

## **PREFACE**

**March 15, 2013**

**2:00 PM (PST)**

**Knight Library, University of Oregon**

**Eugene, Oregon**

**Interview duration: 52 minutes, 45 seconds**

**Interviewee: Jonathan C. Brunton**

**Interviewers: Amanda Rudd, David Scott**

Amanda Rudd is an undergraduate student at the University of Oregon, and is also a participant in Professor Dracobly's UO Vets Oral History Project. She is in her senior year and is working towards a Bachelor of Arts in History.

David Scott is an Undergraduate student with a History major at the University of Oregon, and is a participant in Professor Dracobly's UO Vets Oral History Project.

## TRANSCRIPT

**Amanda Rudd:**

*So, if you could start with giving us your name and branch of military service that you served.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Okay. My name is Jonathan Brunton and the branch of service I was in was the United States Navy.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Thanks.*

**David Scott:**

*When and why did you join the military?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I joined the military right out of high school and actually I was in the late entry program<sup>1</sup> when I was a senior. So I actually signed the contract in '93 and I went in August of '94 right after I graduated. Um, what was the other part of that question?

**David Scott:**

*Why?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I joined mainly because of the Montgomery G.I. Bill. I joined because of the college money. Other than that there was no...there wasn't a tradition in my family, except for my two grandfathers, they both served in World War II, but I didn't really know that until I was in. Other than that, that's pretty much it.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*How did your family feel?*

---

<sup>1</sup> Delayed Entry Program (DEP) is a program wherein military enlistees can enlist in a reserve or inactive status and report for duty at a future date, usually high school graduation.

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Um, my mom didn't like it so much. My dad was fine with it because getting out of high school and having that pay check for like four years...because you know that you are always going to get that paycheck. It's not a job where they can fire you, unless you just don't care about it, you know? If you just follow the rules and just be how you're supposed to, you'll be fine. So, my dad liked it, because that's a paycheck for four straight years.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Yeah.*

**David Scott:**

*Why did you select the Navy?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I selected the Navy for one thing: I knew it was going to get me to see the world, and with a lot of the others, once you are at a base, you really don't go anywhere. Especially when I was in [*the Navy*] there was no war. If you're in the army you may not go anywhere, and if you're in the Air Force, you may just stay at a base also. So I mean...that would've been okay, but it wouldn't have been much different than being at home, I guess.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*What was your experience like at boot camp?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

My experience at boot camp, since I was there in August, and it's Great Lakes Illinois, it's...pretty humid. So it was a lot of work. I lost...um I think in boot camp, which is ten weeks, I think I lost like twenty pounds.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Wow.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

It was a lot of work, and yeah...like I said I lost a lot of weight, I went there and I was like one-eighty...wait maybe I lost twenty-four pounds. I went there, like 184 pounds. and I came home at like 160

pounds. So it was a lot of work...and you know it was something that when you're 18 years old, and you don't really realize how big of a jump it is to go from there [*to boot camp*]. But, now that I look back at it I can say that I enjoyed it. When I got out of it I didn't enjoy it. But, I do now. It taught me a lot of things.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*How do you think the Navy boot camp compares to other boot camps?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Um...since I'd never been through any of the rest of them [*Amanda Rudd laughs*], I don't know I can only go by what other people say, and since almost no one has been through two boot camps, you can never really say how it compares.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Okay.*

**David Scott:**

*Have you served overseas, at all?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Um...I was on a ship that went plenty of places, so yeah, I've been through the Panama Canal three different times. I've been to Malaysia. I've been to Singapore. I've been to Oman. I've been to Kuwait. I've been to United Arab Emirates. I've been to Australia in two different ports...a lot of places. You know, when you're on a ship you spend a lot of time going all different places that some of my friends even now at their age, have never been to, or have never seen, or probably will never go to. So it [*the Navy*] affords you a lot of different things to go and do.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*What was the most memorable...like, which place or time?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Well place or time, because there's a difference between both of them for me.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Well, I guess you could talk about both, if you'd like.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

The most memorable place I went to was Australia. I would always enjoy going back there, because the people are very friendly. They were very nice to Americans, and it was a place that I would like to visit again if I could. It's kind of expensive, because of the long flight. But it's something that I told my family that I would like to go back to eventually, once we have the money, because it's a great time. They were really nice to us. It's a nice country, and that's what I would say.

My most memorable time, now that I look at it...when I got out of boot camp I went home for a couple of weeks to get time off, and I got shipped to a brand new ship. Which basically means that when the ship gets decommissioned or when they stop using the ship, then I get to have a piece of the ship. There aren't very many people who ever get to have that because usually once a ship is put in the service it can last anywhere between twenty and about forty years. So, that means that I was one of the first of three hundred people to ever be on that ship. And that means that my name will always be recognized with that ship, no matter what. And so, whenever it's decommissioned a lot of us will go down to probably San Diego...and do that. 'Cause when we got commissioned, it's a huge ceremony, when you bring a new ship straight out of the shipyard to the United States military, it's a huge thing! They have a whole bunch of dignitaries there.

