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ARMY ORAL HISTORIES

INTERVIEW WITH CSM (RETIRED) RONNIE R. KELLEY

Belton, Texas

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CSM (RETIRED) RONNIE R. KELLEY

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## I N T E R V I E W

MR. WATERHOUSE: Good morning. My name is Sergeant Major Brett Waterhouse of the United States Army Heritage and Education Center and today I am interviewing Command Sergeant Major-Retired Ronnie R. Kelley for the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Oral History Program. Today's date is December 20, 2017 and this interview is being conducted at Sergeant Major Kelley's residence in Belton, Texas. Sergeant Major, can you please tell me your date of birth and where you were born.

MR. KELLEY: 16 December 1965, Bryan Texas.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Would you please talk a little bit about your childhood, to include your family life, places you lived, your hobbies and interests, up through your high school years?

MR. KELLEY: Sure. I'm the oldest of three boys. My mom was a stay at home mom. My dad was a welder. His job took us all over Texas, Louisiana and Texas. It was sort of like living in the military

during my childhood. I guess it was good training for what I was about to start. We moved every couple of years throughout my childhood so I never had a stable home and it kind of trickled into the military. Like most boys, I enjoyed playing sports, baseball and football. Other than that, I think I had a pretty normal childhood.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Sergeant Major, are there any other facts or things concerning your formative years, I would call it, you'd like to discuss?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah something I thought was interesting was both of my parents dropped out of high school in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Education wasn't a priority to them and I ended up dropping out of school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade myself and I went to work with my dad. It wasn't until about a year later that met my what is now my wife, Alice, and she was the salutatorian for her school and her family kind of frowned on a drop out dating their daughter. She convinced me to go back to high school which I did and graduated prior to

going to the military. That was a success story for me.

MR. WATERHOUSE: When you did go back to high school, what were your plans at that time for after graduation?

MR. KELLEY: I was in a small town in Florida and I planned on joining the military. I planned on getting married and joining the military and I wanted to be an MP. I was going to join the Army for three years, get out and be a state trooper. The only thing that really changed was I became a 19-E instead.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What's a 19-E?

MR. KELLEY: It's a tanker.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Okay. So your inspiration for joining back then originally was to get trained to be a police officer?

MR. KELLEY: That was part of it. I grew up saluting the flag, pledging allegiance in school and I would say I was a patriot. The idea of being on America's team and the honor and respect that came

along with it, it was kind of what I wanted to do. It was the opportunity that I had there in high school.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So this was July 1985 correct?

MR. KELLEY: Yes.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What led you to change your mind and join as an armored crewman?

MR. KELLEY: They took me down to the MEPS in Mobile Alabama and I took the ASVAB. The next morning they show you a list of all the things you're qualified to do. MP was one of them but they had met their quota for MP's. So this master sergeant pulled me back into a room and showed me a video of the N-1 tank jumping and burn and firing and I was sold right there. I was like man that's it, that's what I'm doing and that was it. The only unfortunate thing, that process is when I got to basic training, I got in this thing that didn't look nothing like the tank in the video, the M60A3.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Did you know that when you signed up at MEPS or you found that out later?

MR. KELLEY: When you sign up there what you actually sign up for is 19 series. I could have been an 19-E, D or K.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I didn't know that. You didn't know that either.

MR. KELLEY: I didn't, no.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Do you know how they chose that back then or was it ever explained to you?

MR. KELLEY: No, I didn't know that until later. I think it was just based on availability of basic training classes.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You may have mentioned earlier but when you joined up then in 1985, were you thinking about making it a career as an armored guy or just checking up a little while and still getting out.

MR. KELLEY: No, like I said, I was planning on three years. I was going to get out and be a state trooper. By then I'd be the legal age and that was kind of my dream.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So before I get into one station unit you trained at, when did you decide to change your mind?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so it was after the tour in Korea I was at that three year mark. I had a one year old child. I was doing very well and successful in the Army at that point. I got the medical and everything was covered. It wasn't a hard decision to stay.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Okay going back to the eighties here, 1985, you attended Armor One Station Unit Training or OSUT as they call it at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. What was your rank at that time and what was your experience like there at OSUT?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so I was a PV-2 and I was only a PV-2 because the last year of my senior year of high school, they started an ROTC program at the high school. I guess the recruiters probably had told the lieutenant colonel and sergeant major who was enlisted to go because I was in the delayed entry program. I actually enlisted in October 1984. So they came and



approached me and said hey, we're starting this up. We know you joined the military. If you come and take this class as one of the electives I'll get you an E-2 when you join the Army which is a pay raise. I was like hey, I'm sold. It was a little bit of a challenge starting that in a small country school and guys wearing uniforms to school and stuff. It paid off. I learned how to march so I had a little bit of an advantage going into basic training.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So at Knox, was the training kind of what you thought it would be or what did you think of the training there for OSUT?

