and I had decided to get married as well because that was part of—We had an unusual engagement. Our marriage proposal was, "Babe, I'm thinking of joining the Marines. Are you with me?"

TS: [chuckles] Like, "Are you going to stick it out with me?"

JE: Yeah. He said, "Yup, I go where you go."

TS: Aw. What was he doing at the time?

JE: He was a nurse at a nursing home.

TS: Okay.

JE: Or a CNA [certified nursing assistant], and he was, like—and then going up from there, like, now he's in the Surgical Technology Program. So as a nurse or whatever field in medicine, he was like, "I can get a job anywhere, so, yup, I'm with ya."

But I didn't want to, like, give my parents a heart attack by telling them both at the same time.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh. Right. "I'm going in the Marine Corps and I'm getting married."

JE: [chuckles] So I told them the next day instead.

TS: Oh, you gave them twenty-four hours. That was considerate.

JE: Yeah, so.

TS: I'm sure they were thrilled, though.

JE: It was kind of interesting. Yeah, yeah. And they absolutely love him and he loves them and he's great with my brother. Yeah, that's—having a special needs child in your family helps you take a measure of people and can often be—has often for me been the criteria against which I judge people; like, how would that person be with my brother? It's a dating criteria for me.

TS: That's a good way to do it, I think.

JE: Yeah. Haven't always made the best choices in that regard, however, Anderson was definitely the best one. But, yeah, so.

TS: So you're off to the Marine Corps.

JE: Yes, yes, went on the footprints. Yeah, I mean, my friends were like, "Oh, my God, you'll never do that." Like, "You'll never—"

TS: Oh, right.

JE: "You'll never let anybody tell you what to do."

TS: So they were surprised?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah. "You're too independent. You're too strong-willed." I was always scolded for talking back when I was [chuckles]—when I was growing up. But I just thought if I decide to do this then I'm going to do it and I'm humbling myself to do it, so I understood—and I—boot camp for me didn't hold—like, the yelling—like, my grandmother had been kind of the type to blow up in tantrums, so like, "Oh, you're yelling in my face," like that's—It wasn't something—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Well, you're twenty-six, right?

JE: Yeah. That too. Older, wiser, seeing the bigger picture. Okay, this is all to create stress, to liken to combat stress and stuff like that, so I saw—Yeah, I definitely saw those bigger pictures. I had that kind of experience in my life, though, that it wasn't—the yelling fazes a lot of people and not that it didn't faze me at all, but it just didn't have that same kind of impact.

TS: Right. What did you think about it, though? I mean, as you're observing the younger—because it's all women, right?

JE: Yes.

TS: As you're observing eighteen year olds and stuff like that handling it, did they come to you for guidance or help?

JE: Yeah, I did try to be kind of a big sister. I tried to be a good example. And there were—There were definitely times where I kind of hung back to let—because there's something sort of unfair about the twenty-six year old, like, taking all the positions of leadership against[?] all these people—

TS: You don't look twenty-six in those pictures.

JE: Right, and they didn't think so—

TS: You look really young.

JE: Right, and nobody who was with me—I mean, they thought I was wise for my age. [both chuckle] When I—all through.

TS: Right.

JE: That was true throughout my Marine Corps enlistment. But little did they know I was just as wise as I probably ought to have been for twenty-six. And educated. But, no, there were times where I definitely, sort of, hung back because I felt like it was more important for these young eighteen year olds to kind of get the lesson and take the guidon [a military standard (flag) that company or platoon- sized elements carry to signify their unit designation and corps affiliation] or these kinds of things, so there's—I didn't do boot camp, like, balls out [slang for all-out with intensity]—I mean, I did it balls out for doing the best that I could for—and trying to be a good example. And I—that was—Steady Eddie in a way.

TS: But sometimes you have to let them meet the test.

JE: Yeah.

TS: On their own.

JE: Yeah, yeah. And I had that feeling of being a big sister throughout my enlistment as well.

TS: I'm sure.

JE: I definitely tried to be that and was—I mean, there's definitely times where I stood up against rank—against ranks for my females.

TS: Did you?

JE: Yeah. Once or twice. Didn't happen too frequently, but—It didn't have to happen too frequently, but when it happened I didn't give a fuck that I was a lance corporal, I was like, "I'm a twenty-six year old woman with a black belt and a college degree and you're not going to do—You're not going to say that in front of—"

TS: Right.

JE: "You're not going to treat that—people like that. Or you're not going to—"

TS: Interesting. In your basic training, was there anything that was particularly challenging or difficult for you? Not emotionally, doesn't seem like so much. Physically at all?

JE: Yeah, I mean, it was definitely tough. I actually always found myself, like—because they're always like, "You're about to get broke off!" when they're gearing you up for the next, like, training thing that you're going to do, and they always make the—they would make this big deal out of how hard it was and you're going to get broke off.

TS: What does that mean, "to get broke off?"

JE: It means separating the wheat from the chaff.

TS: Okay.

JE: You can't hack it, you're going to get broke off from the group, and you're going off to medical platoon or you're not going to make it; you're not going to make it through boot camp. And every time I succeeded in finishing whatever it was, and then I was like, "Oh, that wasn't actually so bad." And I don't know if that's because it wasn't as hard as it should have been or if it just—I don't know.

TS: Maybe to boost you up because if you completed it—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah, I mean, part of it is break—it definitely breaks you down and, of course, I was not immune to the breaking down in order to build you up. I shed plenty of tears. But even though I had always jogged for exercise I was never a fast runner. I was always fine with hikes and I never fell out of runs or hikes, either at boot camp or otherwise, but I was always—I was always training to try and be a better runner, so I felt like I was always

going up a hill, in that respect. But I felt like I was an asset anyway. You know what I mean? Even though I wasn't the strongest runner.

TS: Right.

JE: But I was lucky, I was in the top quarter of my platoon for performance. And—I don't know—it's different, of course, in the fleet and you have your age groups and I was always in an older age group, so.

TS: Right.

JE: It's kind of—

TS: But still, you're doing the stuff[?], right?

JE: Yeah, yeah. I'm always trying to be better.

TS: We were looking at some pictures before we turned the tape on and there's some of your drill sergeants in there, and you had written some things on the back. Do you want to talk about them at all; about where they had been and [then they came?]?

JE: Well, the female drill sergeants, I mean, I—There's nobody who has my respect like female drill sergeants.

TS: Why is that?

JE: Because they're so tough and they have to—they basically have to do everything that you're doing faster, better. Oh, hello.

TS: What's the kitty's name?

JE: Obsidian.

TS: What a great name.

JE: Hey, buddy. Hey, buddy. Come here.

TS: So they have to do everything faster.

JE: Faster, better, stronger, yeah.

TS: You have to be ahead of the platoon.

JE: Yeah, in order to—because they have to lead by example; they have to show by example. But for the Marine Combat Training, MCT, which is taught by the Marine School of Infantry, and all Marines go through three weeks of that; after boot camp and your ten

days of leave you go to MCT. And I was going through MCT in, like, July of 2004, and the guys who were teaching us were infantrymen who had taken Baghdad [Iraq] in 2003. So they were no shit Marines—no shit infantry Marines—and teaching us was like a gas for them because it was—We're doing obstacle course or mud runs and stuff like that and they're just—We had one guy, a sergeant who would just dive into the mud and was just having the time of his life because this was, like, child's play compared to what they'd done. They probably thought lots of us were walking cannon fodder. [both chuckle] And probably—I can't imagine from their perspective looking at all these, like, skinny recruits fresh out of boot camp who think they're all the shit because they just earned the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor.

[The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor is the official emblem and insignia of the U.S. Marine Corps]

TS: The combat training is separate from the basic, right?

JE: Yeah.

TS: Is it all female too?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: You have some standard—No.

TS: Is that coed?

JE: That's coed, yes.

TS: Okay, I don't think I had realized that.

JE: Yes. So once you finish boot camp—or once we did—you have your ten days leave, you go to the [unclear], that's all integrated—Marine Combat Training—and then you're sent off to your job school and then the fleet.

TS: Okay. How was that to have the segregated, where you're all women in the one, and then the integrated with the men in the other? Did you see any difference?

JE: Oh, yeah. Well, I mean, the second men and women get together, people are flirting with each other or whatever. I think it wasn't even a week before, like, two were caught in a port-a-john or something nasty like that. And so, that—I am personally of the opinion that the segregated boot camp is a great, great thing for the Marines. I think it—You avoid a lot of distraction, you avoid men and women competing together, which—you

want the basic skills first, okay? What does it mean to be a Marine? Forgetting about the fact that you're next to the opposite sex who wants to flirt with you right now, or vice versa. Or unwanted attention, or whatever it is, it's like—beside the physical competition. What tends to be tough training for women is not going to be tough enough for the men. They should be pushed—They can be pushed harder and they should be pushed harder. But—So then you've achieved—you're doing the same training through boot camp and then you get to—you've made that level, you've met those requirements, and then you—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You're supposed to meet a fitness level, right?

JE: Yeah. And the whole—everything that boot camp is about.

TS: Right. Exactly.

JE: It's about the legacy of the branch you're joining, and all the history, and the—and then the skills—the skill set that you're then—

TS: Now, when do you do the Crucible? Which part is that?

[The Crucible is the final test in Marine Corps recruit training. It is a fifty-four hour field training exercise demanding the application of everything a recruit has learned until that point in recruit training, and includes as total of forty-eight miles of marching. It simulates typical combat situations with strenuous testing, hardships, and the deprivation of food and sleep]

JE: That's the last three days before you get to graduate, so that's at the very end of—

TS: Which course are you in?

JE: That's boot camp. That's at the end of Marine Corps boot camp.

TS: Boot camp, okay.

JE: Yeah.

TS: How was that? How did you feel when you got through that?

JE: I mean, ours was a little—there were, like, tornadoes at the time so we did some of our Crucible, but we didn't have a full three day, twenty-four hours of training, because for some of it—because there was lightning striking the ground.

TS: Right.

JE: And tornadoes. We had to be put inside and—Yeah, so it wasn't—

TS: A little disappointed, maybe.

JE: Yeah, I was definitely—It was definitely disappointing. So we only got some of—but by then, I mean, that's, like—by the time you're getting to the Crucible, like, I don't think that—they're not dropping people who don't—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Pretty much everyone's going to make it through.

JE: Yeah, it's more, like, about you've done all this training up to this point and then you get to utilize some of those skills and you get to do it in this whole different, much more stressful environment.

TS: Right.

JE: And stuff like that. But, yeah, so that was definitely a little disappointing but we already felt like we had accomplished it.

TS: Right. Well, I can see, though, it's something that you're looking forward to and you want to pass, but then you have to be careful that nobody's getting struck by lightning.

JE: Yeah. The Crucible, yeah. It has this huge—It has this huge thing that it should be, but you can't always—you can't always plan.

TS: No. You got through basic, through combat training, and what are you thinking about being a marine, at this point?

JE: Well, I felt like probably most young bucks do and I wore my dog tags [chuckles] out when I went to the beach like a big nerd.

TS: Did you? Really?

JE: Yeah.

TS: That's what you do? You wore your—

JE: Yeah, you can see—You can tell who the fresh boots are by that and I was definitely one of them. Proud of having made it and proud to be a part of that force. I mean, there's

nothing like that moment when you—when you've done all that. All the drilling, all the PT, all the history, all the—Everything. All the grueling, all the bullshit [chuckles], where they tear up the barracks and make you clean it up. Or they thr—they make you throw all your boots in the shower [laughs] and then make you take them all out and decipher whose is whose, and all those kind of retarded bullshit that you do in boot camp. So it's tremendous. And then you get to, like, even more meat of the matter when you're in Marine Combat Training, and then you go off to your school. So that's—It's three weeks of combat training and that's really, really, really basic and rudimentary.

TS: Did you fire a lot of weapons?

JE: Yeah. You get to try everything and go through cycles of—

TS: Was there anything you particularly liked about that?

JE: Oh, I thought it was all, like—I mean, it's true how, like, when you're watching a movie and it goes through—they're playing a song in the background and showing all the training and how it is; it's just like that. You're on this gun, and you're learning to throw a grenade, and you're humping [to carry a load on your back while hiking] for eight and then fifteen and then twenty miles or—So yeah. And it was really—And it was arduous and you're just—you're digging holes and—

TS: So it's meeting the test of your wanting to do something hard and challenging.

JE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Okay.

JE: And then Comm [Communications] school was two months out in Twentynine Palms [California].

TS: How was that?

JE: Hot. [chuckles]

TS: Well, how was the ratio? Because even in the Marine Corps today there's—what?—8% women?

JE: Yes.

TS: It's really low compared to some of the other service branches. How many women were in your class?

JE: Yeah, we're the fewer, the prouder.

TS: That's right.

JE: I think there were—I think our class for that job wasn't that big. I think we might have had around twenty-five people and maybe three or four of us were women.

TS: Okay. [unclear]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: And that's pretty much how it was for me all through. When I got to Data Platoon at [Marine Corps Base] Camp Lejeune [Jacksonville, North Carolina] and 8th Com [Communication Battalion] there weren't any women yet. And then shortly after that we got another one and it was just the two of us. By the time we deployed, which they bring in—you deploy with Reserves as well as your active duty so it's a bunch more people, but it's still a handful of females and dozens and dozens of guys.

I had, kind of, one of the many things that made my experience unique: being married and being older. Being married gave me a separation, and I think that's one of several things that kept me away from some of the awful things that happened to women.

TS: You already had, like, a boundary, right, established?

JE: Yeah. When you're living—the barracks are like—they're a dorm. They're a coed dorm. It doesn't matter that you've sectioned off these ten rooms in a row for females, because just walk the gangplank and you're down to somebody else's room. And all you have between you in this little dorm room, essentially, is a door.

TS: When they do the barracks for the Marines, do they do it the same way they do in the army where you live with the people that you're working with, or is it just you're assigned certain barracks, or do you know?

JE: Units are assigned barracks.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Certain barracks.

JE: Yeah. So you're going to be with the people—Yeah.

TS: So you're living and working and you're basically always around—

JE: Yeah, yeah. But the barracks are large so there's going to be other units.

TS: Other units in the barracks.

JE: Yeah, yeah. Sectioned off or on different floors or whatever. Yeah, and I think—and as—just as somebody who is older, and also just not being—I've never been a lots-of-boyfriends type. I've always been, kind of—not really had many relationships, and the ones I've had have been serious ones, so I wasn't—I kind of went in very independent, but not like a man-eating feminist. And I was like—to my guys in my platoon, I'm like, "I'm married. I'm a little older. I'm not hanging out with you. I'm not going to the strip club with you." And I think that was a big—a big thing. And I probably would have handled that—even if I wasn't married that's just how it would have been. Who knows? If I had joined right out of high school or right out of college things could—I was a single, young woman—much younger woman—things could have been entirely different because I obviously didn't have the wisd—I had wisdom but I—it only comes with experience, but.

TS: But it made a difference. Your experience was because of those things, right?

JE: Yeah.

TS: It was different because you were married, because you were older.

JE: Yeah. So I had the separation of not living in the barracks with them, and being married, and also just drawing that line immediately and being very consistent about it. So nobody was trying to throw their arm around me or—and I think that was a really positive thing because the guys—guys would, like, fall over themselves apologizing if they even thought that I might be offended. And I think that can be true. Even though the Marine Corps seems to be, like, the least politically correct branch, they're still very politically correct. I mean, they're still very—They're very hands-off with women in lots of respects, and afraid of offending them because anything can [snaps fingers]—they're all afraid of sexual harassment accusations and stuff like that.

But I was kind of like, "Look, I expect gentlemanly conduct." And I used to—I mean, I used—if I heard them talking about females and I would be like, "I don't care how big of a slut she is, or you think she is. How you talk about her reflects on you." She could be the biggest—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You would say that to them?

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: How would they react to that?

JE: They would shut up.

TS: They would?

JE: Yeah. [chuckles]

TS: At least around you, right?

JE: At least—Yeah—At least not around me, and that meant, also, that if they were around me and other females, then that was the precedent. You know what I mean? And that—and you see—being sort of a little bit wiser observer just for my age and stuff at that time. And I would—I would watch as young women got to the fleet, how they behaved, whether they tried to fit in with the guys or not, or whatever.; "Show us your boobs!" Bullshit like that. And you'll have somebody who does it and you're like—because they're just trying to go along to get along and that's a mistake that a lot of young females make.

TS: That's what they'll say; "Show me your boobs?" Really?

JE: Yeah. They said that to me and I said, "Go fuck yourself, Sergeant."

TS: Okay.

JE: That happened.

TS: Wow.

JE: And so, nobody ever did that—all it takes is once.

TS: Right.

JE: And you just say, "Take your arm off me." [chuckles]

TS: In a sense, though, it's like the women have to set the boundaries, then.

JE: Yeah, I mean, it's definitely how—you don't control how others behave. You can only control your own actions. That's not to say that people are blameless when they do something—

TS: Oh, right.