At a shipyard in Avondale, Louisiana—which is right outside of New Orleans—is where we got commissioned at and they had it right on the water front, right downtown New Orleans when we did the commissioning. So it's pretty interesting, and I have stuff framed for it, because of what happened. So it's pretty interesting, and I enjoy it very much. It was a great experience for someone that was just eighteen years old, just barely out of high school...so that's what I would say the two differences are.

**David Scott:**

*And how long have you served, now?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I served for four years. I served from '94 to '98.

**David Scott:**

*What did you do when you were at the ports at each country?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

A lot of times we'd get together...we'd have different sections of guys that would get together in different departments and usually go out on the town together. And, you'd usually have a couple days you'd go out on the town and you'd have at least one day where you're supposed to stay on watch on the ship. 'Cause you have to have at least certain people still watching the ship just to make sure that nobody does anything to the ship or whatever. A lot of times we'd just go do excursions in town if we were off that day, a lot of us would get together and we'd just do different things...find something that was fun and maybe couldn't do back here. And I enjoyed it very much getting together with those guys. A lot of us still stay friends on Facebook and talk to each other pretty often. So, it's another community that I was a part of and a lot of those days that we'd go out around the town were great, because it made us stay friends.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Speaking of community, having that during your service, what was it like coming out of the service, and being in a different atmosphere?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I think for somebody like me that has four years it's maybe not as hard of a transition. Some people that spend a longer time in there maybe have a harder time transitioning. It was harder when I got to some of my jobs, though, because different people see things differently. But, when you're in the military, you don't leave until that project is finished. So you may leave around midnight, if the project isn't finished, we start it in the morning. And if something has to get done by tomorrow, it *will* get done by tomorrow. And you know, at jobs that I worked at here, "Oh well it needs to get done tomorrow..." you can kind of just keep pushing it back. The military is not the same, thing the community is once it gets assigned it *has* to get done buy *this* time no matter what, and you're not going to get any extra pay for it. You realize that...it just has to get done. So that was one of the biggest differences. It was the work community, because a lot of people here don't go out after work or get together...In the Navy you spend so much time together. So much time! Because a lot of times we would go out to sea for just a week, just outside of San Diego and come back in. Well...for people who are married at that time, or even for me, you spent more time with those guys that week than you spent with anybody in your family. You only got to spend Saturday and Sunday with them. Even though you spent time on the ship...living in the same berthing, 'cause you have to sleep near each other, you have to work near each other...and eat. I mean it's a huge difference. You don't get to just go home on those nights. So it makes you become closer, because you just have to be.

**David Scott:**

*What was your job assignment in the Navy?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

First I started as an undesignated fireman, which basically means that you get to go down to the engine rooms, which isn't something I really enjoyed. So...once I was able to strike out...or move up, which is like two years in, I became an interior communications man, third class. This was basically closer to television...doing circuit boards, anything with the lower voltage electrical stuff.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Did you enjoy that more than the other job?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I enjoyed that a lot more. There was a lot more opportunities. The people were a lot nicer to me, probably 'cause they could tell that I was better at that job, and that it was more for me. You know...the other one just wasn't for me. You happened to get taken down there and your choices are limited. You don't get to just say, "Oh I'm done with this," or "Yeah, I don't want to do this job anymore," it just doesn't happen that way.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*What were your expectations before going into the military? Did that change?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Um...not really. My expectations were just that I wanted to go in and learn a lot of things, spend my four years trying to learn maybe how to help myself out when I got out and I don't think those expectations changed. Because, it did pretty much everything that I wanted it to. It's shaped the way that I am now, which is probably really good. I mean I wasn't the type of person that got in trouble in high school anyway, but it helped me be even more [understanding of] why things have to get done, and why you have to be on time for everything, and why things have to be done a certain way. So, it helped me in that. And that was kind of the expectation I had anyway...you know that when you go into the military everything is going to have to be done a certain way. It's not just an, "Oh well you know we can do whatever," it *has* to be done this way.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Were there some challenges that you faced that you can recall in particular?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Challenges that I faced...I think the most challenging thing was when I had to do a job that I really did not enjoy for two years. And spending all those years trying to figure out what I could do to move out or where I was going to move out once I was able to...I think that was my biggest challenge. It's really hard to do a job for two years...I mean the military is like being a cop or a fireman. It's basically a 24/7 job, because you can be called back to the ship at any time, even if you're with your family at home. It's one of those things where having a job like that made me not enjoy it very much. So it made it a challenge to either fake it or do some of the stuff I didn't enjoy very much. That would probably be my biggest challenge.