MR. KELLEY: I didn't know what to expect. You see movies and drill sergeants and the tough guy is going to be in your face. I kind of expected that deal and we got plenty of it too. It was challenging and I guess it was for the most part, what I expected. I didn't know other than part about the M60A3 versus the N1 tank. The basic training, I came out of there at 135 pounds. I went at 160 and came out at 135 pounds. We marched everywhere and it was very, I

think when I left there, I'm probably getting ahead of myself. I had a pretty good grasp on being an initial level tanker.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In November 1985 after graduating from armor school, you were assigned to Ft. Carson, Colorado where you served with Bravo Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 34<sup>th</sup> Armor Regiment. What duty position did you serve in when you got there and what were some of the primary duties and responsibilities?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I was a tank driver and my primary duties were basically keeping my tank maintained and staying proficient in my skill level and tasks.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Did you feel that OSUT trained you well enough to be ready to jump right in that?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I thought I was well prepared. However, there were times I was completely lost like when they sent me for a box of grid squares. I guess that's all part of being the new guy. For the

most part, I felt confident. I had good NCO's who took it from there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That's a good segway into my next question. As the NCO core has changed over the years just like soldiers have changed with society, in that first unit what was your impression of the quality of the average soldier and NCO?

MR. KELLEY: I think in my opinion, the average soldier then was physically fit. There was no excuses for not being physically fit back in those days and he was proficient in his MOS. And, of course, I say his because at that point there was nothing but male soldiers in the armor community. The majority senior NCO's and platoon sergeants and above were Vietnam vets. I actually thought most of them were a little on the crazy side. I won't go into that too much. My first line leader was a corporal. He was as mean as the dang drill sergeants were. I didn't realize how much he influenced me until many years later. He would inspect me in the mornings. The R4 formations unit back then we had (inaudible) missions,

you showed up for PT formation. You showed up at 9 o'clock after PT formation. We showed up at 1300 and then there was a release formation. There were four formations a day and this guy made me change into my spit shined boots every time before the formation take them off. That's how anal he was but I just didn't realize how important he was in molding as that first line leader. He would stay with me daily for these SQT tests. He'd give me a page or two test to study and then he'd quiz me the next day.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Is that skill qualifications?

MR. KELLEY: Skill qualifications test is what we used to take back in the day to verify how well you knew your MOS. Everything from the tanks to claymores to you name it. He would study with me daily like that and he pushed me all the time. He made me remember every deadline on the tank. Some of the other soldiers were getting a break. He was in my butt, he was that guy but it definitely paid off. I didn't realize that until years later.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So that's something obviously that you took with you.

MR. KELLEY: Yes.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In May 1987, you were assigned to Camp Casey, Korea where you served with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 72<sup>nd</sup> Armor Regiment. What duty position or positions did you serve while stationed there and what were some of your primary responsibilities over there?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so I was a gunner on an M683 tank responsible for the combat readiness of the M683 tank and health and welfare and training of two soldiers in the forward deployed unit at that time. And still today, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel is a contentious area.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So were you a sergeant when you got over there?

MR. KELLEY: No, I was specialist and I was a specialist promoted when I left.

MR. WATERHOUSE: But you were able to get into a gunners position?

MR. KELLEY: I did.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How did that happen?

MR. KELLEY: Luckily, that corporal that I was talking about, forced me before I left Ft. Carson to get a gunnery under my belt. I did and so when I got to Korea, being that I had that experience they put me right into it.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Were you guys short NCO's?

MR. KELLEY: No, I think we were probably short NCO's. Probably if we would have had a sergeant he would have been doing that position. The sergeant was my tank commander so I guess we were short of NCO's now that I think back on it.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So the whole time you were over there you were the gunner?

MR. KELLEY: Correct.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How many gunneries did you do?