JE: —when they do something wrong. But, yeah, I think how you carry yourself and how you present yourself and how you behave has every effect on how guys treat you. And when it came to us being with other units sometimes, like, in Fallujah [Iraq] for example, there were maybe one or two times where somebody would try to say something—I didn't have to do anything because my guys would set them straight.

TS: Yeah. I've heard that a lot with—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: "Eden's not like that. You don't talk about Eden like that," or—

TS: I've heard that a lot though; like, in a unit, the guys are like your brothers, right? They're very protective of the people outside that unit a lot of times.

JE: Against people outside the unit. Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

JE: Yeah. But it also—it had to do with the precedent that I set with my guys—

TS: They knew.

JE: —and that nobody in my entire company would even try anything with me.

TS: I see.

JE: Or try to say anything.

TS: Right.

JE: And the only person who might would be somebody who didn't know me or my unit, you know what I mean?

TS: Gotcha.

JE: So it was like, "You don't know Eden." [both chuckle] "She's not a man-eating feminist but she will eat you up if you're wrong." But I also—I didn't have to do that very much at all, because once I set that precedent and I was consistent about it I didn't have to say anything. It's kind of, like, learning to fight. I needed to know how to fight all through childhood, and some of high school, but once I actually learned how to fight I have never had to fight, because part of learning to fight is being able to avoid fighting.

TS: How do you do that?

JE: Being able to de-escalate situations.

TS: Yeah.

JE: And just being wise about the situations you get yourself into. Half the reason that a lot of females get in bad situations or situations that they regret is putting yourself where there's a higher risk. And it's sort of frowned upon to talk about that, and that women bear some

responsibility for that, but if you don't go to the frat party and get drunk, you're at significantly less risk of getting raped or having sex that your regret.

TS: Right. But that—

JE: It's simple.

TS: There's a whole—

JE: But.

TS: What do you call that?

JE: Another narrative?

TS: A narrative about victim blaming, right?

JE: Right.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: [unclear]

JE: Right. And I'm not saying that.

TS: Right.

JE: But I'm saying we do—Women have control over themselves and what they do and where they place themselves, and I think women are definitely—where you're all together in the barracks, women are at more risk of stuff happening.

TS: Right. But that's not their fault, that they're there.

JE: It's not their fault, but you can lower the risk by—through separation of things like sleeping quarters and stuff like that for their—

TS: So you think they should be segregated out into their own barracks?

JE: Oh, yeah. I think that would be a great thing. But also, I mean, in this day and age nobody really thinks about—it's taboo to even say something like that because—I mean, you're not even—you can't even say, "Save sex for marriage. Profess abstinence." Like that's considered this crazy, crazy thing when you can avoid a lot of problems if you just simply—

TS: Well, people say it all the time, though, don't they?

JE: I never hear anybody say that and I hear—and I hear plenty of—when that has come up, I think when it's come to birth control or stuff like that, people are actually trying to argue that that's—abstinence is not 100% or something like that, ridiculous things. But people also think—I mean, I know it was true when I was in high school or college—again, I was kind of a misfit so some of the times I would just be like, "Yup, I'm a prude." Prude is used as an insult but I would just be like, "Yup, you can call me a prude. That's okay. That's okay."

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Embrace that instead.

JE: But, really, if—there's a pressure of not being a prude, because to be prudish is to be repressed and whatever like this.

TS: Right.

JE: And a lot of—both men and women—kids especially at this age of eighteen through twenty-four and whatever, at your ripest for the military.

TS: Right.

JE: There's this—

TS: There's a lot of sexual tension.

JE: Yeah.

TS: And those kind of things.

JE: And just—So anyway.

TS: That's interesting.

JE: I really—I think there's a lot to be said for behavior and how you—but it's definitely true that there are stereotypes about women and I sort of spent the fir—I was, like, all business the first six months, basically up until deployment. So I got to Camp Lejeune—

TS: When you were on Camp Lejeune.

JE: Yeah, I got to Camp Lejeune in, like, October, mid-October of 2004.

TS: Okay.

JE: And Bravo Company had just left, taking pretty much all the talent with them for their deployment, and then any new communications marines coming in would then be placed with Alpha, and we were then building up to relieve Bravo Company the following August.

TS: Did you know when you got to Camp Lejeune that you were going to be deploying?

JE: Yeah.

TS: You knew right away?

JE: Yes.

TS: Okay.

JE: And I was all business like that. Basically up until deployment I was just, like, nose to the grindstone [idiom for work hard or diligently], because I was busily proving that I wasn't going to ask anybody to carry my shit for me, do my anything for me, and that I wasn't a slut or whatever, easy, or any of those shitty stereotypes that exist for women. And for some women they're true and we hate that, and for a lot of women they're not true and we all have to work against it.

TS: Because it's the one—

JE: Yeah.

TS: When a woman does—seems like—

JE: Because there's so much—

TS: Whatever a woman does, that negative reflects on all women.

JE: It's—Yeah, and it's amplified because there's so—there's so many fewer of us.

TS: Right. Did you feel like you really had to prove that about yourself, then, because you were a woman?

JE: I mean, I didn't feel like I had to prove that I wasn't easy. [chuckles]

TS: I didn't mean it that way. I mean more on the job.

JE: Yeah. No. And this is another unique thing of the experience, is that I was in a commute—compute—

TS: Computer.

JE: Communications MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], so being a data marine, that's computers. That tends to be smarter, relatively well-behaved kids who are into—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Back in the nerd group again, right?

JE: Yeah, we're the nerd group. So you don't tend to have a lot of the more—I don't know—meatheads [slang, meaning "a stupid person"]. [both chuckle].

TS: Okay.

JE: Not to say that there weren't big guys in our platoon and stuff like that—big strong guys—because there definitely were. They weren't all, like, these skinny computer geeks or anything like that.

TS: Right, right.

JE: But I just think probably in that area there's just less—I don't know—less hardship maybe for females than there might in other more difficult or different types of jobs.

TS: If you're doing a more non-traditional job—

JE: Yeah.

TS: —then you're in a more male-dominated environment, and so you might have more of a difficulty.

JE: Yeah, or the more—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But the stereotype—

JE: The more, physically, that a job requires, the more you're likely to have these alpha male high performers, kind of, high testosterone and aggression and all this kind of stuff. And you have those types, like, in every job but just some jobs are definitely different than others.

TS: What was it like in your unit, then, for your experience there at Camp Lejeune, in this communications unit that you were in?

JE: It was good.

TS: What's a typical day?

JE: Oh—Well, what we would do is, we would go out to remote areas and—like in the woods of Camp Lejeune—and just build a network. So you set up the generators and everything that you need to create computer radio communications in a completely remote area. So what you do is—in communications, is, you go to those remote areas, you build it from nothing, you maintain it, and then you break it down, and you practice doing that kind of thing, interspersed with pre-deployment workups. So we did CAX[?] [Combined Arms Exercise?], MOUT [Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain] town, SASO [Stability and Support Operations?] these training—

TS: What's CAX?

JE: CAX is—I forget what the acronym means.

TS: That's okay.

JE: The SASO is urban environment training.

TS: Okay.

JE: MOUT[?] and SASO we're going through—they have these fake cities that are—You go train on them and different stuff like that, or navigation, or just different kinds of evolutions. They sent me to Arabic school, they sent me to Humvee school to learn to drive a Humvee.

TS: How long was your Arabic school?

JE: It was a month. It was just all day—

TS: Like an introductory—

JE: Yeah, all day, every day—the SLAC is Survival Language Arabic Course [correction: Survival Level Arabic Course].

TS: Okay.

JE: So it's a little bit of a plunge to get you understanding some basic vocabulary and some basic usage, but it's really rudimentary. It's not like a full—

TS: But they also sent you to drive a Humvee, so you're getting some skill sets.

JE: Right.

TS: Maybe like a "jack of all trades, but master of none" sort of in those fields?

JE: Yeah, yeah. A bit.

TS: Having a handle so that when you do deploy, that you can take on other things?

JE: Right, right. So they knew that there would be—They were having women do, like, checkpoint duty.

TS: Oh, is that why they gave you the [unclear]?

JE: Right.

TS: Okay.

JE: Having the Arabic—and they'd take a couple of people from every unit to give them that—the language.

TS: Oh, I see. It has some kind of—

JE: But presumably you're going to try and give it to somebody who you plan to utilize it with.

TS: Right.

JE: Yeah, so. And because I had had other languages—French, Hebrew, Latin—in school and stuff, then—

TS: You were a good candidate for it.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Did you feel like you were getting adequately prepared for your deployment? Did you feel like everything was working and things were going well and you were learning?

JE: Yeah. I mean, I reflect on it and I feel like we could have certainly done a lot more. Your pre-deployment workups are subject to whoever is in charge and whatever training they can pull together for you. We had great OpsOs, our Operations Officers and Staff NCOs. They—Two of our company guys, they pulled together—they, like, begged, borrowed, and stole to get training that we were never really slated to get, but they knew—One of them had been in the infantry before as enlisted and was in the First Gulf War, and then had gotten out and come back in, and was then a warrant officer and our operations officer, and my Staff NCO for our platoon, and he worked together to pull together our

training, get it—get us scheduled training, like, under the radar and stuff like that, so we could be prepared.

I feel like there's tons more that we could have done, and when I reflect on deploying, I think the front lines being more fluid means that we should be actually increasing our standards for who we deploy, because there's a lot of people who are—I mean, I think of the short girls that I was doing checkpoint duty with—five feet [tall]—and they're not going to be carrying anybody off the—medevac-ing [medical evacuation] anybody, you know what I mean? And so, I think—

TS: Would that have been a responsibility for where they were at?

JE: Well, when you're on checkpoint duty, we convoy outside the wire to one of five—one of five checkpoints every day.

TS: This was outside—

JE: So you're out there all day and you're just—you're frisking people who are coming into the city, and we would—so the men would separate and the women would come through our hut, and we would frisk them for explosives and stuff like that. So the greater risks, seems like we're all—we're all in the Marines, we're all riflemen, but we're not all infantrymen. And in those jobs where you're—where you're closer, where you're going out more, where you're going outside the wire—I don't know. I think of how I could have used more of my off-time to do more. Even though I was like—I continued martial arts in the Marine Corps as martial arts, which is—they have five belts and it's like they incorporate all different martial arts; the world's martial arts.

TS: Oh, okay.

JE: They incorporate into their—it's meant—highly offensive hand-to-hand combat. But even that—So I had been doing martial arts for seven years before I joined and then continued on through three levels of theirs and it's like—In Marine Corps martial arts—called MCMAP [Marine Corps Martial Arts Program]—the top two levels are brown belt and black belt, and brown belt is where you—you know going in that you're going to at least break a bone. That's how intensive it is. And it seems to me that females who are going to be on things like checkpoint duty—I went through the green belt, the one right below that, and I used to pair myself up with big guys to try and fight—train realistically, train like you fight—but the prospect of guys actually wanting to kill you hand-to-hand, like, that's not enough. It's not even remotely enough, you know what I mean?

TS: Right.

JE: And now I could have—and I thought about this a lot, like on every convoy and every day that we were out there and—or with these guys and I'd be like, "Okay, look at that tall guy. Look at that tall, big guy," and, "Look at how much gear he's carrying."

And I was on checkpoint duty for the month of October, and during that time it was—I think it was Ramadan and they had—they had national elections during that time

as well, which was an exciting time to be there and to actually be outside the wire. I remember that voting day.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You're at Camp Fallujah [also known as MEK Compound], right?

JE: Well, we were—for the voting day we were put in a different checkpoint where people were coming through just having voted.

TS: Okay.

JE: And it was not near Camp Lejeune [correction: Camp Fallujah]. It was one of their buildings that the Iraqi police were using.

TS: So it was like a voting building?

JE: It was on the—we weren't at that place but there was a—

TS: Corridor that they're going down.

JE: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

TS: So you're there, a little bit further away.

JE: Yeah.

TS: So further away from the Green Zone, right?

[The Green Zone is a 10-square-kilometer area in central Baghdad, Iraq, that was the governmental center of the Coalition Provisional Authority, or transitional government of Iraq, during the occupation of Iraq after the American-led 2003 invasion]

JE: Yeah, well—Right. That's what I mean by outside the wire. You're away—You're convoying out of and back to camp to the safety—relative safety of Camp Fallujah. And you're convoying the risk of IED [improvised explosive device] ambush.

TS: Right.

JE: Frisking women for explosives. They had had—I think they had already had a case where a guy had dressed up in the burka with explosives—

TS: Oh, really?

JE: —which was one of the reasons that everybody had to be frisked. But, yeah, I think—I used to think about the fact that I needed—I felt pretty capable and I wanted to believe everybody who told me that they wouldn't put me in that position if they didn't think I could handle it, and stuff like that, but—I don't know. I'm still constantly thinking about the infantry and what they do and what's required of them, that I don't think there's any acting capably while you're in a support role and you're ambushed, or you're engaged by the enemy is still something of a different animal than the infantry.

TS: Absolutely. I remember reading, though, there was this one—it was army and I think they were MPs, and it wasn't the Leigh Ann Hester one, it was a different one.

[Lee Ann Hester is a U.S. Army National Guard soldier who received the Silver Star award for heroic actions during an enemy ambush on a supply convoy in Iraq on 20 March 2005]

There was a woman, she was a driver, and they were ambushed. And she was maybe your size, she wasn't as petite as five foot, one [inch], like you were describing, but she wasn't really a big woman. And there was a guy who got trapped and he was, like, almost two hundred pounds and tall, and she was able to drag him. And she says she doesn't even know how she was able to do it but it was like the adrenaline or something of being in it. And she actually did save him by pulling him back in. It's like you almost don't know what—

JE: Yeah, I was always hoping that I would have—

TS: The super strength.

JE: —just such a rush of adrenaline should I be caught. I mean, my leadership had faith in me and I think I did well and I felt like I was prepared, but you're kind of—

TS: Vulnerable.

JE: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I think of what some of these guys have done. Now, they're going house to house and cave to cave but they end up in that—the gun jams or they run out of ammo. And there were times where we had to, like, wait in remote areas, where we were—We were convoying but we had to pull off on the side of the road to wait for somebody else to join us and then continue, or stuff like that. Like, occasionally there was stuff like that where you just—

TS: You felt like a duck.

JE: I'm a sitting duck [idiom for an easy target] here and if anything happens, like, we all have to rely on each other and we're probably—we're going to need to rely on—were going to rely on these infantry guys.

TS: When you had those situations happen did you just talk about it then, what you were going to do, or did you just sit there and jabber about nothing?

JE: Some. I mean—Both. Both.

TS: Yeah.

JE: All depends on how long you have to wait. [both chuckle]

TS: Were you really nervous, then? Were you afraid?

JE: I mean, sure, I was afraid. I mean, I was aware. I wasn't, like, shaking in my boots or anything. I was—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Right. Well, not to [unclear]

JE: I was alert and aware and just—you just—you just hope that you—you just revert to your training. But, yeah, I mean—so it was really, really intense. I mean—and I wanted to do checkpoint duty the whole deployment. That was a secondary duty.

TS: Yeah.

JE: But also, one of the groups who had done checkpoint duty before us had been in June of 2005 and they had gotten attacked. And that was an ambush that was widely publicized at the time because I think eleven—they had—they had targeted the female truck—or the convoy that had females in the—being taken to the checkpoints, and I think they rolled over an IED and then were ambushed and three women died. I think one at the scene and two from their injuries.

And so, we were—we had—we were told about that before we even, like, went—when we were given our briefing and introduction to that duty before going out on that duty. So it was really, really serious. But some—

[On 23 June 2005, in Fallujah, Iraq, a suicide bomber rammed his car into a cargo truck containing U.S. soldiers returning to Camp Fallujah. The casualties included Lance Corporal Holly Ann Charette, Corporal Ramona M. Valdez, and Petty Officer First Class Regina R. Clark]

TS: Yeah. There's a reality to it, that there's danger.

JE: Yeah.

TS: That you can be killed or injured.

JE: Yeah, absolutely. And just that unpredictable things can happen. And it's really—it's just a credit to Bravo Company and the other—the other marines and army, everybody who was involved in the first half of 2005. All the—What was going on in Iraq. That was the worst fighting, was the first half of 2005. And we got there in August. Things were relatively quiet for us so we had a relatively uneventful deployment, which is good deployment. Everybody comes home.

TS: Right. Everybody did come home?

JE: Huh?

TS: Everybody did come home?

JE: Everybody came home, yeah. Not so for, like, the infantry guys, though, that we were working with, but. Yeah, so.

TS: Well, can I ask you a couple more things about your deployment?

JE: Yes.

TS: Just basic things, like what was it like, the living conditions for you?

JE: I think the living conditions were really good.

TS: Describe them. What were they?

JE: Well, you're in trailers.

TS: Okay. Are they air-conditioned?

JE: Yeah, air-conditioned trailers and tents, so you have generators that are giving you power, and what happens is, when you build a remote base, it's—your combat engineers go out first and they set it up and then everybody else comes to live there. And so, by the time that we were getting there in August of 2005 we had a big—

TS: It was set.