**David Scott:**

*During your four years of service, did you get to come home very often, or was it more like where you were stationed you were always there for the four years?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

No. When you're in the military, you get about a month off a year. And so I usually took a good amount off. A lot of times if we were in port, there was a couple times where I was only in San Diego...so that's only a couple of hours on a plane ride up to here [*Oregon*], so it's not that bad. There were times where I'd just take a weekend and come up here [*Oregon*]. Since I'm already on the West Coast, I knew guys who were from the East Coast who couldn't do that, but for me it was pretty easy.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Did you get married during your time in the service?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I did not. I actually had an ex-fiancé in the service, but we decided not to get married at that point, because she said that she was only willing to come up to Oregon for a year. So I kind of thought of that as not really a "try-out period," it was more a kind of more like, "Yeah, I'll go up there for a year, and where just going to move back." So, I actually I got married to my wife outside of the military. But, she knows that I'm very much a veteran, and I'm very much involved with veteran stuff. So...yeah I didn't get married while I was in the military. For me, seeing a lot of the married people, especially in the



Navy, there's a reason why the divorce rate is like 70% because you don't spend a lot of time together. Unfortunately, but that's just how it is.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*So could you talk about your job now? You work at...what is it called again?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

While I'm a student, taking 16 credits right now, I am the co-director of the Veteran and Family Student Association. We try to have a community for veterans transitioning from military to school, and then we also are trying to help them now with our new programs that we started, which is called Veterans to Success. It's helped them transition from school to the outside world, because for anyone who was in the military, basically all you did to go into the military was sign a contract. Well, what some of these guys don't realize is that once you try to get your next job out of college it involves a lot of networking. So we're trying to teach them through business people from the outside that I know, because I've lived here for a long time, and through other people, that we're trying to hook them up and be a kind of a business-to-student mentorship. We are trying to get them to understand how much networking is going to help...because there going to be with that mentor for about a year after they graduate from school to make sure that it works out for them.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*That's great.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Like I said we basically took it from zero because they basically had one or two veterans coming down to the organization, and they didn't really have a community. We throw pizza parties, and we've thrown a whole bunch of different stuff...we go to baseball games together, we go to basketball games together. So it's kind of like a community inside a community. And we also do stuff off campus with each other.

We are trying to create a community where they can all feel welcome, because a lot of them aren't. I'm one of the only one's that actually grew up here, and then went into the military for four years and came back. Most of them, I mean we got people from Bend, Portland, we have one as far away as Alaska, we have some from California, so they're not actually really from here. So it helps to kind of create a community. We had a holiday dinner this year, because it helps with a lot of them that don't live

here. So, they got to bring their wives, or their kids, or just them, and for some it was just them by themselves. We did this just to create that sense of community.

And then, we have the new Veterans' Center that will be opening here very soon. We have a ribbon cutting April 20th, Saturday at 1:30 PM and we'd love everybody to come, because it's a very historic moment at the University of Oregon for its student veterans. We are going to be recognized as having our own place, rather than having to share it with five other student groups. We will be able to give more resources to our veterans, and we can explain to them their benefits easier. It's easier to bring in people to help the veterans when you have your own space. Not all veterans want to be talking out in front of everybody, because you are trained not to when you're in the military...and like I said, we've brought the numbers up over 500% from where they were last year. We have about twenty-five people that come down at least twice a week, and then we have about sixty more that come down probably once every two weeks. So it's pretty good coming from one to two people to where we are at right now. And we've done a very good job with advertising and helping. We have these [*pointing to pin on his shirt*] and I don't know if you've seen any of our t-shirts either?

**David Scott:**

*Yeah, I have.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Yeah they are pretty neat. You have to start things new if it just doesn't seem like it's working. You have to make it livelier and think outside the box a lot of times. And for the VSFA, because we've had this, we've been able to think outside the box. It's worked really well. I'm glad as the co-director the ship is moving rather than going backwards or downhill.

**David Scott:**

*So after you graduate, do you think it will continue to grow?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

The Director [*Jonathan said co-director, but he meant to say director*] will be here another year, and I think we've already got the co-director that's going to take my place. I am very positive, and I have a lot of confidence that these two will carry it forward. Like I said, even when they had their board meetings last year there was only one or two people that came. Well, one of them was the advisor. And that doesn't really count. We just had a board meeting now, and there was about ten of us there. So, I am positive that it will keep moving forward.

**Amanda Rudd and David Scott:**

*[Both say 'good' in approval].*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

It may not be as big of numbers, because once we're already at a certain point, maybe we'll pick up a couple more, but starting from zero, that makes our percentage go up really fast. But, I do think they will keep on moving it forward and it won't move backwards.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*What do you think, if anything, will be interesting or important to people in the future who want to know what it's like to serve in the military at this time, and also during the time that you served?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Do you mean a high school student that is looking to go in?