MR. KELLEY: Probably, I think we did one like every six months at least over there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So looking at that time, what were some of the major challenges you and/or your

soldiers under your care faced during your time over there and how did you overcome those?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I think for me personally, the biggest challenge was that's a hardship tour. So you go without your family and I had been in the Army for just a little over a year at that point. I had a five month old child and I'm leaving my wife and kid back in the States. That was the first time being split up and first time ever being outside the country. That was my biggest challenge. The only way you deal with it is the way Army families deal with it. You contact and stay in touch as much as you can and soldier on and get back home.

The other challenge for the unit overall was always just like it is now, high friction post that was on Camp Casey (inaudible) artillery range of the North Korean's. We kept all our ammunition on the tanks and it always stayed fully uploaded. The only thing that wasn't on there was the firing pins. When one would go off a couple of times a month, everybody took off running. It was always in the middle of the

night. Sometimes it would catch you off guard and everybody would take off running. The 50 cal cans with the back plates and the firing pins in them.

MR. WATERHOUSE: The back plates are the weapons?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah 50 calibers and all that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So the weapons were on the tank.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah everything was there except the back plates and the firing pins. All we had was the first tank was up on the hill so we had to run down to the motor pool. They had these turtle ditches. You'd stay inside of them so that when the artillery started to come in you'd have a place to get down. We'd also keep our bags in there so that was how we dealt with that challenge. We minimized the amount of time that we were going to be out there in that artillery barrage. We each had a place that we rehearsed that we went to in the tanks. The other piece of it was it was a six day work week over there.



Sunday was the only day you got off. It made the time go by quick staying busy.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So what were some of the positive and/or negative things you experienced during your time in Korea that may have influenced your decision making thoughts or actions later in your career?

MR. KELLEY: I think some of the positive things was being able to train with foreign armies and actually have them embedded in our Army. We called them KATUSA's. Those are actually Korean soldiers, because every Korean has to be a soldier for a certain amount of time, I think it's two or three years, something like that. They were embedded in our Army and worked alongside us. So at an early age to be able work with a foreign Army like that. And then the second thing was getting experience going up to the DMZ. Up there they have the little Panmunjom where you can go through the -- there is a building. Half of it is on the North Korean side, half of it is on the South Korean side. That's where they bring visitors

and stuff so you can walk through it. When you're out there the Army is all standing on alert. We've got folks up there too. Just being able to go up there and the North Korean Army guys will come right up to the window. You're seeing the enemy eye to eye and realizing, at that point, it kind of struck me, this is a guy who I'm trained to kill. And just being able to see how much it looked like he wanted to kill me, it changed my whole thought process about what I was doing in the Army and how important it was and I better be better prepared than he was.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So in May 1988, you redeployed to the United States and were again assigned to Ft. Carson, Colorado but this time you served with Bravo Troop, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. What duty position or positions did you serve in during your two years with 2-7 VAV and what were some of your roles and responsibilities there?

MR. KELLEY: Again, I was a gunner on a M68 tank. I was responsible for combat readiness of M683

and the health and welfare of two soldiers. I was the gunner on my platoon sergeants tank.

MR. WATERHOUSE: While you were there at Ft. Carson, did you attend any Army schools and if so, how has your experience in those schools influenced or affected you?

MR. KELLEY: I did. I attended PLDC which was back then, Primary Leadership Development Course. BNOC and EO at Ft. Carson. PLD basically just reinforced what I had already been taught at the unit. BNOC, I was a last minute insert. There was a sergeant that was scheduled to go and he was dropped. At the last minute they said, Kelley, you're going. I had been in the Army four years and remember this as one of the hardest courses I attended in the Army. I think it was just because, I was like the junior guy in the class and everybody else was staff sergeants. I was just a recently promoted sergeant promotable and most of them were already tank commanders. So for me, it was a pretty steep learning curve. Luckily a team of soldiers in that course got me through it. That

and the good leaders so my platoon sergeant would come and study with me. If I didn't do well on a test he would help me study to make sure I was tracking. It was probably the most challenging for me as I look back on Army school. Of course, the EO course was a very eye opening course. It made you see things in a different light and understand how we all come from different backgrounds and understand how much discrimination was out there within the Army.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So those two courses, were they at Ft. Carson or a different location?

MR. KELLEY: They were at Ft. Carson.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So during your time there in 2-7 CAV, what significant challenges did you or your soldiers face there and what did you guys do to overcome or deal with them?