JE: —a big mess hall and a gym trailer. And a lot of the communications stuff, day to day, was just boring stuff. It was monitoring stuff and just—so you're just working out,

working, and doing platoon stuff or guard duty or stuff like that, just in the desert living in trailers and tents.

TS: What kind of schedule—like a daily or weekly schedule—were you on?

JE: It's usually twelve hours on, twelve hours off, or stuff like that, where you're—and then you may be pulled to do other duties over the course of the deployment. Like, I was put on checkpoint duty for October and the rest of the time was just a contin—continue doing—like, they had the Green Belt MCMAP course in Fallujah. They do things like your corporal's course, or your sergeant's course. I didn't happen to do those in Fallujah.

TS: The regular marine training.

JE: Yeah, because—

TS: For promotions and things like that?

JE: Yeah, because deploy—I mean, there's a lot more action, obviously, for the combat arms, but a lot of deployment is just maintaining what you've got going, like your communications, for example, and the central command where they have all their Predator [drone] feeds. We had to make sure all that was working all the time and everything. But if something goes wrong with the server system you just have to work all night.

TS: How was that? How was your equipment while you were there?

JE: It was good. I mean, 2005—that summer of 2005 was the big hubbub of the trucks weren't armored well enough.

TS: Oh, right.

JE: Stuff like that. The infantry guys definitely had some complaints in that regard. But we just rode along. We just rode along.

TS: What about for women, the kind of equipment that you get? I've read some things, too, about sometimes you're wearing equipment made for men, not made for women; as far as the gear goes. Do you think there could be better constructed gear for women?

JE: Yeah. I didn't really have a problem with fit for some of the gear and stuff like that. I remember a sense of accomplishment when I started to feel—when I would take off my gear—forty pounds of your SAPI plates [Small Arms Protective Insert] and your ammo and your rifle and all that—and I started to feel naked without the stuff and I was like, "Huh."

TS: I'm sure. But you carried it with you all the time?

JE: Yeah, yeah. You go everywhere with it. Sometimes if you're indoors or you're within the confines of the base you can do certain things, like, obviously, you go to the gym tent—or the gym trailer. You just walk over there and you're—

TS: You're not taking your weapon everywhere you go.

JE: Well, you do take your weapon.

TS: You do?

JE: But if you're going from a trailer to a gym trailer, you can wear your shorts and your—

TS: Oh, I see. But you still have your weapon.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Okay.

JE: I think if we went jogging and stuff on the base you'd do that without your weapon. I can't really remember now, though. I was always supplementarily jogging and stuff like that.

TS: What does that mean?

JE: Because you're not really—Well, when you're on deployment, like, we didn't do group PT in the sense that you do it when you're—

TS: In the morning.

JE: Yeah. I mean, you're always working out. I was always working out. But they don't want to put big—you don't want to have big groups—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, like, as a target.

JE: —running around together. Yeah.

TS: I see. That makes sense. How about the food?

JE: I thought the food was fine. I mean, the food was good.

TS: What kind did you get?

JE: It's hot chow and you have people—I used to have an egg white omelet every morning.

TS: Special made?

JE: Yeah. They have a line where you can—during breakfast where—I mean, I think it's not difficult. I mean, the infantry guys really had it—They get some hot meals carted out to them every so often.

TS: But mostly not.

JE: But, yeah, they're in the—Yeah, so I feel like we had cake compared to these guys.

TS: Yeah.

JE: Yeah, I mean, they had everything from a sandwich bar at lunch, you can make yourself a sandwich. They have everything from chicken nuggets to steak, and lobster every so often, or stuff like that. I was kind of surprised by the—People think that deployment—and deployment, granted, it's dangerous and it's completely—it's foreign to a lot of people, but at the—I think if a lot of people realize, like, how relatively civilized—that's very, very civilized living.

TS: Yeah.

JE: On our modern day bases that we whip up. The bigger ones, I guess.

TS: Not on the FOB [forward operating base] and stuff necessarily.

JE: Camp Fallujah was, like, a base with four thousand people on it. Everybody else—Everybody on the outskirts is in the dirt.

TS: Right, in the FOBs and things like that.

JE: Is in the dirt with MREs [Meals, Ready to Eat]. [chuckles]

TS: So different class levels, so to speak.

JE: Almost, yeah.

TS: Living while you're there[?].

JE: Yeah, it's tough.

TS: Did you get to take any R&R [rest and relaxation or recuperation] while you were there?

JE: No, we were just seven, maybe almost eight, or around eight months, and we just did ours and came home.

TS: Nothing with the locals or anything? No contact at all?

JE: Well, there's the people who—

TS: Coming in?

JE: Locals work at the chow halls and they have a little shop. They have a little—where you can get, sort of, the Middle Eastern art or trinkets or this or that. There's a lot of—There's locals who work on the base.

TS: That's why you're doing the checkpoints, right?

JE: Well, no, I mean, those are people who have been cleared to work on the base.

TS: Okay.

JE: DOD [Department of Defense] [unclear].

TS: Well, what were the checkpoints that you were doing?

JE: The checkpoints are on the outskirts of Fall—the city of Fallujah itself.

TS: Okay.

JE: You have the base, and then the checkpoints were entryway—entry points into the city of Fallujah. And the frisking was to reduce [bombings—JE added later]—and the check—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Incidents [within the city?].

JE: Us frisking, and what the infantry does at these checkpoints, in general, was to reduce the insurgent activity and explosions—

TS: Within the city.

JE: —that were going on in the city, yeah.

TS: Oh, okay. I see. Was there anything that was particularly challenging during your deployment for you, as Jude?

JE: The further out you get from both your service and the deployment the more—the less of the hardship is the most prominent. The less hardship is more prominent in your mind the further out you get.

TS: Oh, okay.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: So your memory—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: So I mean, I know I was frustrated—

TS: It's not as raw.

JE: Yeah. I mean, I know I was frustrated by different little things, but I didn't really have too bad of a time at all. I mean, that was a—Like I said, it was a relatively uneventful deployment.

TS: How about being away from your husband and your family?

JE: That was tough, but I've always been so independent that it was just something I knew was coming. We were writing a lot.

TS: What kind of communication did you have?

JE: We were allo—we were able to email. Some people did the video chat regularly. I did—I called on the phone once in a while, but primarily it was email or just written letters; written letters home.

TS: Did you get random mail; like, they sometimes send packages and things?

JE: Yeah, there's stuff where we would get—we would get tons of packages that just get put in common areas.

TS: Any good stuff?

JE: Sure, sure. I mean, food, candy. They'd send lots of things to the females, so we had this big homemade bookcase unit in the—in the women's shower trailer that just had all the kinds of stuff that people would send us, from lotions to soaps to everything that a gal needs while on deployment. [chuckles]

TS: Well, talk about that a little. Was that difficult for women, hygiene and all?

JE: Not in the context of the base because you basically have everything you need. You have running water.

TS: Yeah.

JE: And you have privacy. So it's being out—when we were out all day, every day, I mean, we were lucky. Again, I can't—I was constantly thinking about this—we keep bringing up the infantry but it's just—The fact that as disgusting as you get from standing in a hundred and four degree heat all day, even when you're in the shade part of the time, and just in the dust and dirt and just kind of doing what you're doing.

TS: Right.

JE: Doing whatever your job is. But we got to come home. Come back or—home [chuckles]—come back to the base and shower the day off, and those guys had to stay out there, or if they were lucky enough to convoy—be the ones to convoy us back then they might get a shower once they got back.

TS: Right.

JE: And hot chow and stuff like that.

TS: Well, for me—

JE: I think we had it, like, relatively easy.

TS: Right. Sure. But when thinking of how things have changed for women over the course of the years, in talking to some of the women that were in Vietnam, probably the most requested item that they had were tampons—

JE: Yeah.

TS: —and pads because they couldn't go to the BX [base exchange] or PX [post exchange] to get any of that. It wouldn't be stocked.

JE: Right, right.

TS: So those kind of—

JE: And we not only had that stuff stocked at, like—there is a shop on your bases—your forward bases like Camp Fallujah, but we also had people sending—

TS: Those kind of things?

JE: —sending tons of stuff like that, yeah.

TS: Yeah. It just always was remarkable to me because they didn't even think of those things.

JE: I know. Can you imagine? During Vietnam? God.

TS: No.

JE: I mean, that's why those women are the shit [awesome], too. They were just—

TS: But they didn't have a weapon that they were carrying.

JE: Well, true. True.

TS: Doing different roles. When you look at the change at the time, women are still not doing infantry, but checkpoints outside the wire.

JE: Yes.

TS: Those kind of things are really interesting—

JE: Yeah, and they have more—they discover that it's problematic, like, for women being more subject to UTIs [urinary tract infections] and things, partly just because we are more prone to them, but partly because when you're convoying or you're out and you for whatever reason can't stop to pee, that causes problems, whereas men can do it anywhere.

TS: [unclear] for guys, right.

JE: Yeah.

TS: Yeah, true. Well, was there anything that was particularly surprising about your deployment?

JE: No. I mean, I guess I was surprised at how much I felt like I thrived during it. And you definitely—deploying is that you get to put your—what you've been trained for to use. Even if you don't end up shooting your weapon, which I didn't. But you feel like you actually get to do the stuff that you've been training for all this time. And I actually felt like all the work that I had done, kind of keeping my nose to the grindstone and establishing that I was a reliable asset before deploying, paid off on deployment.

Whereas, I saw how some women had kind of done those things—the go along get along things, or just trying to fit in with the guys, and they were kind of cliquish before deployment, but that all fell away.

TS: Why do you think that happened that way?

JE: Because it was a matter of being taken seriously. I spent those first months in the fleet being sure that I was taken seriously as a marine and not for any other reason. And

although I wasn't part of the clique stateside, it kind of worked to my advantage [on] deployment because I was—It didn't matter that I kind of wasn't—I was being relied upon and, like, chosen for checkpoint duty. You know what I'm saying?

TS: Right.

JE: So I kind of—I mean, that, I guess, was a pleasant surprise to me. And then, of course, coming home was, like—I felt a really solid—no need to speak; I'd done it. You know what I mean? I would never have to give my résumé. Whereas when you're getting to know people you start at the fleet—And I wasn't—I was telling people all my stuff all the time, but I did tell—Most of my stuff, like, my peer group, the people in my platoon found out not from me but from my command, because they drilled me once I got there, "You're twenty-six and married. What are you doing here? You have college. What are you doing here? And you went to photography school. What are you doing here?"

Oh, and I didn't even tell you one of the—one of the things that made it, in addition, a really great experience was because I had that photography background, and we talked about it when I first got to the fleet, and they were, like, "Who is this Eden that we've just received here?"

Two or three days after finding out that I went to photography school and had been pursuing that, my OPSO [operations officer] tosses me a box and it's a—I think it was a Canon Rebel [camera] and he goes, "See what you can do with this." And basically, I was the company and battalion photographer for, like, the rest of my enlistment. Every training evolution, every promotion, everything that we did—which is especially fun with the training evolutions because I would go through the training evolution just to go through it for the training, and then I would go through it again with the camera. And because I was designated the camera, I could go run around all I wanted, and run around again and again photographing people as we all went through, like, the MOUT town where we learned the house-to-house, or these other training evolutions. Or we did one training evolution where we had—it was after doing—we did one week during the urban environment and then the following week that was out in the field where we were in these, like, cement buildings having to sleep in sleeping bags and make do. And setting up this whole thing where we had some marines, like, playing bad guys to attack the town and stuff like that.

TS: Okay.

JE: And so, I was—I was playing the role of propaganda, so I was taking pictures and telling them how shitty they were for attacking a mosque and how they had committed atrocities and stuff like that. And so, there were these different things that had I not had a photography background and mentioned it or been questioned about it, I never—I—that would have been a totally different experience. But becau—and because I didn't go into public relations as a marine and that wasn't the job—because I figured I already had that training so I don't need to be—

TS: Do something different.

JE: I mean, it would be great to be taught it and using the Marine Corps' equipment, which is awesome equipment photography-wise and video-wise and stuff like that, but I'm so glad I didn't take that path partly because all my photographs are mine. When you're a PAO [Public Affairs Officer] nothing belongs to you. They'll give you a credit that you took it and stuff like that but you don't own your photographs.

TS: Oh, okay.

JE: And so, what's cool about that is not only did I get the cool experience of any time we were training or had an event—And it was true on social things too. I would just always—

TS: That's great. We'll have to get some of those photos.

JE: Yeah. Oh, God.

TS: That would be awesome to see.

JE: Archives of them. But, yeah. And even before being pulled for that checkpoint duty, when we first arrived in Fallujah, the company officer had me come on their first convoy around Fallujah where they were being—trading off the chain of command and they were being shown the lay of the land in Fallujah.

TS: Oh, wow. You went on that?

JE: Yeah. They said, "Get your camera, Eden. You're coming." So I was one of the first people in my unit to get to go convoying around Fallujah as my—as our command was getting briefed on the situation; the situation and the lay of the land there, so.

TS: Did they use a lot of those pictures to document the unit's time in Fallujah?

JE: Not formally.

TS: No? You didn't have a newsletter or anything like that?

JE: No, they did a newsletter in Fallujah. I think I might have given them a picture, like, that was specifically—For example—

TS: For the PIO?

JE: —they had me write a piece, I think, and give them a picture on doing checkpoint duty.

TS: Okay.

JE: Which, that, I can share with you.

TS: Okay, that would be great.

JE: You guys would probably like that. I'll have to dig that up.

TS: But other than that you were just taking pictures?

JE: Yeah, I was just—wherever I was—and I actually—I mean, I probably could have done a lot more, but you start—you have this big—it's not a phone camera, you know what I mean?

TS: Yeah.

JE: It's kind of an imposing thing and also—Yeah, I have very few pic—relatively few pictures of myself doing any of the cool stuff.

TS: Right, right.

JE: Unless I happened to turn the camera on myself, which I didn't do very often.

TS: Right.

JE: And I didn't—I should have more—said, "Hey, will you take a picture of me doing this," to people, but I almost never did.

TS: Right. You don't think of it.

JE: Yeah. Which is unfortunate because there was a lot of cool shit. But you have Jude's perspective of it all. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. Right. Which is unique in itself, right?

JE: And—Yeah, yeah. It's a great—makes for a great—great stuff.

[Recording paused]

TS: All right, we're back. We're still in Iraq, and is there anything about Iraq that you wanted to mention that we haven't talked about, your deployment?

JE: I can't think of anything. I mean, like I said, it was uneventful but it was a very fulfilling experience. I think I did well there. I thrived in the sense of I was given responsibility and respect because I had been so nose to the grindstone.

TS: Right.

JE: And I sort of—So I was able to reap the benefits later and when it counted the most, which was being in country [deployed].

TS: Right.

JE: And so, that was when it was the most gratifying to have that show of faith, I guess, or stuff like that.

TS: Since you went into the Marine Corps to do something greater than yourself, and you wanted to deploy, so was it almost anticlimactic when you came back?

JE: Oh, certainly.

TS: Yeah.

JE: Certainly. No one can understand what you've done. And there's an element of that in becoming a marine, and then there—it comes again in every difficult thing that you do; every task that you achieve that's demanded of you. And certainly, when I came home I was very—I was sort of quietly proud. I just felt—like I was saying before, I don't have to give my résumé. I didn't feel the need to justify myself or my existence or—I mean, obviously, when you meet new people and they have no idea who you are and you say, "Well, I've done this," but I just didn't even—Yeah, there's—I just felt a little more stalwart, and just—It almost had a calming effect on me. I guess—you're asking if there's anything surprising, and that kind of is.

TS: Yeah.

JE: But I also was so fortunate to not see anything traumatic and bloodshed or any of my fellows hurt or killed. So I just feel like I was tremendously lucky in the experience that I had. But, yeah, I felt very—I had really accomplished something and done it well and come out without any major blunders or foibles or—

TS: And trauma.

JE: —mistakes or trauma. Yeah, exactly. Because those foibles can lead to trauma, that's exactly the—

TS: Sure.

JE: The fear is that if you don't do something right or you don't act when you should or you don't know what the right thing to do is at the critical time, then you can really—the consequences can be deadly, in addition to just, you don't want to let anybody down.

TS: When you were doing the checkpoint for that month, was there any moments where your palms sweat, sort of those kind of moments—

JE: Yeah.

TS: —where you're like, "Something's not right."

JE: Yeah, but unfortunately they—or fortunately, I should say, they were minor events. We had a scrape here and there, or there were times where something was going a little—going off a little bit in the distance, but it was the Iraqi police who went to address it. So there's a question of, "Okay, do we need to do something here? Do we have to be ready for something here?" It was, like, within viewing distance but kind of far off, you know what I mean?

TS: Yes.

JE: Or within distance of hearing the shots going on. One of our checkpoints was next to a graveyard—this huge, huge graveyard—and one day somebody was taking potshots at us from the graveyard, and so we went from the plywood hut into this little—our rest area, which was, like, a small cement building, maybe the size of a garage, with some cots in it for us to sit on when we were taking our break. It kind of, like, blew over; somebody else dealt with it. So it was extremely minor.