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Yeah. I mean anyone who is interested in going in, but also just a better perspective for somebody who is on the outside, as well.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I think for me it was the greatest learning experience that I've ever had in my life. Being 18 to 22 you may not think that at the time, because you're just getting out of high school, and you just got out of your parents house, so it is pretty rough at the beginning. But, the as the older you get, I have seen that it has shaped everything that I do in my life. The way I live my life. The way I have my family life. The way I've done the veterans' work here. The way I've done school here...It's kind of all towards that.

At first when I got out I didn't. I told people that it sucked, and I wouldn't go in again, but now I think for me, I would say it's a great experience. It's something that everybody should learn. I think it especially helps people that didn't do very well in high school, or wasn't "grown up" enough...maybe who've had problems. Because I knew some of those people [*in the military*]...and it helped them even more than it helped me. It made them see the purpose, and it made them see why they had to be on time, and when a lot of them got out of the military, it changed them. And for me, it changed me because of all of the opportunities I've been able to have out of it.

It affords you a lot of opportunities in your life afterwards, too, that people may not know. Like, no down payment house loans. I have that right now on my house. It helps a lot by just being a veteran...they help you with a lot of stuff afterwards. I just enjoyed the experience very much. I wouldn't change how it went. It worked out the way it was supposed to.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Do you think there are some improvements that can be done to help vets after coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan, and just being deployed? Is there a better way we can help?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I think that's a two-part question, because I think the government could do a lot more...because I don't know if you guys have seen where most of the cuts are coming from? The military. Why do we cut from the poorest? Military people don't make very much money, and we're going to cut from the poorest amount of people? They don't make overtime. You know when I was in I knew somebody that was on food stamps just because they had a family. If you're in the military, why should they have food stamps? I don't understand that. They can't go work overtime. A lot of times they can't go work a second job, especially if you're in the Navy, because you're out all the time. You don't have that choice. So it's one of those things, I think right now, especially the government, with all of the cuts they're doing, it's the wrong way to cut! I mean they could cut from the senators and congressmen's pay. They make plenty of money, and they don't really...well obviously now they don't do anything with it anyway. Because they're not making any movements.

Or about the vets center. I don't know if you guys have heard about the new vets center they want to have come to Eugene. Did you hear it got stopped again? Do you know the reason why?

**Amanda Rudd and David Scott:**

*[Reply no].*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Because one of the contractors is mad that they didn't give it to him. He's the one that actually put the order in to stop it. That's...that's petty. Aren't we trying to help our veterans? And you're going to be petty over it because you didn't get picked for the contract? Maybe there's a reason you didn't get picked for the contract. I know he likes it, because it's going to be a rich contract...it's like a hundred thousand square foot place, but this isn't the time to fight over something small like that. And those are the things that make me kind of mad...I don't understand why the veterans are always the first to be cut.

When a lot of them are the poorest. I know, because when I went in with some of the hours I was doing...you might be making less than a dollar an hour. If you actually think about it, it made you just say, "Wow, this just sucks."

**Amanda Rudd:**

*[Laughs.]*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

And then the other part of the question would be...I don't think the University of Oregon does a very good job of helping our veterans. We went back to a conference...have you guys heard of the Student Veterans of America?

**Amanda Rudd:**

*No.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

You guys will have to check it out. It's one of these new places that's kind of like...you guys have heard of the VFW, right?

**David Scott:**

*Yes.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

The VFW is the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The SVA is kind of like the new VFW. It's really trying to help students' transition from the wars into being students, and then to try and graduate. The Director and I went back to the Conference in Orlando in early January [*changed order of words*]. We had found out that for our size of school—which is 25,000—that we're pretty far behind for what we do for our veterans here. A lot of other places had already had a Vets center for about four or five years, and we're just getting ours. And I don't understand how they [*the University of Oregon*] don't see how far behind we are.

Oregon State, which we visited this summer, they have a veteran's liaison, which is a forty hour position just to help veterans. Because you have a GI Bill...I mean you know Mary? [*Speaking to David Scott, whose father served in the military, and is receiving the GI bill*] You have a GI Bill benefit person; well they have that at Oregon State plus another forty-hour position. There is so much stuff that veterans

cannot understand when they first get out, and they need a lot more help...and then also helping them transition. It's a really hard transition to go from high school to military and back to college. When you just go from high school to college, it's pretty easy, you're just going from institution to institution, and you are still on that mindset.