MR. KELLEY: The only thing that comes to mind that was a significant challenge was that we were short of officers at that time. I don't know why at that period or if it was just that unit but we were short on platoon leaders. It was a typical company

troop back then so you had two tank platoons, two infantry ITV platoons, you had a scout platoon, a mortar platoon. I remember there was only like one or two officers for all six of those platoons at the time. How we overcame it, is there was NCO and platoon sergeants and platoon leaders in those platoons and mine was one of those.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Sir, what if any positive or negative things in that particular unit at Ft. Carson did you take with you throughout your career?

MR. KELLEY: I think the most positive thing was that was where I became a leader and developed my leadership style. My platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Toomey, he kind of became my role model in the Army. I had a number of NCO's that I didn't want to be like but he was one I wanted to be like. We all have that guy who influenced us like that but he's the guy that I emulated. I wanted to be like him throughout my career.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Do you have any examples of some of the things he would do that you would emulate?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah he was a leader all the time. He set the example. Like I said, there was a lot of Vietnam vets back then that they didn't really care and there were a lot of NCO's that didn't want to be sergeants. I can remember people would rather be a 5 or 6 versus a sergeant because being sergeant meant you had to be a leader.

So the Army was still, we had only been out of Vietnam for almost a decade but there were still some challenges at the NCO part at that point. He was one of the good ones. He took time to come to the school and help teach or after hours helping whatever it might be. He was a team builder. He really brought the team together. He was not the NCO who was screaming and yelling at you all the time but the one who was explaining things and teaching you. He was just the type of guy that people gravitated to.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You mentioned specialist five and six. I want to say 1987 is when they stopped promoting folks into those ranks but there were still some spec fives and sixes where you were?

MR. KELLEY: Yes there was. Mainly at that point, I think, was in supply and some places like that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: But not in your unit?

MR. KELLEY: No.

MR. WATERHOUSE: The next question and we kind of already covered this. When exactly were you promoted to sergeant because this is one of the hardest transitions for most people is becoming one of the lead to one of the leaders. When was that exactly and how did you handle that transition?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so I was promoted in February 1989. Luckily, Sergeant First Class Toomey had made me a corporal. In my eyes, that was the tougher transition was the corporal. But when I first got to Carson, like I said, I was promoted coming out of Korea. He said, you're promoted, you're going to be a corporal. So I think it was one of the most under utilized ranks we have in the Army system. It is free to the Army and it is a leadership platform to step into to get you so you don't have that difficult

transition as a sergeant. But I had been a corporal for a while so it was kind of a seamless, it was a nice pay raise but I was kind doing the job.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So when you got there, the guys already knew you as a junior NCO. You weren't a specialist.

MR. KELLEY: Exactly. I took that with me in the future. As a first sergeant and as a battalion sergeant major, I would push folks and I would take the battalion commander out and watching infantry guy do and firing some specialist and he would promote them and say hey you're just a team lead why aren't you a sergeant, why aren't you a corporal. We would promote them right there on the spot and it is a big deal to guys.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In June 1990, you were assigned to Ft. Knox, Kentucky for a few weeks. Why were you there for such a short time?

MR. KELLEY: I was sent there in route to Germany. So finally I was going to get to be on that tank that I saw in the video that I signed up for.



But to do that, you had to go through a transition course to become a 19-K. So I went there through the transition course and then went on to Germany from there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So that was for anybody going from 60's to N1's. About how long was it?

MR. KELLEY: I think it was like a two week course.

MR. WATERHOUSE: After that course you were assigned to Erlangen, Germany where you served with three different units during your three years there. The first unit you served with was Bravo Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Armor Regiment. When you got to Bravo 1-35<sup>th</sup> armor, what were your duties and responsibilities there?

MR. KELLEY: I was immediately -- the company commander had furloughed his last gunnery as a tanker. Furloughing gunneries was like the worst thing you could do in your career back then. He pulled me into his office. When I got there he said, hey look you've been a gunner for a while, you're

going to be my gunner. Then he told me, he look I didn't qualify the last time. If I don't qualify again, they probably will take me out of position. No pressure. I had never gunned other than just getting to shoot one round at that transition course off an M1 tank. So you're talking (inaudible) factor, I was there. I tell you, we may get into it here but you have to be humble sometimes. I had to step down and have privates and specialists teach me about that M1 tank because you don't learn everything in two weeks in a course. So I relied on them guys and it really paid off for me and we became a trusted team.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How much time do you think you had before you went to that first gunnery?