I think the only other little scrape was we—somebody threw, like, a grenade or something at the front of our truck on our convoy and the driver—the staff sergeant in—swerving in reaction to it kind of got tangled in the concertina wire and that was—and we were in the back of—four of us were in the back of one truck and there were others in other vehicles—Humvees and trucks. And we just sped off down a few blocks, had to stop, cut out the concertina wire, and then get off to our checkpoint. And so, that was a palm-sweating moment. But that could have been so much worse, but I think it was just—we ended up thinking it was just—it was somebody just trying something. It wasn't, like, any kind of planned—

TS: Right. Or a plan that didn't work.

JE: Yeah, so.

TS: But it seems like you would never have that sense of—like, you're always on an elevated sense of alertness.

JE: Oh, yeah. For sure.

TS: And that must never let up, it wouldn't seem.

JE: Yeah. Especially—

TS: I mean, there's no complacency, right?

JE: Right. Exactly, exactly. And that's why it's just constantly on your mind. I think people get bent out of shape about the kind of assessing that you do in considering some people

able and some people not able. But we all do that. You can't help but do that. I couldn't help but look at my other females—I'll bring up a picture and you can see tall, tall, short, short, short, tall. You know what I mean? Or medium-sized, medium-sized, medium-sized, tall, short, short, short.

TS: Right.

JE: And you just—You look around at everybody, everywhere, going—or you think about, "Okay, well, this guy in my data platoon, he's the shitbird [undisciplined; useless] that no—everybody knows they can't rely on in a physical sense." And I think it's a little too hard to get rid of bad folks than it should be.

TS: Yeah.

JE: Probably a lot due to political correctness or afraid of hurting anybody's feelings. And not that—I don't know. That's a whole other ballgame.

TS: Okay.

JE: Because people get hurt, and then you kind of—people who get legitimately hurt often get placed in that category.

TS: What do you mean by "hurt?" You mean injured?

JE: Like if somebody gets injured—Yeah, if somebody gets injured and then they're in a position where they can't perform either.

TS: Right.

JE: But they're not shitbags, they're just hurt. You know what I mean? Like, there's—

TS: Right. There's a difference.

JE: It's too easy to put them in the same category and I just want to specify a distinction.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: There's people who are slackers.

JE: Yeah, exactly. I think it's too—

TS: And there's people who have a temporary disability to do the job.

JE: Exactly. I think it's already too hard for the military to get rid of its slackers.

TS: Is it?

JE: I think it should be easier for them to get rid of the slackers. [chuckles]

TS: Well, that might be true in the whole—

JE: Yeah.

TS: —[chuckles] in our whole culture.

JE: True enough. True enough.

TS: Coming back, was it then difficult, in a sense? Did you have a cultural shock, or some kind of shock, coming back?

JE: Yeah, and it's really grounded in the fact that nobody can understand what you've just been through or what you've done. Or the magnitude of what you've done. Or the magnitude of what I was able to get through and not see carnage. The magnanimity of that. But, no, I felt like I could—just like after coming out of boot camp, I mean, I felt like I could do anything. I felt like I could do anything asked of me or—

TS: Did you ever have the survivor's guilt, though, of coming through clean where somebody didn't? Not necessarily with your unit.

JE: I think that happens more—That happens to guys who have actually known people who have died and who have seen that carnage. And because I didn't, I don't have—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You don't have that connection?

JE: Yeah, I don't have that because I had an uneventful deployment where nobody died.

TS: Right.

JE: So I was very fortunate in that regard. I certainly give all honor and due to those who didn't come back, and that's what—these guys who have done amazing things in combat, I mean, I notice that they are very reticent about themselves and what they've done, but they talk a lot about their fellows and the guys who didn't come back and the guys—And the medics, oh my God, you've never seen such love as these guys and their medics.

Yeah, no, I think I came back feeling lucky and that I did well and that I could pretty much face anything. And then I ended up having to face cancer and I was, like, "God damn it!"

TS: When did that happen? You came back in 2007?

JE: Six—February of 2006. And it was several months later that I was—I was wondering why I was—I was tired a lot. And, I mean, I knew I was entitled to be tired. [chuckles]

TS: Right. Sure.

JE: However, I had generally been wondering how—why is it that I can put so much more work and hours of working out in, and clean eating, and I'm struggling not to be the worst. I mean, I always maintained a First Class PFT [Physical Fitness Test], but as of twenty—by the time then, a twenty-eight year old, twenty-nine year old, that's, itself, a lower standard just because of the age bracket. And I think I was struggling to stay under a nine-minute mile. I'm like, "I am working out all the time and I eat great. What is the problem? I sleep." And then I was just wondering why I had to work so much harder. I mean, women do.

TS: Right.

JE: Women have to work a lot harder to achieve the same work, but it just seemed ridiculous. And then my mom suggested that I get my thyroid checked, because it turned out that my mom and my grandmother both took, like, supplemental thyroid medicine for underactive thyroid, which I didn't realize.

TS: Oh, okay. Until this?

JE: Until she mentioned it, yeah. So I got checked out, and as they were examining they could feel—I had a cancerous cyst on each of my thyroid glands, and so they have to take the thyroid out in that case and you go on a thyroid replacement hormone. So your thyroid manages the hormones—it regulates the hormones in your body and how much of the hormones you get. It's basically your body's compass. So my body's compass was gone and I—it's kind of like a—from the surgeries and just—you trying to find a new normal.

TS: Right.

JE: In 2007 was when I had the thyroidectomy, and then I was kind of—I—because of that—Like, I was getting ready to deploy again with Alpha Company.

TS: Okay.

JE: I was in a slightly different role because I had been moved up to the headquarters of Alpha Company, I think it was, which meant I was—I was kind of like secretary to managing every—all the marine's training and all their stuff and answering to the company first sergeant XO [executive officer] and CO [commanding officer], and then I would have been kind of doing that same sort of role while deployed on the next one—

next deployment. But they wouldn't let me not—I actually said, "Can I—Can you—Can we save the surgery for after the next deployment?" And they said no.

And, dammit, I probably could have because it wasn't going anywhere. But I was really upset that I was not going to get to deploy again. Although, after the fact, I was told by others who had been on our deployment and then went on this next one, and others since, that there was never anything like that experience. Like, the combination of good people in charge, basically a good group of marines, and everyone, and a good, successful deployment. People said the others—the other deployments they were on were the worst, or were awful in some other respect. Or some dick [idiom for jerk] in charge. Stuff like that.

[Speaking Simultaneous]

TS: It would have been completely different.

JE: Yeah, yeah. So I couldn't go on the second deployment. In examining the tissue from the surgery they verified that I had had an underactive thyroid for some time, so I didn't realize that the reason I had had to be working so hard was because I was working against my metabolism.

TS: Right.

JE: Not only was I working against men's metabolism—

TS: [chuckles] Your own.

JE: God damn them and their fast metabolism. They'll go—[chuckles]

TS: Your own was thwarting you.

JE: They'll go eat garbage and smoke cigarettes and come hung over in the morning and they'll knock out that PFT. Those fuckers. [both chuckle] And here I was, I was doing Semper Fit [a Marine Corps intensive aerobics class], like, four days a week, which is combat fitness, sort of aerobics type of thing, in addition to the PT—regular PT three or four times a week. And I was always hitting the weights and all this stuff, and I was like, "Why is this not—" So I was working against my metabolism. And I was wearing out my knees. So it became clear to me that—I just—I didn't feel like [unclear] as a sergeant with deteriorating knees—and I didn't know what my new normal would be with no thyroid.

TS: Right.

JE: And I just felt like between the two things, I was struggling just to—for the fitness; to stay on top of the fitness and to not get below a First Class PFT, and just to maintain that.

And I was, like—they wanted me to stay. I would have been a good asset. I could have—I could have done other things and maybe tried to mitigate for the running somehow.

TS: Right.

JE: But I just felt like as a sergeant, you need to be an example and to lead marines frequently, to lead runs, to do those kind of things, and I just didn't feel like I was going to be able to do it. I felt like my running was sort of steadily declining.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: It wasn't getting any better[?], necessarily?

JE: Although, I mean, I wish we had had Crossfit back then. I think the different kind of cross-training.

[CrossFit is a branded high-intensity fitness program created by Greg Glassman that incorporates elements from several sports and types of exercise]

TS: Right.

JE: Maybe what I was doing was—by running more to try to get it—

TS: [unclear]

JE: —running—better at running, or even the supplemental weight stuff and doing aerobics classes was not enough. Now there's better science as to—people do Crossfit in order to get better at running faster.

TS: Right.

JE: You know what I'm saying?

TS: Yes. The science behind it is less clear[?].

JE: Yeah, it is. But at the same time, I mean, I had to stop running probably a couple years after getting out of the Marines. I was still jogging just for exercise and realized that between my knees and my lower back I couldn't.

TS: Do you think you would have stayed in if not for the issues that you were having like this?

JE: I might have. I mean, I did start to feel like maybe this was not where I'm my most useful for the ideal or the philosophy of what led me into the Marine Corps as being part of the fight and being an effective agent for good change in the world, or fighting for what's right and protecting people. But, yeah, there are definitely times when I thought about what it would be like if I had stayed in, but I think it was the right choice because I can't run for anybody anymore [chuckles] and I kind of started to know that.

TS: Right.

JE: I can't run for the Marine Corps anymore, and so that's basic; that's basic in the military; it's basic in the Marines. It could have been a totally different story had I joined at eighteen or had I joined at twenty-two when I was in more of my prime.

TS: Right.

JE: And I was probably suffering from underactive thyroid then, too, so who knows?

TS: It might have come out sooner.

JE: It might have come out sooner, or—if you don't have cancer in the thyroid you can supplement underactive thyroid with—

TS: But if you do, you can't?

JE: Right. So if the gland is underactive you can take medication that supplements the hormones that it puts out.

TS: Okay.

JE: But you still have the glands and you still—and they're still functioning, just not as well as they should. But when you take out the thyroid altogether—I can't survive that long without the medication because I'll just slow down.

TS: Right.

JE: I would just slow down into a puddle of juice eventually. [both chuckle] So, yeah, when the ER—the EMP [electromagnetic pulse], or when the shit completely hits the fan and the apocalypse comes, I'll be one of the ones who keels ov—keels off early. [both chuckle]

TS: Okay. I don't know. I wouldn't bet on that. After talking with you, I would not bet on that.

JE: Unless someone decides to make me the librarian for the new order.

TS: There you go.

JE: The new world.

TS: I think you could convince them of that. You know how you talked about having a mentor for photography. Did you have any mentors in the Marine Corps?

JE: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

TS: Any you want to talk about?

JE: They're still mine. Yeah, Tony and Troy. Those were the guys I describe as—they put—scraped together our pre-deployment training.

TS: Oh, right. Okay.

JE: These were the guys that trained us on everything from pistols to—Troy would take a couple of us shooting periodically just off—I wish I had done so much more of that because the military—the Marines—that was my first—I'd never thought about guns or owning a gun.

TS: You'd never shot a gun before?

JE: No, no. Never hunted.

TS: How did you do?

JE: Well.

TS: Did you?

JE: I'm an expert marksman.

TS: Very nice. So that was a part of it you did enjoy?

JE: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And they—I was always picking their brains. There was a little bit—I don't know—this is another thing that just—Because my experience is so unique it's, like, completely unrepeatable. But, maybe it's because my dad being a professor, I treated all my professors like they were my dad. Like, I just informally would ask them questions in a way that I would ask my dad. And I kind of was that way a little bit, or to a certain degree, with these guys because I was more their age.

TS: Right.

JE: I wasn't my fellow lance corporal's age. And so—

TS: To your peers you're more mature.

JE: Yeah.

TS: And have more life experience.

JE: Yeah. And in that sense, too, when there were officers around, there was like—again, undercover lance corporal—where I look at them like peers because we're all upper twenties with college degrees and some life experience. Not that I disrespected rank or stuff like that, but I realized later, after the Marine Corps, how really—how not strict and to a "T" I was about kind of—

TS: Hierarchy?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: How you talk to—Yeah, like how you talk to officers and stuff like that.

TS: Yeah.

JE: I was more apt to be maybe—I mean, I wasn't totally conversational with them, but I was more apt to, like, get in a conversation while doing something else near an officer or something like that. [chuckles] You're working on their computer or doing some other task or whatever.

TS: Right. You weren't intimidated by their rank.

JE: Yeah, yeah. Because I just look at everybody, like, for—I don't know—what we have in common, I guess. [chuckles]

TS: You talked about this before we turned the tape on, that there were instances when you would yell. Maybe yell isn't the right word, but correct and intervene in a situation where you saw someone being mistreated.

JE: Yeah, yeah. That happened once or twice in Iraq. I don't think it—

TS: It was in Iraq?

JE: Yeah, there was—I know there was one specific instance in particular that—where it was a sergeant of one of the infantry units, and he was just—He was just a—he was a bad egg, that guy. His whole platoon hated him. He was just—He was the kind of dick asshole who would get you in the shitty situation and then you would have to make up for it. But with my females—So we would—

TS: This is on the checkpoint?

JE: Yeah. On the checkpoint duty there's a group of us and then they take, say, four to each checkpoint, and one's [of the pair] resting while the other is on and it's, like, two hours on, two hours off, or three hours on—something like that.

TS: Okay.

JE: And so, in the resting time you're sitting—you're wherever these guys are typically living, either near the checkpoint or somewhere close by. For some of them it's like here's the checkpoint and down a hundred yards away or something is where the guys are all sleeping, and some of them were only checkpoints where nobody's living nearby. But there's, like, the cement building about the size of a garage where—that's where you go when you're—when you're at rest. In the one checkpoint it was a plywood small house, like a hut, like the size of this room.

TS: Okay.

JE: Maybe sixteen [feet] by thirty or something like that, with rows of cots where they were sleeping, and then we got a couple of cots in the corner to be on. And so—And this guy, he was just inappropriate. He would ogle the females and stuff like that and I just—I told him off one day. And I was a lance corporal and he was a sergeant but I was—I don't think I got in his face or anything, it was just—

TS: What was the outcome of that?

JE: Handshakes from his platoon.

TS: Oh, really? [both chuckle]

JE: And there was another instance where he—

TS: Well, he wasn't really in charge of you.

JE: He wasn't—No, but he was the sergeant.

TS: He had rank. He had rank.

JE: He was the sergeant. Yeah. No, I just sort of tore him a new asshole [idiom for criticizing harshly] and he kind of—he backed off. And there was another instance where that same guy was messing around and like—What did he do?—He sort of shoved off one of the—one of the females, beckoning for the Iraqi police to come and take her away. And I, again, just getting on him and—that ended up with their company's sergeant major sitting down with me and my first sergeant going, like, "Okay, tell me what went on here."

And being in a position where my first sergeant said, "Eden is a good marine and we have a lot of faith in her judgement," and stuff like that.

And I was like, "You need to look out for this guy because he's going to get those guys killed, and they hate him for it, and they all know it. And you've got a bigger problem here than this little incident," and stuff like that.

TS: Right.

JE: And it was—it was things that happened periodically in terms of my command, or people in my command or in positions of authority over me, just seeing me as not quite like the lower rank but somebody who's got a good head on their shoulders and who, when you want to know kind of the skinny [idiom for information] of how—"What's the lay of the land here, Eden?"

TS: So they had respect for what you have to say.

JE: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I wasn't the most technical marine or anything, but it was just real world good judgement.

TS: Right.

JE: And kind of being a little older and wiser, and that focus and reliable that they'd listen, you know what I mean?

TS: Yeah. So that outcome was good too?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: It was a good impact. But yeah, no, I mean—and they all knew—The females knew that they could come to me, and they did. That's how I—That's how I knew that he was saying dumb shit to them or being inappropriate. And it wasn't like—See, that's the thing too. It's like, I'm not somebody who's easily offended or quick to go, "That's offensive. You can't say that." I don't give a shit about that, and a lot of female marines are the same way. It's like, we're just as obviously salty-mouthed as these guys. [chuckles]

TS: Sure.

JE: Or maybe not as raunchy as these guys, conversationally-speaking, but not a wilting butterfly [idiom for delicate] when it comes to this stuff. So this wasn't just, like, somebody told a dirty joke and this was about punishing him. This was—It was more serious than that.

TS: Issues of safety and security.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: And it had to be addressed. Yeah, yeah. It had to be—Yeah. He was sort of predatory. But then again, he was a dick in general and his guys hated him too. Which I just felt awful for them because they had no way out.

TS: Right.

JE: Until something changes.

TS: Did you ever see any blatant discrimination, or experience it?

JE: No. I've read a lot of —I read all this stuff on women in combat, all the articles that are coming out, all the different—people on the different—each side. And a lot of them have horror shows or really negative experiences with, "Why don't you drop out like a woman should?" Or stuff like that. And nobody ever—I never had any of that. I had—My guys were great. Not that we were all best friends or anything, but everybody respected me and nobody was a complete asshole or anything; get along with some more than others. But they all knew I was a reliable good marine. I had faith in them. Friendly where it's appropriate—

TS: Right.