The military guys that I hear talk about it, they're like maybe sophomores and juniors, really struggle the first year with taking too many credits. They try to take sixteen, when they should only take twelve, and they don't understand how to manage their time, because they're used to somebody else managing their time. Or that you have to be at a certain place from 8 AM to 5 PM every day, but here it's like, "Oh we have these classes on this day, and these classes on this day." So it makes the transition a lot harder. And sometimes they don't understand how some people learn differently at this point. It's just really hard to make that transition back. I know that we're going to have the Executive Director of the Student Veterans of America be the keynote speaker, at no charge to the U of O. I signed him up, and so we're going to have him here the day to basically talk with some of the administrators on where they need to go with veterans, and it needs to be a lot better than where we are at now. I'm not matching up against schools that are 75,000 people or smaller; I'm matching them up against schools where we should at least be on the same level. Right now we are about five levels below.... and for me, I've grown up in this area, and I've always been a University of Oregon fan; I've always wanted this to be my school; I'm kind of sad at the way that they [*the UO veterans*] are treated.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Do you think the understanding is not there or do you think it's a bureaucratic problem?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Um.... I think it's a little bit of both. I think it's a little bit of a bureaucratic problem, because we've found out that even through this process of trying to get our own space...I don't know how many times I've had to basically go in and fight with people and ask, "Are you serious? Is this really what we are going to do for our veterans?" It's been a long process.

We started this process in the summer [2011]. What is it now? I mean it's going to be April in two weeks. I mean that was a long process to get something, that I thought was simple, done. And the bureaucratic process here reminds of being in the military a lot of times. It takes *way* too long to get something simple done. If I were working a regular job it would take like two days to get it done, and figure it out. Either, yes or no. Rather than, "Oh we'll give you a maybe for a couple months," and that's what told me what the University really thinks of their veterans, because I would've thought that this would've been a very easy process.

And look, I mean we've been an organization since 2006 here at the University of Oregon. I mean...and there's been nothing even since then. And I don't know.... It's kind of just one of those things. So for me, I'd like to see a lot more positivity, and I hope that when we get this Veterans' Center set up it will be seen as a lot more positive. And that's what I am hoping for.

I know the other thing that we've been hit with is that there are other organizations that want to move in with us also, and I've just been like, "Well why would I want to do that? I already have a place [*in the same area as other organizations*], I'll just stay with that place if that's what's going to happen." I don't know...I think the University of Oregon could do a lot better job, and I hope that this helps them see that they could do a lot better job. Because my biggest explanation was, "Do you realize how much a veteran brings in money...that you don't have to chase them down for a loan? It goes straight from government, to government. It's a pretty easy process. No other student group has that at the University of Oregon. Nobody else...I know it's sad, but that's how the University likes to look at things, as money things. Well here's your money thing, that's a lot of money that could go away pretty quick...or it could go a lot better if you're seen as veteran-friendly. It can change your numbers going up too." So...that's what I would say.

**David Scott:**

*So you see the transitioning out of the service and into college life as difficult. How do you help the veterans to overcome that difficulty?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Well, for right now since we don't have a veterans' liaison, it's some of the older people, like me, like a senior, or some of the seniors that have been through it to try to help them transition. There's been a couple of people that I've helped to stay at school...It's telling them that, "Hey, twelve credits is full time. Consider that full time. Do not take the sixteen credits, because...unfortunately, I hate to tell you, but you're not ready for it when you come straight out of the military. That shouldn't be your first term. It should be the twelve, and then you can start figuring out that okay, this is a great study time for me, or this is a great study time for me; I'm better at studying in the morning; I'm better at studying in the afternoon; or I'm better at studying at night. Rather than taking the sixteen credits and you've already overwhelmed yourself, just from the start." And I don't know if any of you know that if you do the sixteen the first term you're here, it pretty much overwhelms you. No matter what you think...twelve credits, that's only three classes, but that's a lot of papers...and trying to do sixteen is just overwhelming.

That's how we try to help them transition, by talking to them, and kind of counseling them on how this would be the best way to go about it...and for most of them it turns out to be a lot better. They'll

say, “Thanks for helping me out because I was really starting to get overwhelmed.” The GI Bill says twelve credits is full time so take that as full time. I know you might think it’s only three classes, but just help yourself out. So that’s how we help transition at this point. That’s one of the biggest things.

**David Scott:**

*Do you find that rewarding?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I find it rewarding to help people out so that they don’t seem so stressed, because I know that I don’t like to be stressed. So, if I can help somebody else not to be so stressed, you know, that’s all the better for them. If I went through that, and it didn’t work out for me, it’s probably better to explain it to the next person, “Hey, I tried that, and it didn’t work out very well, so how about you just do this. I’m telling you that it’ll work a lot better. And then you won’t fail classes, because the GI Bill doesn’t pay when you fail.” Do they? [*Speaking to David Scott*] I think you have to pay it back. So it’s kind of one of those things where, why would you want to do that? Because if you take the sixteen, and you fail one of them, you only got twelve credits anyway. And then you get in trouble by the GI Bill. So...just keep it at that.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Are there any other things that you would like to discuss concerning your time in the military that you served, or coming back?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Um...like I said, for me it was a little bit different for me when I came back, because I didn’t come back from war...now people are way more accepting of veterans, and it’s a big issue, which I’m glad it is, and that people are looking at it as something different. I wish that’s the way that people would treat veterans most of the time, and they don’t.