JE: —and to the extent that it was appropriate. But they all knew I was a serious person, and I guess the situation collided all well enough between the individuals over four years that I had interaction with. Maybe the unit, the command. I mean—

TS: So the environment that you were placed in was positive?

JE: Yeah, yeah. And I never—I mean, nobody was ever telling me I couldn't compete because I was a woman. They saw that I was supplementing my workouts—

TS: Oh, right.

JE: —and doing everything that I could to—

TS: Did you feel like you were treated fairly, then?

JE: Yeah.

TS: With promotions?

JE: Yeah, yeah, and I didn't—I had—women can get promoted a lot faster—tend to get—I guess, statistically, women get promoted faster.

TS: At the lower ranks.

JE: I don't know the particular ranks—

TS: Yeah, I think the statistics at the lower ranks, but as they go up—

JE: The enlisted?

TS: —then it slows down.

JE: Yeah, yeah. Which makes total sense. And I didn't—I didn't work especially hard to promote quickly. I actually wanted to just go on a normal—what any marine would go through.

TS: Right.

JE: There again, many people, it takes them longer than four years or three and a half years to get sergeant, but in a communications unit it's a little different, but.

TS: Did you feel that there was anything that you wanted to do that you weren't able to do? I don't mean, like, couldn't do, but I mean—

JE: Physically?

TS: Yeah, I don't mean that. I mean more like some kind of training or special—but you were able to do special [unclear] of training and stuff.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah. I mean, I feel like I had done all—any of the training that was offered for deployments. I didn't think that there was anything that I wanted to do that I wasn't being able to do because I was a female. I think I had plenty on my plate.

TS: Yeah.

JE: I've always—I always felt like—everybody gets along with somebody who they know is trying their best and is—Well, I guess that's not even true, too, because there are some people who, even though they are trying their best, they don't always fit in or they don't—they're not always accepted.

TS: Right.

JE: And I felt accepted.

TS: Did you feel like you fit in?

JE: Yeah. I mean, I was a bit separate.

TS: Well, that's interesting because earlier, growing up, you were saying [unclear] misfit.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah. I mean, to the extent that I fit in, which I guess—[chuckles] What's funny is they all pegged me as an artist type.

TS: Really?

JE: And I was like, "What are you talking about? I'm dressed just like the rest of you."

TS: Right, right.

JE: But as—

TS: Did you try to hold them back from that so you wouldn't be characterized or stereotyped in a certain way?

JE: Yeah, I was like—I was like, "I joined to fight terrorism. I'm not a hippie." Like, they all thought I was a hippie artist who spontaneously joined the Marine Corps. Which I guess in one very—

TS: Like *Private Benjamin*?

[*Private Benjamin* is a 1980 comedy film starring Goldie Hawn, about an American woman who joins the U.S. Army]

JE: Well. [chuckles] Not quite. But, yeah.

TS: Right.

JE: I mean—

TS: I mean, obviously not.

JE: In a very oversimplified way, yeah. I was a musician artist hippie girl, anti-conformist misfit who spontaneously decided to join the Marine Corps. But, yeah. But I'm also a descendant of Jews who were sent off to concentration camps so it's a different—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Right. It's complex, right?

JE: Yeah.

TS: It's not like a label.

JE: It's a complex story.

TS: That's interesting. Do you have any particular heroes or heroines or people that you admired, either in the service or outside the service?

JE: Oh, sure, I mean, there's lots of people that I admire. I mean, of prominent figures, like Churchill and [British Prime Minister] Margaret Thatcher.

TS: How about contemporary figures? [During] your time that you were in the service.

JE: Well, definitely those guys that I was telling you about; those mentors. They're still mentors to this day and I still just talk to them about things. And they were an invaluable source of just knowledge, and they were willing to share it and we could talk about all kinds of things, so.

TS: The Fort Hood shooting actually happened after you got out.

[On 5 November 2009, Nidal Hasan, a US Army major and psychiatrist, fatally shot 13 people and injured more than 30 others during a mass shooting at Fort Hood, a military base near Killeen, Texas.]

JE: Yes.

TS: Did you have any reaction to that at all?

JE: Oh, absolutely. I mean, I think that's horrific. It's absolutely horrific. It was—It's horrific that it was called workplace violence. It's horrific that they knew on his email communications that he was extremist and they could have done something about it, but they're so politically correct that they won't dare say this is indicative of a problem and is a red flag. I think the military should absolutely be able to arm themselves on bases.

TS: You mean, like, for the shootings [unclear] recruiting stations [unclear]?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah, I mean—And I don't mean to over-simplify it because, there again, you have your slackers and your shitbags in the military that you're like, "Ummm."

TS: Should they be carrying a gun around, right?

JE: Not so much. Yeah, definitely, it's not a simplistic—I don't mean to be over-simplistic about it but, yeah. No, that's—It should never have happened. It should never have happened.

TS: We talked a little about the sexual harassment stuff so we've probably covered that, in talking I think.

JE: Yes.

TS: So you're in 2004. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed. I don't actually remember what year that was.

["Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was the official U.S. policy on military service by gays, bisexuals, and lesbians. The policy prohibited military personnel from discriminating against or harassing closeted homosexual or bisexual service members, while barring openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual people from military service. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed 20 September 2011]

JE: Eleven?

TS: Was it that late?

JE: Yeah.

TS: Two-thousand eleven? Oh, yeah, because it would have been somewhere in that time frame. What are your thoughts about homosexuals in the military? Before "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" there was a whole different policy, and then there's this policy, and then it's repealed. Do you have any thoughts on that whole issue? I mean, that's kind of controversial in some ways; maybe not as much as it used to be.

JE: Yeah. I don't think it's a good thing to—I don't think it was—I didn't agree with repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" because I think it—I think it sexualizes areas that were once neutral.

TS: In what way?

JE: Amongst the sexes separately.

TS: What do you mean by "neutral" before?

JE: In that because homosexual behavior was not condoned.

TS: Right.

JE: Then amongst—when you're amongst your own sex, say boot camp.

TS: Right.

JE: Segregated for the Marine Corps or stuff like that, that those areas where you weren't—of course, if you were gay you might be thinking about sex, but overall, right, neutral in the sense that when women are among women they're not worried about the guys and vice versa, or the sexual dynamics that come with putting the sexes together, and so—I mean, I hate that somebody would have to not live their life to their—or out.

TS: Right.

JE: But I think it's destructive to good order and discipline, because now, like I said, you've now it's—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But can't you just check behavior?

JE: Huh?

TS: Can't you just check behavior?

JE: Well, but they—but they can't. I mean—

TS: I don't understand what you mean by "they can't," though.

JE: Well, just like you can't stop men and women from having sex when you put them together.

TS: Well, you could have certain, I guess, policies or whatever in place.

JE: Right, but they're—people are fraternizing even though there is a policy against fraternization. People are having inappropriate relationships even though there's policy against it. You can't stop it. And whereas, before the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," because of the environment of it not being approved of or not being able to express it

outwardly, then now you've opened up a condoning of behavior where now it's perfectly accepted for women and women and men and men, so now you have to be concerned about—Well, you don't have to be concerned about things like pregnancy, but you do about fraternization, inappropriate relationships, this kind of thing, or sexual assault. Apparently sexual assault—same sex sexual assault—is on the rise since the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

TS: Isn't that, though, because of the repeal—

JE: More people are reporting?

TS: —more people are reporting because they don't have the stigma. Especially with men.

JE: Yeah, there's a chance for that as well, but I think—I don't know—I think it's less important for women actually.

TS: What part? I'm sorry, I lost you.

JE: I think if you—because if you have women who are gay, at least who don't—a lot of women who are gay tend not to want children, and so that's what you need in the military. So it's less damaging to good order and discipline to have women who typically don't—aren't having children. Even that dynamic, though, is changing these days.

TS: That's true.

JE: But I think it's—The problem with, say, coed boot camp, where you're touching, you're correcting, you're yelling, any of this stuff, it's different when a guy does it screaming at a girl, young recruit, or vice versa, and there's a different dynamic. And now you have where even a female with a female—Okay, well that—this touching or screaming, or whatever, is part of Marine Corps boot camp, but I'm gay and I'm seeing that as—I'm perceiving that as sexual harassment. You know what I'm saying? That's what I'm saying about—That's why I'm suggesting that it sexualizes in areas that when we were where the sexes are separated, whether it's in their living quarters, their shower stalls, or whatever, now there's—

TS: But don't you think—

JE: It's accepted for—

TS: Even though it wasn't accepted it was still happening.

JE: It was still happening, but that's where people were forced to keep it under wraps.

TS: Right.

JE: It has much less of an impact on good order and discipline. I know it's a tough subject because you have—you have gays who have served honorably.

TS: Well, it's because—Right.

JE: It's really tough.

TS: It's complicated, right?

JE: It's tough, yeah. Of course, you want anybody to be able to love who they want to love, but the military is a different entity. It's not just an office environment, which is why everything like sex and all this stuff that has these impacts, you're in a different environment here. This is about killing the enemy.

TS: Right.

JE: This entity exists to kill the enemy and any—all the things that take away from that—Obviously, we're not robots and we're human so you have to take into account human nature.

TS: Yeah.

JE: And—

TS: But if the person can do their job, and you're in a unit and everybody respects each other, there's really not a big deal, right?

JE: Yeah, and I've heard from friends in really tight units who—either someone's gay and everybody knows it and it's just something that they know. It's like—

TS: Right. It's not a big deal.

JE: Right. And there are some people that, like, after getting out they found out that the person was gay and they had no idea the whole time and that was—I mean, I really have great respect for the people who do that because they made a sacrifice of their personal lives in order to serve the country, and you kind of have to remember that that's what this is about, it's about serving your country. Women have to make the same choice. For me, I always knew that if I got pregnant, I was getting out. I wasn't going to—

TS: But you have to.

JE: Yeah, but I personally did not consider it compatible to be a deploying marine and a mother. It's one or the other. And when we're ready to have kids I want to be able to care for those kids.

TS: Right. I understand your point. I've talked to a lot of women, especially from the earlier eras, who still don't agree that there should be mothers in the military.

JE: Yes.

TS: And one woman kind of brought it up to me that there's actually a lot more single parents that are men in the military, so we're not worried about them as much as we are about the single mothers. That was just an interesting—

JE: Right.

TS: —way to look at it that I never really thought about before.

JE: There are a lot of single men, and there's a systemic societal thing that also overlaps that circle.

TS: Do a Venn diagram. [chuckles]

JE: The circles—Yeah, yeah. The circles of general society on one hand and the military as this sort of—its own entity on the other. But we don't need to deploy single mothers at all, and where somebody is a single father, that's a hardship as well but there's typically—the child would stay with the mother. They're deploying—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So it's more of a cultural issue.

JE: Well, they're deploying. I mean, I don't think it's a good precedent either way, but especially for the women because you have no need to deploy single mothers and that's where—this is what—It's the marine perspective because we are the most deployable; the most deployed.

TS: Sure. Absolutely.

JE: We're supposed to be the killing machine.

TS: The percentage of marines that are in infantry and in combat arms jobs is much higher than any other service.

JE: Yes.

TS: It's a different culture, I think—

JE: Yeah.

TS: —than, say, in the air force where the killing machine are the pilots.

JE: Right.

TS: And everybody else is support.

JE: Supports them, yeah.

TS: It seems like it doesn't always translate the same when you go across—

JE: Yes.

TS: —those lines of services.

JE: Yeah, I see what you're saying.

TS: What the actual jobs are doing.

JE: Right. Right, but I mean—

TS: But, still, women would have to deploy no matter what service they're in.

JE: Right.

TS: Even your job in communications, right?

JE: Right. And they don't—The services don't like to deploy single mothers. I mean, they prefer to not do that at all and you have to—you have to have—show your plan—your child care plan.

[All military members who have dependents and are either single or part of a dual-military couple must have a Family Care Plan. It is the means by which a military member plans in advance for the care of his/her family when they are deployed, TDY, or otherwise not available because of military duty]

TS: Right.

JE: Or whatever. There's a name for it. I forget. But increasingly, single mothers are leaving their kids with grandparents, and sometimes the father isn't there at all, and that's bad. That's not good for anybody. And we—And those women are not so critical—the jobs that they're doing could be done by a man or, say, a woman who's not pregnant. But we don't have to do that, it's just that we are tolerating doing it.

TS: Well, in the volunteer force, though, right?

JE: Yeah.

TS: So when we went to that we never really thought that women were going to be necessary, originally, when they went to the voluntary force, but when they realized—

JE: Well, since it's gone to—since it went to a voluntary force they were actively—from the fifties they were trying to get lots of women in.

TS: But they had a 2% cap on women up until—

JE: Right. But even when they increased the caps over the decades they found it so hard to recruit women.

TS: Oh, sure. But my point was that when they originally did the all-volunteer force they really didn't think about using women as a resource at that time, to supplement the volunteer force. What happened was that the demographics showed that birth rates were going to go down, and also men were not enlisting at the rate that they expected, and that's when they started to increase the recruiting on women at a much higher level.

JE: Yes.

TS: So it became a secondary thing, it wasn't really initially thought of in that way. But the roles have changed so much.

JE: You mean the resourcefulness or the use of—

TS: Right, the use of women and the numbers of women. You look at how women were used in the early 1970's, through your experience just eight years ago or so.

JE: Yes.

TS: It's completely different. But it's interesting that you say that about motherhood because that's a common theme for a lot of women who've been in the service.

JE: Yeah. I mean, I don't think it makes sense to join the military, which—to think of it like any other office. I mean, there's a lot of office jobs in the military where you're just—it is a 9:00 [a.m.] to 5:00 [p.m.] stateside, but that doesn't mean that its function is that of a civilian office.

TS: Right, you're 24/7.

JE: Yeah.

TS: Soldier or Marine.

JE: Yeah. And we're paying for all this. We're paying for these babies to be born with money that if these babies weren't being born would be armoring more vehicles or updating airplanes or any number of things. So I think that's—I think that's—It's not to disparage mothers in any way or—I mean, I have good friends who are in still or out now and they are mothers and became mothers while they were marines. And I certainly—I mean, there again, it's human nature. You put men and women together, some of them are going to pair off. And some of them do. And there's some great people in the military; of course you'd fall in love with them.

TS: Right. Well, some of them go in as parents.

JE: Yeah. And that's something else that has—see, the criteria and what we have allowed, like, we never used to—we didn't used to allow people with dependents. I can't remember—

TS: Women. Men could have dependents but not women.

JE: Going in, though?

TS: Yeah.

JE: Well, I think if they were—

TS: There were waivers.

JE: I think if they were married, though. But if they were single parents they didn't want—

TS: Oh, single parents. Different.

JE: Yeah.

TS: But you could get—

JE: But the—

TS: They could get waivers. And then women started to get waivers.

JE: Right, so we've changed that, and of course, the policy on—women used to have to transition out if they got pregnant.

TS: Right. Or even if they married a man who had kids already, they had to get out.

JE: If they were pregnant?

TS: No. If they were single and they marry a man and that man has dependents, the woman would have to get out.

JE: Really?

TS: Yeah.

JE: And that was—Yeah, yeah. Okay. Yeah, so, I mean—

TS: I mean, it's changed quite a lot.

JE: I can—Yeah, yeah, it has and—I mean, I think there's something—I hate to put a pregnant woman out, you know what I mean? But at the same time, it's, like, the needs of the military. This is about fighting war, and there's something intrinsically incompatible about motherhood and making war. Now, in individual roles it's less so because there are so many office jobs; like, jobs that you can do if all you have to do is report to work, do a job, and come home at night.

TS: Yeah, it is different on account of the kind of thing you're doing. Let's switch to the women in combat.

JE: Oh, yeah. I was thinking about that in terms of how—it's kind of—it's really like—it's misconstrued. A narrative was presented that if you oppose women in combat partly on the grounds that we're deploying mothers, that you want women barefoot and in the kitchen, which is a totally off base and skewed—No, it's not that we think that women should be not employed, and in the home only caring for children, it's that we don't need those mothers in the combat zones so much that we have to deploy them away from their kids. Even if they're married and not single mothers but parents with young—mothers with young children.

TS: I haven't done a lot of research on the most recent wars, but when they talked about the First Gulf War, they said they couldn't have deployed without the women. I mean, they didn't have the same kind of jobs at the level that they have now, that went outside the wires the way that you did. But they couldn't have won that war without deploy—It was the first time that they had deployed some of the women into a war zone. They said they wouldn't have been able to do it without all the women because women are so integrated into all these non-combatant jobs.

JE: Right. But that's because women have been put in roles. It wasn't that the women were essential, it's that the roles which were being filled by women were essential.

TS: Exactly. So you're saying that you could fill those roles with just men.

JE: Yeah. I mean, or it depends on how—I think the argument that there are no more front lines is reason to pull back more on deploying women because they [the front lines—JE clarified later] are so fluid. And what we did with pre-deployment work-ups and

preparing to deploy and be in the hot area on the ground, that was probably a quarter of what the infantry does to be prepared, to be on the ground in the hot zone.