I know that I’ve talked with some of our other veterans, and they don’t understand why they’re getting thanked for their service, and they don’t always like to be thanked. I just talked to somebody about that the other day, and what my comment was to him was, “Do you remember how the Vietnam veterans came back? Basically, they were spit on, yelled at, protested against...so if you get thanked, you should probably just take it. Because it’s way better than what some people had to see when they came back from war.” Now people see it more that you didn’t sign up for the war, you just signed a blank check to be sent to anywhere they send you. You can agree with it, or not agree with it, but that’s what I’ve always



said...a soldier or the sailor...they probably didn't go in to shoot anybody. I'm pretty sure. Because I've told everybody that the top two things that people go into the military for is for one, the college money, and for two, because of family tradition. They don't go in because their top thing is to go in and shoot somebody...they sign a blank check and you get sent wherever and whenever they want to send you.

**David Scott:**

*While you were on the ship, did you get to communicate with your family over the Internet or did you send out letters?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Well, when we were in, the Internet wasn't very good. So, you didn't have any of that set up. And the sea phone was so expensive that the captain was really the only one who got to call out...so a lot of times it was through letters. Or when you stopped at a port, you could go get a calling card. Or a lot of times you could call from there, also.

So that's how I usually communicated. I would wait until we got into port, I'd get a phone card...because some of the places weren't that bad, except for when you went to Oman and you gave them a dollar and you got thirty-three cents back [*David Scott laughs*]. That's where I didn't do a whole lot of anything there. So the biggest thing was letters. You could get care packages from your family, but calling from port was pretty much the best thing you could do.

**David Scott:**

*Did you find that helpful?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I found it pretty helpful...I mean I think everyone found it pretty helpful, because that's your one contact with your family. For some people it wasn't as big of a deal, because...like for me I was single. It was good at some points, because at some ports you needed it more than others. Where you may have a had a difficult struggle from one port to the other, whether it was really hard work or something else...so sometimes it's that time where you can talk about what happened, and it relieves stress, because you don't really tell anybody in the military, because you're kind of all going through the same thing. And they would just tell you to stop complaining, because we're all going through it. So...I think it helped.

**David Scott:**

*Were you ever awarded any medals or a citation, maybe?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I have some awards. But...I don't look at them all the time. It's just stuff that you kind of put in your closet. I mean I've never got any huge medals, but there's different stuff that you get...I see a lot more of the certificates that I've got, just because those are framed. Like I've said, the plank owner one is framed. There's one that the Navy has that is called the Order of the Ditch, and it's basically that if you go through the Panama Canal once, you have one. So, I'd have three, but they only gave us one. There's one also for a shellback, which means that once you go over the equator you get one. And once you go over the international timeline, you get one. So...there's been different stuff that I've been given, but like I said, I think that when you're in the military, sometimes when you get out for a while, you just kind of forget about it. I think most military people that I've found...don't...well my wife tells me a lot of times, when we're at family functions, when somebody else will talk about their life and stuff they've done, she says, "Why don't you say anything, because you've done so much more than some of these people?" And it's like, yeah but it's not me. I'm not a bragging type of person. It's just, it's not me, and I think most veterans aren't really bragging people. I don't know...it's just different I guess.

And I guess one of the other things I would add, which is totally on a different subject...this is one of the things we've been talking about with the VFSA is how the media wants to make it seem like every military member has shot somebody, or has PTSD. I know that this is something that we've gone through. We've had interviews earlier in the year, in where one of the first questions somebody would ask is one of those two. We are going to send something to the J school [*School of Journalism*] basically saying how you should interview a veteran, so that you don't make them really mad. Some people don't understand, "Well, why can't I just ask that question?" Most of us don't have PTSD, and most of us have never shot anybody, but the one person that has, I know a couple of them, it brings up really horrible nightmares, and just really horrible stuff. Like I said, about the shooting thing, that's not something they wanted to do. But, for them to save their own lives, it was something they had to do. And with PTSD, most of us, I mean especially for someone like me on the ship, I don't know why I'd have PTSD. Or, like a lot of the other Navy members that we have down there...because I know that when we set up our new center, that's one of the things we have to do is make sure the chairs don't have their backs to the door. This is for those people that have been to Afghanistan or Iraq, because you—that's just something you don't do. You don't put your back where someone is entering a place. I know that this is one of the things that we've been really trying to get out to people...just not asking people about the PTSD, and not asking, "Have you shot anybody?"

I think with veterans, some people don't realize what may be inappropriate with questions. But, if they were to interview somebody that was gay, or something else, well they would know what they

shouldn't ask. Well, for veterans, it's the same thing. There are just some questions that are highly inappropriate.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Do you think having the VFSA—*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Yeah...we have the VFSA, which the Student Veterans of America thing.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Okay. Do you think by having this building, or just, I don't know, being more recognized on campus, do you think it could create a better awareness for respect and better understanding for people to not ask those questions? And also understanding the diversity, because there are all kinds of people serving?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Well, I know we had talked about this earlier when we've been in some other meetings, is that when I've had other interviews, I take it as two totally different things. Like the students, I noticed a lot more that the students are more understanding than some of the administration, which I find really weird, when the students are what, eighteen to twenty-two? And the administration is older than me. They're in their fifties and sixties.