TS: If even that.

JE: Yeah. And so—And if you put women through that kind of training, they tend to get injured much more and that's a liability, I think, on injuries alone. That's another misdirected—there's a lot of misdirection with the rates of injury and this argument over—in the media in general, which is that when we talk about average injuries, that we're talking about average women. And while those averages are true of average women, they're true of average military women, in that military women, on average, get more than twice the injuries than men do for doing the same work. And that's true across the branches, it's true across—true across the decades, that it's actually two to ten times the injury, depending on the injury you're talking about. Women get something like ten times more—

TS: What type of work are you talking about?

JE: Just work units. Like, of whatever is being required. Whether it's the training—The army had a study recently that more women are injured during basic—their basic combat training, which I think comes after their boot camp.

TS: Haven't they talked about, too, doing something like—Because women are getting more fit, as we are going through the decades, than we were before. But, like, some of the things they did to prepare women better; make them better prepared, better trained for certain skills that they have to do in a particular job. Just make them better prepared.

One thing I think I read a couple weeks ago was about firemen. There are very few women that are firemen.

JE: Yes.

TS: In 2000 there were, like, 3%. In 2010, there were, like, just barely 5%, maybe not even. They were trying to get women to be firemen, and so they did pre-training and they built up their skill sets with their physical strength, and some other issues, up to 96% of what the average man could do, just by doing a specific training; the specific skills of a fireman.

JE: Yeah, but in the overall heavy lifting, which is required by firemen and infantry men alike, first of all, most women aren't doing that.

TS: No, most women aren't.

JE: And aren't at that level. And that's true in the military as well; is that amazons [idiom for very strong warrior women] are few and far between and when it comes to policy—making a policy that then subjects all the active duty women to involuntary assignment on the same basis as men and—

TS: Is that the Selective Service that just came out?

JE: No, it's in addition to the Selective Service. So when you repeal a combat exemption, women can now be assigned to the combat units just like men, whether they want to or not; involuntary basis.

TS: But wouldn't they have to be qualified to do the job, though?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: And then—And it also—Yeah, but if they have to, like—Ray Mabus [Raymond Edwin Mabus, Jr.] said he wants twenty-five—

TS: Who's Ray Mabus?

JE: The Secretary of the Navy.

TS: Okay.

JE: He has demanded—He wants to see 25% representation of females in the service.

TS: In the navy?

JE: In the services—Service-wide or—all the branches.

TS: Just an average? Twenty-five percent?

JE: No. He wants the Marines to go from 8 to 25%.

TS: Oh, each service to be 25%.

JE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I'm sorry.

TS: It would take longer for the Marine Corps. Or the air force is at, like, eighteen or something.

JE: Right. So where these highly, highly athletic women are quite rare, that can do the same stuff as the infantrymen or the men's standard, they're going to—they're still subject to more than twice the risk—of more than twice the risk of injury, and their replacements will come from that body of women who don't want to, or the one—If you're a top performer in this other unit, well, they have to make their quota, so they can pluck this top performer. She may not want to, but she's got a full class PFT and she's tough and she's at the top of field in the support unit and we need her over there.

TS: Oh, I see what you're saying. You're saying because the military can just take you and put you in whatever slot they want if you're qualified, that one argument is that women aren't going to go into combat arms unless they volunteer for it. You're saying if there's a need and there's a qualified woman they'll just snatch them and—

JE: Yeah. Especially when they have to make numbers, because this administration has required it. It's totally arbitrary; it's going totally backwards.

TS: Do you think there's a job that women should not be doing, then? I mean, that seems to be [unclear].

JE: Yeah, I support women's combat exemption. I think it's good for women and it's good for our combat readiness. It's not—I don't think the military owes anybody, let alone any woman, a career. That's a totally misguided—

TS: But what if they're qualified to do it? What if a woman could do the job? I mean, you've describe them as an amazon. I wouldn't necessarily say that every job needs an amazon. I mean, there's tank drivers and things like that.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: We're not—We're still not finding women who are qualified at the level of infantrymen and able to make and maintain those standards. So it's like—and even if you can make those standards, there's so many other risks that are—that women have that men don't have that we're then adding to the combat units. We're at high risk of capture; we're at risk of special torture when captured. That risk of injury means that these women are going to have to be replaced much more frequently.

When you have a group that you're saying, "Okay, well, you made men's three pull-ups and the PFT," and stuff like that.

TS: Right.

JE: But she's still at higher risk of injury. She could get pregnant. She's more at risk for—where they're in these combat units which are smaller, have less privacy. You go out in the least civilized areas where there's not even a door to lock between you.

TS: Right.

JE: She's at much higher risk. Now, you can blame the men for sexual assault being a factor.

TS: But if they train as a unit together, right? I mean, if they start out together training. I mean, it's not like a woman's just going to come in necessarily to a set group of men that are already there, right? They work to get to that point where they're trained as a unit and

a team to go out and do these jobs. You see what I'm saying? It's not like there's four men necessarily that are, like, in this unit and then a woman comes in.

JE: Well, but that is what will happen because that's just the nature of how things shift, is like, people come in and out of units.

TS: Sure.

JE: It's like—

TS: But a lot of times they're going through the training together, is what I'm saying.

JE: Yeah.

TS: You train as a unit and a team and things like that. I mean, that's the argument on the other side of—That it's not necessarily like women are going to just show up one day and have all this animosity directed—although there is, certainly, plenty of hostility.

JE: Yeah, and I don't think the training together, that's not—I mean, the issue is not that people can't go through shared difficulty and come out a closer unit, and it's not that men and women can't work together, including in the military. Of course we can. And for most other jobs besides the combat arms, we can tol—we do tolerate a certain amount of expense and disruption, and often destruction, because of all the stuff that we have to do, because people get hurt, injured, assaulted.

TS: Right.

JE: To separate two people—there's a sexual assault happens in a unit. You have to pull both people out and then you have to go through the whole legal UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice]—

TS: Process?

JE: Yeah, the whole process of figuring that out. If somebody gets pregnant, and then you have to replace—you have to take her out and you have to replace them. Somebody gets injured you, have to take them out or they're on leave where everybody has to pick up that slack or you fill in with somebody new. These kinds of things. It's very expensive to shuffle people around like that. And the fact that we tolerate a certain amount of expense and disruption and stuff like that does not mean we should put this—It's all predictable. It's predictable that there will be more injuries amongst the women which will render them non-deployable more frequently than the men they're next to. It's predictable that somebody's going to get pregnant and that is even more—we may tolerate that—I mean, women are sent home much more frequently from deployment than men and a lot of the bulk of the time it's due to getting pregnant. We may tolerate that for support units, and I have a big problem with that. I think that's a major expense and that's a lot of—that's a lot

of money that could be spent just to—It's, like, thirty thousand dollars just to put—have to replace somebody who has to be taken out.

TS: Same with the disciplinary issues with the men.

JE: Exactly.

TS: A higher rate of problems with them—

JE: Yeah.

TS: —with alcohol and disciplinary. They're moved from place to place at a higher—

JE: Yeah. Just because we tolerate that in the non-combat arms does not mean that we should say it's okay for the infantry units, where the mission is essential, it's the priority, and it's deadly. And things aren't going to go as planned. They're not going to go, like, they went in sixty day, controlled environment Ranger School.

TS: Right. What do you think's going to happen? Because they did just open everything up, right?

JE: Yeah, and now they've demanded that Marine Corps boot camp go coed. They've demanded that—

TS: When did they do that?

JE: That was just recently. That was in January.

TS: Okay.

JE: January first, actually, and I think it was either [U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Baldwin "Ash"] Carter or Mabus. It was either the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the Navy.

TS: Said it's going to go—

JE: Said, "On January 1, msby January 15, I want you to have a plan on my desk for integrating boot camp and you're going to do it. You don't have a choice." And implemented by April 1, which was when coed—when the combat arms was supposed to be completely integrated. And now two congressmen have put forward—Now they're saying that we need to draft women. Women should be registering for the draft.

TS: Registering for the Selective Service?

JE: Right, right.

TS: Because they got rid of the reason why they—

JE: Right. The combat exemption was the only thing constitutionally standing between women and being drafted, because it's for collecting combat troops in the time of war, so. But it's not—That's not an equal prospect for women and—but because they've—That was one of the major arguments for not repealing the combat exemption, was because since that's the only thing standing between women and Selective Service, or involuntary assignment of active duty women to the men's jobs, this has far greater impacts than just the couple of women who say they want to do it. It's not just about a couple of women who want to, it's about all the other impacts.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So you think there's going to be unintended consequences and things?

JE: Oh, yeah, absolutely. And they're predictable and we know about them from—We know about the injury rates because we've been studying this since women's full integration in 1948. We have all our data from last fourteen years of deployment; how much more frequently women are on non-deployment—non-deployable status. We attrite at quicker rates. We get out of the military much more frequently than men do, and much more frequently before finishing the contract. And women get out most often to have families, or because the physical demand is too much, or too much to maintain or continue maintaining. I also think that we can utilize our best amazon females without—

TS: [chuckles] It just cracks me up that you call them amazon females.

JE: Yeah, well, there are some tough chicks there and they're awesome. I mean, those women are kickass and those are the women that you want in your military. You want those kickass, tough, hard-charging women who want it all. But we can utilize those kinds of strong assets without repealing the whole exemption, which then opens everything else up, right? And it's because women—Look, women are fitter in general, but the top fit women are still not competitive with the top fit men in any sport anywhere.

TS: Sure.

JE: The top crossfitter female is not competition for the top male crossfitter, and that's what you're talking about at this level, we're not talking about—

TS: But do you think the military's actually going to put people in the job that are not qualified to do it?

JE: Sure.

TS: You think they would?

JE: Oh, yeah. They've done it in the past. They've totally done it. Kara Hultgreen was the first combat F-16 fighter pilot and she killed herself in a plane crash.

[Lieutenant Kara Spears Hultgreen was the first female carrier-based fighter pilot in the U.S. Navy. She died 25 October 1994, when her F-14 Tomcat crashed into the sea on final approach to USS *Abraham Lincoln*]

TS: Well, lots of guys have killed themselves in plane crashes.

JE: No, but she was—she was passed when—where other men would have been failed.

TS: And you don't think that it hasn't happened with other men through the years?

JE: I think whether it's happened with other men is a completely separate issue. We're talking about—We know that women typically aren't making men's standards, and we know that every time jobs have been open to women there's either a sta—a formal or informal goal to put more women in those positions. I mean, in the eighties this was why the army tried to implement MEPSCAT [Military Entrance Physical Strength Capacity Test], which was a standard of testing recruits to put them in jobs where they could do the job. And so, they divided it—the jobs according to the—like, industrial categories, which was light, medium heavy lifting, very heavy lifting. Because women [in the army—JE clarified later] were already put—being assigned to positions that they couldn't fulfill. Because the jobs had been open to them, they wanted to put the women there and show how diverse they are, and it turned out that 85% of the women who were put in heavy lifting category jobs, only 8% of them could actually do the job that was required.

So the army was doing that. They rejected—They rejected MEPSCAT. They said, "We need a standard so that we're putting qualified people in." Well, that was rejected because DACOWITS [Department of Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services] said, "This is bad for morale." Well, yeah, knowing that 8—only 8% of people can do the job that they are supposed to be doing, yeah, that's bad for morale, but for the reality—

TS: I like this conversation.

JE: Yeah. With Kara Hultgreen, so that was in the nineties, and it was—

TS: Right. Well, I mean, people dispute that she wasn't qualified or trained.

JE: No, there's no disputing that she wasn't qualified.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Well, I don't know.

JE: Her records were made public, and so was the girls' who went through flight school with her. And they were both shown to have been passed where men would have failed. And it came out in testimony at the Presidential Commission on Women [Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces] in the—

["In general, the Commission shall assess the laws and policies restricting the assignment of female service members and shall make findings on such matters"]

TS: Is that the one in '92?

JE: WISR [Women in Service Restriction Review] they call it. The presidential—the last presidential commission on women

TS: Ninety-two?

JE: Yeah. Women in the services and on combat. And they testified that they were told a woman *will* pass flight school. In other words, that it was a directive that women would be passed, and the guy that was her instructor had tried to fail her because she should have failed, and he was told that he had to change the mark, and he's—he testified accordingly and said when she was killed, that was the worst day of his life because he tried to do something about it and he was overruled because they were—After Tailhook, the navy and the air force were in a race to show, again, how diverse they are and to try and sort of make up for the sexual harassment at Tailhook or whatever.

[The Tailhook scandal was a series of incidents where more than one hundred U.S. Navy and United States Marine Corps aviation officers were alleged to have sexually assaulted eighty-three women and seven men, or otherwise engaged in "improper and indecent" conduct, at the Las Vegas Hilton in Las Vegas, Nevada, during the 35th Annual Tailhook Association Symposium in September 1991]

TS: Do you think that—

JE: Or make up for the idea that this is systemic and—

TS: Okay. With these points that you've made, then, do you think that the military because of the way—

JE: It's not beyond them to pass people through who aren't qualified because they—Yeah.

TS: Sure. Well, for men and women. I still think that some men can easily get—depending on who they are, how they're connected, things like that.

JE: Sometimes. However, I think the closer you get to where—that stuff doesn't—

TS: When you talk about having slackers, you're not just talking about women, right?

JE: Right. No, of course.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That's what I mean.

JE: Of course. Absolutely.

TS: That's all I'm saying.

JE: But I think that that stuff—Yeah. And obviously we don't want—we don't want shitbirds anywhere. [chuckles]

TS: Right. Right. Regardless. But—

JE: But I think it doesn't last very long. Like, the more serious the job gets, the more quickly those kind of people are weeded out.

TS: Right, but you're talking about a guy that was in the—deployed, right? That one guy.

JE: Oh, yeah. Well, yeah.

TS: But my question is, all these points are great, but do you think the military today, then, that has these women integrated in all these jobs, is it not efficient?

JE: Yeah, I think we could be a lot more efficient with our resources as—our people resources, our time, our money. I mean, these are all taxpayer dollars.

TS: The argument, then, that you see says women are 50% of the population, we need to have them as part of the pool so we have the best qualified people on their merit for whatever job that they're best suited for. I mean, that's the argument you see about—

JE: Yeah. You see that, and that's a ridiculous argument because the military is not meant to reflect society in general. If it did we would put the deaf, dumb, and blind—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Not that, but the part about having a bigger pool to get the most qualified people for the jobs.

JE: But it's really not a bigger pool because there's no shortage of men who want to go in the infantry. I mean, recruiters have twenty men for every one woman's spot that they are trying to fill. There's no shortage of men who want to be in infantry, who want to be infantry officers, so there's no military need to do this. It's strictly being imposed from above because they think the military ought to look a certain way. Which is, by the way, completely superficial. Completely superficial to say—And they're talking out of both sides of their mouths. Okay, you want to say women are qualified, and only the ones then—you don't say, "I want 25% female representation." You say, "There is no quota, the women all have to do this, and if we find zero are qualified that is absolutely fine." And that—and de facto there may be none. If we had a bit of a higher standard for women—there is a pla—I don't want to be mistaken in saying all one standard, because the double standard was created because it acknowledged physiological differences between men and women, and that women had—tended to get much more injury trying to do the same things.

TS: Which standard are you talking about, PT or—

JE: Yeah, PFT standards.

TS: Because I thought that was just fitness.

JE: It is, it is. It's general fitness.

TS: It's not really a standard of who's going to be in infantry or who's going to be this.

JE: Right. It's a test of general fitness and then the—

TS: And it's aged and all that other stuff.

JE: Right. So what I'm saying is, there is a place for a double standard. And obviously, support doesn't need to operate at the same level as the infantry does. There's so much more demand. But if we—if women would—the other part of this is they're—they've embedded re-evaluating the standards in order to gender-norm them, rather than saying, "Here are the men's standards. Here's what they typically actually do," which is what the Marine Corps did for their nine month integration study. Can women do it or not? They say, "These standards are discriminatory and sexist so we have to re-evaluate them." But if women could so easily make those standards, or if there are enough women consistently that can make those standards, you wouldn't have to change them.

TS: Most of the women that are advocating to go in those positions don't want the standards changed.

JE: That's what they say and that's what always has been said, but if that were true then they would insist there was no re-evaluation of standards. But the re-evaluations of standards was embedded by [U.S. Army] General [Martin Edward] Dempsey at the first of the 2013 announcement with Leon Panetta, that we must have a "sufficient number of women" [JE added quotation marks later] in these roles and "already assigned" [JE added quotation marks later] to these roles, because of course you have to have leadership. You can't just throw some enlisted females in there with no female leadership.

But there's not—We have to break hundreds of women just to get two who can make it through Ranger School, right? Nobody has been able to make it through Marine infantry officer course. Even if you got two that could, that's not cost effective. Like, not even remotely, for all the disruption, and you can—It takes much longer to get infantry guys ready. I think they have nine weeks of Marine combat training versus, like, the three weeks that normal marines get.

TS: Right.

JE: And you have to increase that, so by the time you're done you put a lot longer and more into their training. And then the second something bad or unexpected happens—bad—sexual assault—unexpected—a pregnancy—and it can so easily, predictably happen. You can't mandate birth control if you're going in the infantry. We'd love to have you, you're a good asset, you've made all the standards, you can't force them to not—you know what I'm saying? And how many young women going in at eighteen or twenty-two know that they want children; that they don't want children.

TS: Right, right.

JE: Any of those things.

TS: Right. Well, it will be interesting to see how it all plays out.

JE: Right. And now the draft is being proposed as, like, opening women—women have to sign up as being proposed in order to get it on the debate floor, which is where it should have been before because this Selective Service was a primary reason to maintain the combat exclusion because—

TS: Back when they did the Selective Service they did say that women could be drafted just for non-combatant jobs, at the time it was proposed. I think the suit was a man suing—

JE: Oh, I remember that.

TS: —and so that's why when they came down with that court ruling it said they're differentially placed and that's why they could be discriminated because they weren't on the same standard.

JE: Yes.

TS: That it was just for combat and that was what the ruling was. It was just interesting that it's come so far that now it is about combat, right?

JE: Yeah.

TS: It'll be interesting. We could talk all day on this issue, I can tell.

JE: Yeah, we sure could.

TS: Do you have any more you want to add on that? Very interesting points.

JE: Yeah, I just—I think that it's a shame that it's being put forth as, like, a career opportunity for military women because I think—I think the opposite—I think the opposite of everything they're arguing is what will happen. You put women and open up the combat units to them—Women who are placed in a combat unit are not competitive for rank because they're always going to be at the bottom quarter because, physically, if you're competing against guys who are working out to their utmost so they can be the best infantry soldier, that woman is not going to be competitive. And in the same way that a woman on an NFL [National Football League] team is not going to be competitive with those men, or the Crossfit example, professional sports. Olympic sports. The top female Olympic athlete in—pick your sport—is not competition for the top male athlete in that same sport. Competing with that guy—I relate it to when I was training for my black belt. I used to train with black belt males.

TS: Right, you said earlier.

JE: And that was to help—it helped me to be—and I used to do some competition fighting and stuff like that but—

TS: But it challenged you—

JE: Well—

TS: —beyond your capability.

JE: Fighting with these men who were a higher rank, it made me a better fighter, of course. It made me better against women of my own rank and weight, okay? It gave me an edge on them. I can't say it gave me an edge on fighting other men or fight—I wasn't real competition for those men.

TS: But there was probably a number of men that you could beat.

JE: Yeah. Yeah, maybe. But there again, that's where you separate the fact that, okay, even if you can do everything that they're doing, they're still higher risk of capture, higher risk of injury, more expensive.

TS: Why do you say they're higher risk of capture?

JE: Because women are a high value target to this enemy. We're talking about ISIS [Islamic State in Iraq and Syria] and Islamic extremists who are—

TS: Have we seen that happening?

JE: Yeah. I mean, women are higher value for propaganda.

TS: No, I mean—Right, sure, I get that, but in the recent wars we've had, did that happen?

JE: Well, the females on that checkpoint group before us were targeted because they—we were—and we were told—the intel that we were given, we had to, like, try—

TS: Not look like women?

JE: Yeah, we had to try and cover our hair as much as possible, handkerchiefs, and put it over the bun and stuff like that to—because they—on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan, or Syria now, what have you, the native people in the area know what's going on and if you—I mean, accounts that I've read, guys that I've talked to, I mean, the people in the area, insurgents in the area, they know what movements are going on; it's their playing field.

TS: Sure.

JE: They knew where we were, they knew what the lay of the land was, so we were told they'll target females. They see females as an easy target, as great exploitation, and so a woman isn't just taking a risk for herself there. A woman who is a higher value target than anybody that she's next to is at greater risk because she's a higher value target. And there's nothing societally in America that we can do anything about that, you know what I mean? Because ISIS is always going to consider women a higher value target that they can exploit to greater effect. And they, of course, know that we don't treat our women like cattle and we don't genitally mutilate them and we don't treat them like that. We value our women and we don't want to try and put them in senseless danger.

And that's even—they know how much more demoralize—as demoralizing as it is when we have any POW [prisoner of war], they know that the impact is just viscerally, instinctively, primaly—it's different when a female is captured and I just—There's nothing you can do. Just like there's nothing you can—or would want to do—I was going to say can do, but would want to—okay, to prepare women to fight men, okay? And having done that and, like I say, paired myself up with the tough guys because of course it's totally unrealistic for me to practice throwing a guy who's my size. And I practiced the throw and practiced the throw, and you get thrown and you get thrown and you get thrown, and we're going to make our women ragdolls for hand to hand combat training.

Ronda Rousey, UFC [Ultimate Fighting Championship] fighter who, at the top of her career, was being asked, "You're so great. Would you fight a man?"

She said, "No, it would be a total disadvantage for a woman." And there's a transsexual UFC, now female, fighter, Fallon Fox, and the woman who fought her said, "I've never experienced power like that." It's different. And they're, what? In the same weight class.

TS: Right.

JE: So it's different. And so, there's—in the psyche, what I was saying about—in order to train like you fight, I did all this martial arts—not to say that that's the end all, be all or anything—but when I imagined those guys actually fighting me like they wanted to kill me, I mean I shud—I just got goose bumps all over me just thinking about the kind of guys that I've trained with actually wanting to kill me, you know what I mean?

TS: Right.

JE: It's a whole different ballgame, and when you're training you're not even training—I mean, I think they are, of course, at those higher levels of the Marine's martial arts, and the infantry and stuff, they do a lot more hand to hand combat type of stuff, but this is the getting women used to being hit, getting guys used to hitting women, this kind of—this bigger, bigger thing, this bigger picture. We would be horrified to live in a world where men no longer go with their instinct of protecting women. I mean, that would be an awful, awful world to live in.

And we're saying, "Women, you need to be more masculine because that's what it takes to succeed in combat," and, "Men, you have to disregard the basic, civilized behavior that we want and that we expect from gentlemen or from good men." And I think that's—That's awful.

TS: But that's a premise that not everybody would accept; that that's the case of what happened, right? I mean, okay—

JE: Some people would say it's like a social construct that men want to protect women and I would say that's utterly ridiculous.

TS: Well, take the case of Leigh Ann Hester, who I'm sure you know.

[Lee Ann Hester is a U.S. Army National Guard soldier who received the Silver Star award for heroic actions during an enemy ambush on a supply convoy in Iraq on 20 March 2005]

JE: Yeah.

TS: Just because of talking with you.

JE: I've heard—Yeah.

TS: She wasn't infantry, she was MP [military police], and do you know her story?

JE: I've read it, but I've read so many stories you'll have to remind me of it.

TS: Right. They were protecting a convoy and it got attacked, and they went up to meet it, and there was a couple different jeeps or whatever they were driving. Which I'm sure it wasn't a jeep, it was a Humvee.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: I can't remember all their leadership, but she was a platoon leader or something. And the guy was looking for somebody to go and they had to go over the ravine. They didn't call it that.

JE: Dirt berm or something.

TS: Berm, yeah. So he grabbed her and she grabbed a particular type of weapon, and I'm not army so I don't remember, but it wasn't an M16. It was one that shot grenades or something?

JE: Yes.

TS: They were, like, back to back. They went over this berm and cleaned it out, and at one point she ran back to go get more ammunition and then came back and they survived. They originally both got the Silver Star and he got the next higher one from the Silver Star, underneath the Medal of Honor. But the way he talks about her performance was like—the thing was that they trained for it; that they were prepared and that it wasn't—and the idea of protecting, he knew that she was quite capable of doing whatever. It didn't have anything to do with gender, because your instincts just went in and you just acted in how you were trained.

JE: Yeah. And I understand that but it's not—just, like—I mean, I went through the Marine Corps and had nothing but platonic relationships, okay?

TS: Right.

JE: And it's completely possible, obviously, to do that. It's not the ones where that doesn't happen that you have to worry about. Just like it's not the women who don't get pregnant that you have to worry about. It's the ones who do. And so, while that's a great story, it doesn't change the fact that there is a lot more that goes—that deploying women or putting women in infantry units is different than putting men in infantry units and putting them—that we're not interchangeable. We're equal under the law; we have equal rights.

TS: Right.

JE: But we are unequal in our abilities and we're—

TS: Right, men and women are definitely different physiologically, and the strongest man is always going to be stronger than the strongest women.

JE: Yes.

TS: But if you have a job and a woman qualifies for it—and you've said all the reasons why you wouldn't let her do it, we've talked about these other things.

JE: Yeah.

TS: The costs and things.

JE: Because there's just so much poten—if any one of the things happens from injury or—And a lot of women, like, they'll get more than one injury. So there's all sorts of things that can happen. Your knees, hips, back.

TS: Sure.

JE: Feet. Stuff like that. There's sexual harassment, getting pregnant, or getting in a relationship, or any of the things. For a lot of people in the military, more than one of those things are likely to happen. If any one of them happens, it's predictable and we may absorb it in the support units, but it's going to be catastrophic. It's problems we can see coming that we could avoid by not—by just keeping it—keeping those units all male.

TS: You and I are going to have to have this conversation in, like, five years?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah, we'll see where we are.

TS: Maybe just two, I think.

JE: We'll see where we are. Yeah, I mean, there—a lot of people think it's a done deal. The policy is in effect, but now that people—

TS: Policies always change.

JE: Policies change; presidents change. I've always been of the opinion that this was never the Department of Defense's decision to make. You know about the presidential commissions of the past, like, congressional commission's open debate or vote, if not by the entire congress at least by the House Armed Services Committee or a Senate Armed Services Committee.

TS: Yes.

JE: Where there's some accountability, because our representatives ought to be accountable for subjecting all women for Selective Service, or for subjecting all women to involuntary assignment.

TS: But in '92 and '94—'92 when Congress voted to remove the combat—

JE: The risk rule or the—

TS: Not the risk rule but—

JE: The combat pilots?

TS: The pilots and ships.

JE: Yeah.

TS: In '92 they took out the only legal restrictions in place for women, and then it was the policies of the services because the army never had any legal restrictions.

JE: Right.

TS: There was never any thought that women were going to be in infantry, so there was never a law put in place to prohibit them from it.

JE: Right, right. I see what you're saying.

TS: It was just for the planes and the ships. So in '92 when Congress did it; '94 is when the DOD removed it and they made this policy and the risk rule was gone then, too. So there's not been a law to prohibit it. Now this discussion didn't really open up until after these two wars to talk about—

JE: Yeah, but that's also why it's so atrocious, what they did, and completely ignoring and dismissing the Marine Corps', like, thirty-six million dollar study over nine months, that was an excellent study, peer-reviewed. And the women—There again, those women—the hundred volunteers who did that—of the women, they had all made the men's minimum PFT standard, they had all gone through enlisted—the enlisted infantry training, and yet, and still, those are fit women, they had made men's minimum standards.

TS: Didn't they pass in some of the combat arms but not in some of the particulars? I mean some of the—

JE: They—so they had—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —combat arms they did pass, right, between 50 and 80%, but it was the officer one—the officer combat—

JE: I think we're talking about different things here.

TS: Are we? Okay.

JE: Yeah, I think what you're talking about is the IOC, the Infantry Officer Course.

TS: Might be.

JE: They had opened that up for women to try for a period of time. I'm talking about the more recent—

TS: Okay. I might not have seen that one.

JE: —the nine month integration study; the gender integration study of the combat arms that the Marine Corps did and it was nine months long. It's been in the press a lot. The people who were for women in combat disparage it as not being a good study, although they cite where there's a couple—So there were a hundred and thirty-four tasks, and they compared all male teams to coed teams, and on some tasks they just compared, like, can two males change the track on a track unit, and can two females? Some of it was just raw, like, here's the task, can two men do it; can two women do it?

TS: Okay.

JE: But most of the tasks was all male units versus coed units.

TS: Mixed gender.

JE: Right, right. Exactly. So the hypothesis was coed units will perform equally or better than all male units, and the opposite was shown. So on—it was like ninety-six out of a hundred and thirty-four tasks, 69% of the all-male units out—far out-performed the coed units, and the women experienced more than twice the injuries—slightly more than twice the injuries that men did. [Actually six times the injuries—JE added later].

And when women first—I think it's since 2014 that they've been letting enlisted marines—females—into the enlisted infantry side.

TS: Okay.

JE: Not the officer side, but the enlisted.

TS: For training, right?

JE: No, they've been—they've been allowing them—Well, yeah, until the policy, yeah, they're allowed into the training.

TS: But not [unclear].

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: But even—But when the first three women made it through that training that was touted as proving that women are interchangeable with men, ready for combat, that kind of thing. Well, a hundred women make men's minimum standard, do that infantry training, and still are not able to perform—and they were against—those were top-performing female marines against average male marines. And again, on the injuries alone, if you have two groups of people to recruit from, that's not a bigger pool because they get twice—they tend to get twice the injuries, and it's often much more than twice the injuries.

TS: Right.

JE: So I'm not—If you had a set of gear that broke down more than twice as much as this other set of gear you'd say, "Okay, look, I can use that gear here, but where mission is critical and deadly, I can't afford to use that gear here. It's just not cost-effective." And for all the other problems that arise, whether somebody falls in love and decides to get married, or whether something bad happens, or whether it's an injury, or whether—

TS: Right.

JE: There's just—It's not cost-effective.

TS: Seriously, I'm coming back here.

JE: [chuckles]

TS: I don't know when, and we're going to see where we're at.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: What do you say?

JE: And this draft thing is, like—that's being proposed as being policy, or it's a bill that's being put forward.

TS: Isn't it just proposed so they can talk about it?

JE: Yeah.

TS: I don't think they really support it.

JE: For open debate and congressional oversight. Well, that's what should have been demanded before the decision was made because now that's the horse. The cart is already—is already there [referencing the idiom "put the horse before the cart" *i.e.* doing things in the wrong order].

TS: Right. Well, who knows what they might do [unclear].

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah, they're trying to—and I've always thought, like, look—because I've been talking about this for a while.

TS: Obviously. [chuckles]

JE: Yeah. Well, because there are very few women who will—who are veterans and who have also deployed, but even just female veterans in general, who will be outspoken about it. And I think it's because a lot of them feel like they're somehow betraying women who came before by saying we draw the line at the infantry. Like, this is a policy that makes sense.

TS: Well, there's been a lot of lines drawn for a lot of years, and so I think it's easy to say, "Before, they said we couldn't do this," and, "Before, they said we couldn't do this."

JE: Yeah. And I don't feel that way at all. I don't feel like I'm betraying any of the women who did such amazing things; that my experience was easy compared to theirs, you know what I mean?

TS: Right.

JE: I, of course, revere and appreciate them, but I don't think there's any irreverence in saying, "Look, this is a policy that make sense." It's not—I think they're going to have—I started to say before, I think they're going to have less women because a lot of women don't want to be involuntarily assigned and they don't want—so good women who would otherwise stay serving are going to leave because they don't like that prospect of being involuntarily assigned or put in these units where they're then not really competitive for those ranks that we're told is the career opportunity. And a lot of them, because the demand is going to be so much harder on their bodies than it already is for military women, that even more women are going to be getting out injured, which is a cost to

them. It's a cost in the VA [Veterans Administration]. But most importantly it's a cost to them.

TS: Right.

JE: I mean, as somebody who can no longer jog for exercise, it's a cost to them and it can be life-long. And I've heard that there are even some—some of the women who made it through the enlisted training that have been medically discharged, they're not serving at all anymore, who might have made fine marines otherwise, but so much more of a demand was put on their bodies when they have smaller skeletons, smaller—less musculature. And that's nobody's fault, it's not blaming anyone, it's just a recognition of reality.

So I don't think the—I think the premises are sort of false on—Oh, and it's, of course, much harder to recruit women, so now the prospect of being put in combat units involuntarily is—it's a deterrent for young women who are already five times harder and more expensive to recruit. I think they're saying they want more representation, but they're actually—by opening all the jobs, they're going to end up with, I think—

TS: Less.

JE: —less women. And then, awesome women who we want in our military are going to—I mean, we could argue that they're the sexist misogynist. They're going to create it—creating a situation which will result in fewer women serving. Is that what they really want? No. That's not what they say they want.

TS: Well, we don't know the end of the story.

JE: Yeah.

TS: We'll have to see what happens.

JE: Or the big fear that they're just going to have to lower the standards to accommodate women and mitigate for so much more injury, and women don't want to—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But I find that hard to believe that the women that would be wanting to be in those positions would want—because they would want—

JE: No, no. And I don't—they don't—

TS: They wouldn't have the respect.

JE: Yeah. I hate to think that all—not enough was asked of me that should have—like, that should have been.

TS: Right.

JE: Yeah, I mean, I think that—

TS: Fair and equal standards, right?