I found that when we went to the student council this year and asked for three thousand dollars, because we didn't have money to go to the conference [VSFA]...we won unanimously. Nobody voted against us. And afterwards, they even thanked us for our service, and stood up and clapped. I mean that's not something that I expected from kids that are eighteen to twenty-two. But, then you go to some of the Administration and you hit a lot more brick walls. Like, we were trying to set up for April 19th [*the opening of the new Vets Center*], and Michael [Michael Tieman] shows up early. I sent stuff two weeks ago, and I've received about two things back...I mean it's one of those things that I don't know if they want the problem to go away or...I don't understand. You would think that you would want to show to Michael, which is a national thing, you'd think you would want to show him that the University of Oregon is veteran-friendly. I don't think it's going to help if I invite all of these administrators and only three show up. He's not going to say a lot of good things probably...if someone were to call him up do you think he is going to say that the University of Oregon is veteran-friendly? Probably not. Which, like I said is very important to me, because I've always been a University of Oregon fan.

Living here, and always seeing this place, I would like it to change. I know it can change. It's getting the right people to make it change. Do I think the center will help that? I hope. I mean you can always hope. I always hope for the positive, whether that happens or not, I can't make someone do it. I wish I could, but I can't. I hope that because the University of Oregon President is going to be at the ribbon cutting, I will hope that since he's new, maybe this will make him change the way that the rest of the administration looks. And how they look at their veterans, or how some of them treat their veterans. Like I said, the students and the instructors...the instructors have been great to me and so have the students. It's the administrators that we'd like to get to look our way, and sometimes that's the worst part, because they are the ones that get to make a lot of the decisions. I mean the students and the instructors don't make a lot of the decisions. If it was up to them, I think we'd be a lot further along.

**David Scott:**

*Do you think there are many misconceptions from the general population of non-military members towards veterans or military members in general?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Yeah, like I said I think the whole PTSD and the shooting thing. I think those are the two biggest misperceptions: that we've all shot somebody. Most of us, like me, rarely ever carried around a gun. Because, I was on a ship. Why do I need to carry around a gun? We actually only had one person who carried around a gun on a naval ship. Out of three hundred people, that's not very many, and at one time you usually only had one or two of them that would carry around a gun. So, that's one of the biggest misperceptions.

Or I've noticed in the media a lot of times, that if somebody does something wrong, what's the first thing they say about them? It's not their job. It's not their family. It's that, they were a veteran. Like, how about that guy in Arkansas that kidnapped the kid, what's the first thing they said about him? He's a Vietnam veteran. Why does it matter what he was? I think he was in his sixties, so I'm pretty sure that Vietnam didn't shape the way he was and it may have been something else. It sounded like he was a weirdo anyway.

And there was something else that happened recently, and the first thing they said was: veteran. But that doesn't shape them into being a shooter, or if they kill somebody. I mean that shouldn't be the first thing that you should bring up. Why don't you bring up his job that he had three weeks ago? I mean they could've brought that up also. What's the difference?

But it's the PTSD also. I mean very rarely...I mean it's like the criminals, I think it's like three percent of the criminals cause all of the crimes in the United States, because they keep repeating. Well,

the PTSD people, that's probably like three percent also...I think it's like three to six percent that have extreme cases of PTSD. That's what I've always told people...do you think many of us would be able to function as college students if we had high levels of PTSD to be student veteran college students? No. We wouldn't be able to get through school. If any of them have it, it's small, and they're not going to snap, or shoot anybody, or do any of that stuff. They are just regular veterans that got out of high school, took a little bit of time away from the rest of things and then came back to college, and that's what they're doing now.

**David Scott:**

*What kind of ship were you on when you were in the Navy?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I was on LSD, which stands for, if you're in the Navy, "Large Sitting Duck." But, it's actually supposed to be "Landing Ship Dock." It's basically a ship, and if any of you guys want to look it up, it's called the *USS Harper's Ferry*; it's LSD-49. It was based out of San Diego. We got it from a shipyard in Avondale, Louisiana, and it was commissioned January 7, 1995. Then we went back to San Diego, through the Panama Canal, with a couple of stops in between. We stopped at Panama City, Florida, and then we stopped right in Panama to get rid of some of our trash. We then stopped right next to the Bridges of America, which basically bridges the Continents together...Then we stopped in Mazatlan, Mexico, and we went back to San Diego. It was based there for a long time...until it was based in Japan recently, and now it's back in San Diego again.