JE: I mean, I think it puts women in the worst position of all because the prospect of—under gender—all that—all that these people in the Pentagon and the service committees seem to be concerned about is, oh, as long as the standards are gender-normed then everything is hunky-dory, and that's just not true at all. And I don't think that helps women because the women actually have to be much better physically than the men's minimum standard if they want to survive, if they want to be actually successful. And the whole point of this whole thing of the military is victory with the fewest casualties possible.

TS: Right.

JE: It's not going to help that. There's nothing to say that it helps that. And just because, like, on two of the combat tasks women—the coed teams had better decision-making or something. Okay, well, that's two out of a hundred and thirty-four tasks. That does not outweigh in any way, shape, or form—It's not worth all the cost. Especially when on 70%—

TS: You're making me want to go read this report now. [chuckles] I'll have to read it.

JE: Yeah, it's out there and, I mean, there's a lot—and you'll see what everybody was saying that doesn't like the study. Although they like that part where the women were better at decision-making.

TS: Right. I know the studies I've looked at are earlier, from the research I've done. We'll talk about that off-tape.

JE: Sure. [chuckles]

TS: But I wanted to ask you, because of your role in Iraq, being deployed, being outside the wire, do you consider yourself a trailblazer at all for women?

JE: Not really.

TS: Why not?

JE: I mean, I know I'm—because I'm not the only one who had done it. I wasn't the first who had done that. I mean, I think I'm—

TS: It was 2004.

JE: Yeah. I'm part of a very tiny—

TS: Five—2005, right?

JE: —Yeah—a tiny—I'm part of a tiny—teeny-tiny group of people who have done that. But, I mean, no, I don't really think I'm a trailblazer. I know I'm very unique. [chuckles]

TS: Okay.

JE: I know that I'll break all the paradigms. You can't, sort of, put me in any one box.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I think that is a truism.

JE: I'm straddling, like, twelve boxes.

TS: That's right.

JE: Twelve categories or something.

TS: Well, can you describe your adjustment to civilian life after you left the Marines?

JE: Yeah. There again, very unique experience because I was a cancer patient [chuckles] by the time I was, like—

TS: Oh, that's right.

JE: —coming out of the Marines so I—

TS: When you got out, did you get medically discharged?

JE: No, I just—I finished my enlistment.

TS: Okay.

JE: I'm considered a disabled veteran for both, like—for knees and my lower back and for having gotten cancer. Which, of course, is not the Marine Corps fault, but.

TS: Right. So you do have a disability?

JE: Yeah. Yeah, I just tried to—I think being—having been placed in computers and a computer job set me up really well for getting out. That was a great skill, especially for this age. And so, if I had gone in with the idea that I wanted to be set up for a career path I couldn't have chosen any better, really. Not that I was, like, big into computers, but I'm a learner type so I'm able to do it well. I'm good at multi-tasking and managing and running a lot of different stuff, and I kind of thrive off high responsibility jobs like that.

TS: Yeah.

JE: I run the backbone for our water utility in Wilmington [North Carolina]. But, yeah, in the mo—I knew I was getting out for the month's work building up, so I think probably in the fall—I was due to get out in the spring of 2008, in the fall of 2007 I started looking. My husband and I had decided that we thought this would be a great place to set down roots, and we weren't really interested in going back to Massachusetts just because it's a very expensive place to live, and although we have our house there it's like there wasn't—the Cape is—can be a lot like the Wilmington area, in it's a coastal town and city, but there's a lot larger demographic, especially age-wise, down here. My husband and I, as being thirty, getting out—when I was getting out of the Marine Corps it just felt like there wasn't as much pros—as many prospects up there in Massachusetts, or in Cape Cod specifically, and so we decided this seemed like a great—Great people-wise, great—there are dolphins in that ocean.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah.

JE: There's no seaweed and no crabs like there are up at where we were in the—

TS: That's right. It's beautiful.

JE: —South-facing cape facing the Atlantic. Yeah, so we decided to look for a place here. And I didn't pick up a computer job immediately. I think I just—I interviewed for one and—or a couple—and ended up doing—working for a law firm as, like, a temp or something, and then a different position came up at the company and they called me back on [unclear].

TS: Is it full-time?

JE: Yeah, yeah. So I'm a—I run a data center.

TS: The pace of work in the civilian world compared to being in the military, are there any differences?

JE: Yeah, I mean, it's a whole—It's a whole different ballgame and a whole different set of expectations. Although, my boss is a former marine. [chuckles] So I was hired on, basically, "Oh, you worked a help desk in Iraq. I think you can handle it here." And I was hired as—

TS: So that was a benefit.

JE: Yeah, yeah. It was that credit check of, [both chuckle] not only did you serve, you kind of did computer tech work in the combat zone so you can probably handle this water utility's help desk and stuff like that.

TS: That's cool.

JE: I started as that and promoted up to be running the data center and stuff like that.

TS: Have you had any experience with the VA at all?

JE: I signed up with the VA and stuff to get that squared away, but the second I got a job I—I have never used the VA.

TS: Just stay in the private [insurance sector]?

JE: Yeah. Because, I mean, the VA is a broken bureaucracy. And I also kind of feel like—I mean, I'm paying out of my pocket, but I also feel like, as backlogged as they are, my place in that line would be better taken by somebody with greater need.

TS: Okay.

JE: So I kind of feel like it's something I'm willing to pay for, especially to get the care I need, because I do have medical needs that have to do with service, but I just—And part of that decision was, like, almost immediate because we were moving here—knew we were moving here, and the only—they didn't have a VA hospital in Wilmington, and both as somebody living in Wilmington but also as a woman, like, there are small clinics but you have—you had to go to Fayetteville.

TS: Right. It's quite a drive.

JE: So I'm like—I'm not going to do that. Like, whenever we're ready to have kids—

TS: Right.

JE: —and that's the only—That's ridiculous. And with the thyroid thing, the—that they would have to—I would have to go to Fayetteville and have them assign me a—wait and go on that whole thing, for them to then assign me an endocrinologist, maybe in Wilmington, maybe at their whatever facility there that they can accommodate, and I was like, "That's just a ridiculous prospect."

TS: Right.

JE: When I already had an endocrinologist that I had gone to because it was the closest to Jacksonville—

TS: Right.

JE: —in that last year of—both before, during, and after the surgery.

TS: It keeps some continuity with that?

JE: Yeah, yeah. So.

TS: Well, if you ever do have children and they wanted to join the service—the Marine Corps or any other service—what would you say? What kind of advice would you give them?

JE: I would tell them not to, but that's mainly because of the horrific rules of engagement that our guys are under right now that I think protect the enemy more and put us in greater danger, and I just think that's an awful prospect, that there can be no trust. Like, how can we trust our sons and daughters to a military that does that to them? I mean—and they're all worried about litigation; that if they do their job they'll be thrown in jail for murder later down the line for shooting an insurgent or—

TS: So you'd try to discourage them.

JE: Yeah, I don't think—and I just—I hate saying that. I mean, I love the marines, I love the Marine Corps. I realize that they are—have long since had a lot of sort of political correctness and maybe watering down by the time I joined, but at the same time that's still, like, a higher level of demand and expectation and challenge than anything else you can find. And meritocracy.

But in this—In this day and age of—we have been watering down the standards and it is difficult to get rid of your slackers. And Defense is always on—Defense spending is always on the chopping block, while we're saying we want 25% more women but we're cutting personnel. I think the army cut, like, forty thousand people in 2015, and now the military kind of ain't what it used to be. And I feel sort of silly saying that because there are, like, forty year male guys in the military everywhere who are like, "Ugh—" scoff at—"When I came up in the—" whenever, "and we had to eat rocks." [chuckles]

TS: Well, how do you think your life has been different because you joined the Marine Corps?

JE: Oh, I think it's—I think it took a vastly different path than I ever would—I mean, if you had told me when I was in college or high school that I would one day be a marine, and one day be such an advocate for high standards, and a proponent of maintaining the combat exemption, and defending both men and women in uniform, and—I feel like I'm trying to, like, save the military myself; save the Marine Corps, save their standards.

TS: Do you feel like that sometimes?

JE: Yeah. Well, in the "women in combat" conversation.

TS: Okay.

JE: Definitely. But I want us to be—And I hope we can turn that around because, I mean, we are the best. We are the best, okay? Our military is awesome. I think we have so much that we can be proud of. Increasingly, women's stories have been told which I—which I think is awesome. I have these books of the women who served, World War II female spies. Like, I think that our women are increasingly more and more recognized, which is good and right.

TS: How has it been different for your life?

JE: Oh, right, right. Sorry. I'm going off on another tangent.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I know, you're going on that combat one and you're on that train [of thought].

JE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: That's okay.

JE: Yeah, I think—I mean, it's definitely—I mean, it's definitely one of the best things that I did with my life. Second only to marrying my husband, I would say. But those are the top two things that I think were really great things. I love the community that I'm now a part of and that—nothing could ever take that—take that away from me. Nothing—And there will be—There will be things that are more or less difficult than any given thing that the Marines were but—for those—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Is that the community that you mean; that that's the community you're part of, is the Marine Corps?

JE: Yeah. And veterans in general.

TS: Okay.

JE: I mean—And since getting out I've gotten to know, like, so many people and so many more people, and gotten to be close with peo—even closer with people than I was while we were in; while I was being a busy little bee.

TS: Working.

JE: Keeping my nose to the grindstone. But, yeah, I—and I'm still enjoying, like—Because I had no context of military history. I was learning about it going in, and all these famous and great battles and famous and great marines. And I've really enjoyed—I don't think I would ever have really gotten into getting a picture of that and getting—I always—I knew why we fought World War II, I knew—studied different wars, but never really delved into the tradition and the legacy and the ethos and stuff like that of the military. I always thought it was really this sort of, like, out of reach, not my—not in my world.

TS: Right.

JE: But when it came to being attacked on 9/11 and knowing, okay, I'm one of those people who says, "Here am I, send me." I was like, "This is important and I can—I can put my energy towards that—toward that thing, to be useful for that endeavor and fight the good fight," I guess.

TS: Is there anything you would like to say or explain to a civilian that they may not understand or misinterpret about the military? Whether it's the military itself or the people in the military.

JE: Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of, I guess, conventional thought on the military/civilian divide and this kind of thing, and I don't know that that's—I mean, all we can—I think that the more—I mean, if fourteen years of war has done anything, more people than ever—more people that you probably know have served. Even though fewer people are serving overall, that's fourteen years of people going and coming. You know what I mean?

TS: You have to have contact[?] with somebody somehow.

JE: Yeah, yeah. I don't know, maybe that's not quite an accurate depiction, but it seems to me that—I mean, this is not like World War II when really everybody—You know what I mean? But so many people that the average civilian—The average civilian is probably in contact with somebody who served and deployed or—and/or.

TS: Do you think there's anything that civilians really don't get about being in the military?

JE: Oh, sure. Lots of things.

TS: Like what?

JE: Like what I [thought—JE edited later] before joining, that you have to—you have to be a complete conformist, or that you get brainwashed, or that you're somehow not just a portion of the general population, that you're somehow something other. Now you are other because few people are willing to do this kind of thing. Few people are willing to make the sacrifices, write the blank check.

TS: But maybe it's not just the last chance for a life, sort of.

JE: Yeah. Or that if you only join the military if you have no other prospects.

TS: Right. That's what I mean.

JE: Yeah, yeah, and it's utterly ridiculous. And I'm glad I have a full view and can advocate against that kind of misconception, I guess. Because, of course, it takes all kinds and it takes—There are people who, like, you'd never think would join the military or would make it in the military, and they do and they do great things.

TS: There's a question that I used to ask—I don't really ask that much anymore—about whether you feel like you're independent. That's the question.

JE: Oh, like when you're in?

TS: No, before you went, did you feel like you were a really independent person?

JE: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

TS: Right. I don't need to ask you that question because it comes across.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Right, right.

TS: I question instead for you is, do you think there are traits that you had in you that the military drew out that maybe you didn't really understand that they were that strong in you until you served?

JE: I'm not sure. I mean, it definitely did make me more disciplined. It made me—It made me OCD [obsessive compulsive disorder] [both chuckle] in certain respects that I sort of wasn't before. Which I think have benefited me just in life in general, and also, specifically, as running a data center.

TS: Right.

JE: It helps to be a little OCD on things.

TS: Do you think it draws out your strengths, I guess is what I'm saying.

JE: Yeah, absolutely, because—and it helps you pare down and sort of let go of anything superfluous. Because we're all dressed the same and you're all going through the same

challenges, it's sort of, like—it sort of sloughs off everything but the core and who you really are and who—and some people rise to that and some people don't.

TS: That's a good explanation.

JE: Yeah. I kind of—I think I definitely rose to it. I look back frequently and I think how much more I might have done. But then again—

TS: You're an old lady at twenty-six.

JE: I was grandma [both chuckle] of my platoon, yeah.

TS: What does patriotism mean to you?

JE: Patriotism means standing up for your country, and is a love of country. It's simple. It's, like, the most simple, concise answer I've given you all day, right? [both chuckle]

TS: It is. Well, would you do it all over again?

JE: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, in a heartbeat.

TS: Well, I don't have any more—

JE: When I was in Reserve I used to think, like, "Oh, well, they're not going to pull back the cancer patient for—" But I was like—it was like things got—we had the surgery in 2007 and then later—

TS: Oh, right.

JE: —later they were—It seemed like I heard, or something on the grapevine, that they were pulling some people back from Reserve—inactive Reserve or whatever—like that. I was like—and at the time I was kind of feeling—I was missing—

TS: Did you have two or four years of—

JE: Four years.

TS: Four, okay.

JE: Yeah. And I found myself at different times, like—I would go—Like, if they called me back I would go. And, I mean, people often feel that once they—You plan to get out and you're, like, "I can't wait to get out and not deal with this bullshit anymore;" like, the day-to-day bullshit.

TS: Right.

JE: And then you get out and you're kind of like, "I kind of miss the fun—" At least the fun stuff, you don't miss the—you don't miss the day-to-day bullshit, but—it was a lot of "hurry up and wait." But even when you're doing "hurry up and wait" you still—you're part of the Marine Corps so you feel like you automatically, just by existing there, have a higher purpose.

TS: Yeah. I don't have any more formal questions, but is there anything you want to add or a final thing you'd like to say about your service or the Marine Corps?

JE: Yeah, I'm really glad I did it. I had a great experience. I worked with great guys and gals. And it's like my Marine Corps and my veteran family keeps expanding the older I get. And even the more vocal I get on—

TS: [chuckles]

JE: I mean, I'm definitely making my target—myself a target.

TS: Are you?

JE: Especially for feminists, yeah.

TS: Why do you think that?

JE: Well, because it tends to be hardcore feminists that are for women in combat.

TS: There's a lot of anti-military feminists, though, that aren't for women—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: Yeah, yeah, but sometimes those overlap. [both chuckle] Which is a whole other story.

TS: That's interesting because there's a whole range of feminism. It's not—

JE: Yeah, I mean, I'm a walking feminist by all those standards of—young, college-educated woman pursues photography dream in New York City. And then joins the Marine Corps.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: And then joins the Marine Corps. Yes, you're a paradox, aren't you?

JE: Yeah, yeah. And after I got out—I had put music and all the fun stuff that I was doing, I put it on the backburner, like, deliberately. For a while I was all business in the Marine

Corps. Some of the experience or the feelings came out in music and it also—I don't know, it just—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: With your cello?

JE: I like what I'm—Yeah, yeah. Cello. Singing.

TS: Oh, and you sing too?

JE: Yeah, yeah. Not always at the same time, but.

TS: Okay.

JE: Sometimes, yeah. Yeah, I've a duo, we're called Upstarts and Roads, and it's my friend, Jeff, and I, and he plays guitar and I play cello. We both sing.

TS: You think that that's another way you can kind of take that experience and express it in a different way?

JE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I have some—I'll give you a record. There's one—

TS: Cool.

JE: One of my cello compositions is called "The Seafarer" and it's kind of about—kind of about the return home, or, like, the heroes return home; how you feel like nobody understands you, like—and that's the story—I mean, that goes back to, like, the literature major in me. In every great story, the hero, he leaves the village, he leaves his people, he goes off, he does great things, he comes back with wisdom they can't understand and so he's ostracized. So he has all the wisdom and the knowledge but they can't receive it. And so, the hero is always sort of an outcast or separated. Not that I'm any kind of hero, but I did—

TS: Right, but you're—

JE: I'm a journeyman.

TS: You went to war.

JE: Yeah.

TS: And came back.

JE: Yeah.

TS: Well, you did.

JE: Yeah. In a sense. In a sense.

TS: I don't think that's in a sense.

JE: Yeah. I—

TS: I didn't say you went into combat and fought.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JE: I constantly—Yeah, I'm constantly comparing to the—Yeah.

TS: Right.

JE: But, yeah.

TS: Well, I am so glad that we met and I had a great time.

JE: Thank you. So did I. It was such a pleasure.

TS: Yeah. I'm going to go ahead and shut it off now.

JE: Okay.

[End of Interview]