The landing ship dock is basically a ship for a Marine carrier. There's 319 or 317, I think, of Navy personnel, but when you go out on deployment there's almost 600 Marines. It carries all of their vehicles, because that's basically what that kind of ship does. It releases a bunch of tanks, and takes in water. There's a well deck...and hovercrafts, where they put Marine vehicles in...They come up, the Marine vehicles get off and go back out to get more Marine vehicles, and come back in.

So...if you had a war where you had ground troops, it basically backs up and gets down and loads all of the troops off. So that's why it's called...that's why the Navy likes to make fun of it...that's why it's called a "large sitting duck," because you're basically sitting in the sand to be shot at...that's what you are doing, really. You're ship basically can't go anywhere.

Luckily, now you have carrier groups, so we'd have some carriers with us, and a couple of submarines, and a couple frigates or destroyers. So I mean, you are the ship that's sitting next to it, but you have a lot of firepower anyway. I don't know if you guys know that the Navy has the largest amount

of aircrafts, actually. Even though the Air Force is the Air Force, they don't have as many aircraft as the Navy does.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*I did know that, actually.*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

Not everybody knows that. A lot of people look at me with their eyes open, and I say, well it's true. It's because those aircraft carriers can carry a lot of planes.

**David Scott:**

*Did the ship have a general mission?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

I don't think any ship has any real general mission. It's kind of a certain thing. Like, every two years you went on at least one six month deployment, where you're gone from your family and everyone for about six months, and you're basically going from port to port, basically you're just showing the military flag. At that point, because I went in a couple years after the First Gulf War, you always had to go into Kuwait and drop off the Marines for about thirty days at a time, and they'd go train in the sand. We still have a U.S. Army base in Kuwait (I don't know if you guys knew that), because the Kuwaiti government sees us as allies, because we helped them in the First Gulf War from Saddam Hussein who tried to take over their country.

So we have an Army base there, and the Marines go out in the sand for thirty days and train...so we've been training for how many years? Since 1992. I don't know if everybody knew that, but every ship would take out Marines and that's what they'd be dropped off for was to train. Which, in hindsight was a good plan. Because they knew that he [*Saddam Hussein*] would never change. We were very well prepared.

**David Scott:**

*Was there much friction between the Marines and the Navy?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

No, but there's always joking. I don't know if either of you guys knew this, but the Marines is a department of the Navy, and that's what their checks say on the bottom. So the Navy can always make

fun of the Marines and say, “Oh, so your check says what? Oh it doesn’t say the Department of the Marines, it says the Navy.” So...this is what I’ve always told everybody about the military. It’s kind of like your little brother. You can make fun of him. So either branch of military can make fun of other branches, but if somebody from the outside that’s never been in the military makes fun of it, it doesn’t usually go over very well. Because, both of the military guys, even if they’re from different branches will attack the other person like, “Oh really so...you were in the military when?” So it’s one of those things that the banter back and forth between the military guys is actually pretty funny if you go into the VSFA. It gets pretty harsh at times, but they just look at it as, well that’s my brother.

I don’t know if you had seen our Emerald piece last week [*the Daily Emerald newspaper*], on the Monday one. We were talking about how no matter what part of the military you’re from, like I can talk to somebody from the sixties or the seventies...and we share a lot of commonalities. If they know you’re a veteran, and you know they’re a veteran, it sort of eases the conversation right then...because a lot of our stories, we don’t share with everybody. Why is that? Because they just don’t want to share their stories with just anybody.

We have a guy that’s a part of our board that’s a community member, and he didn’t share his story from being at Vietnam until he found the VFSA. I don’t know how he found it, but the other VFSA members, the older ones, a couple of years ago started talking to him, and he started sharing Vietnam stories.

Or, like some of the Iraq and Afghanistan people that are in there and have gone through some difficulties, there’s probably only going to be a couple of people they’re going to share it with and it’s going to be another veteran, probably. Until they get older in life, because they know they’re not going to be looked at differently. I mean I’m not going to look at him differently if he said he had to do what he did. I’m going to say, “Yeah, well you had to do what you had to do.” But they’re not sure if a civilian will understand, or if they’re going to be anti-war—they really just don’t know how they’re going to see it, even if they were just the veteran who had to go do the job.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Are there any closing remarks that you would like to say?*

**Jonathan C. Brunton:**

No. My only closing remark is that my time in the military taught me a lot. One of the things it has taught me now is how to be in a leadership role...I also referee high school football around here, and I’m one of the youngest refs to be a white hat, which is the main referee for varsity games in this area. So I think the military has helped me be in that leadership role and this leadership role, as well. I will always

say that it has been one of the greatest things I have done with my life. It taught me a lot, along with getting married and having a kid...the military has taught me everything I've learned. And that's probably all I'd say.

**Amanda Rudd:**

*Okay! Thank you very much.*

**David Scott:**

*Thank you.*



## **TRANSCRIPTION NOTE**

None.