MR. KELLEY: It wasn't very long because Desert Storm kicked off. We had to go qualify before we deployed. We got out there and we shot a 996.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That's pretty good.

MR. KELLEY: It's very good and you know, he was as happy as he could be. I told him, that was the easiest thing I ever did. I couldn't remember which

times we were moving and which times we were stationary because that tank was so smooth. If you were ever on an M683 and you tried to fire with the stabilization on that thing while you're moving, we would come up with reasons to deadline our stakes. There were short hops. But that tank was so smooth and the fire control system was just great. We kicked butts after that and he wouldn't let me go nowhere.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I know you deploy to Iraq for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Did you deploy with 1-35 Armor or were you attached to another unit?

MR. KELLEY: I deployed with 1-35 Armor as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division. We took off on December 31, 1990 and landed on New Year's Day in Saudi Arabia.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How long were you over there?

MR. KELLEY: Five months. Just not long enough to get your first combat strip, you know.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Just shy. So when you were over there, you were in Saudi Arabia and then where did you go, Kuwait or Iraq?

MR. KELLEY: Into Iraq. We were part of (inaudible) hail Mary. We staged in Saudi Arabia and then came up into Iraq and cut off the Iraqi's withdraw.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Were you still the gunners on the CO's tanker?

MR. KELLEY: Yes I was the gunner on the company commanders tank. I was basically responsible for that tank, the XO's and the CO's tank.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So what was your, you said you were part of General Schwarzkopf left hook. What did you see as your -- you didn't have much of a Desert Shield, I guess it went into Desert Storm a few days after you got there.

MR. KELLEY: We were in the desert for a little while and it was a challenge just waiting. Our mission was to cut off the Iraqi's with withdraw.

MR. WATERHOUSE: From Kuwait?

MR. KELLEY: Yes.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So looking back at your time over there, your five months over there, how do you feel your unit performed over there? What were you guys most proud of?

MR. KELLEY: I think we performed well. I think we overwhelmed the enemy. I can remember guys surrendering and it seemed like thousands and we just had to wave them past their tanks for the infantry guys to pick up. Some of them were hearing the commander talk and some of the guys were captured. They thought we were firing with artillery rounds and it was really our tanks. They had no clue and it just devastated them and overwhelmed them. I was pretty proud. We took down a dictator who took over a little small country and their people. We brought it back so I was pretty proud of myself and my unit at that point. After so many years you get a combat badge and you're feeling pretty on top of the world at that point.

MR. WATERHOUSE: And you hadn't been in that long.

MR. KELLEY: Right.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So looking back at Desert Shield Desert Storm, was there any significant challenges you personally faced or your guys faced?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I think sitting out in the desert forever. We got to use the telephone one time in that whole tour. They put us in the back of some 5 ton and took us to some tent in the middle of nowhere. It took forever to get there and nobody ever wanted to go back after that. That was one of the challenges being out there and we learned a lot about field craft.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You didn't want to go back because of the bumpy ride?

MR. KELLEY: Just driving out in the desert in the back of a 5 ton and it just wasn't worth the challenges that we could have had. Also, we played a lot of spades and things like that. Tactically, it was a challenge navigating the desert. I think that

was one of the biggest things I remember. We had the loran systems like what they used on the ships to navigate the ocean. My company had one and we were the lead company for the battalion. I'm assuming the other company may have had one but I know we only had one in our company. The commander would have to change latitude and longitude to a grid because it was just open desert. We're trying to stay on track.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In May 1991, you were promoted to Staff Sergeant and transferred to Charlie Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 70<sup>th</sup> Armor there in Erlangen where you served as a tank commander. What brought about you moving from 1-35 to 4-70?

MR. KELLEY: So I was promoted to Staff Sergeant out in the desert right before we deployed back. I always call it my battlefield promotion. So 1-35 left all our tanks in Iraq. We cleaned them up and left them there. I don't know where they were going next or anything. We left them there and we got back home and 1-35 deactivated as part of the draw down of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division in Germany. So that was

the beginning of the draw down in Europe. That was the reason. So if you had more than 12 months or so, you had to transfer to the next battalion which, at the time, all three of those battalions had the same concern in Erlangen along with the brigade headquarters. That's how that happened.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So in January 1992 about seven months after you started working in 4-70 Armor, you were transferred again in Erlangen, this time to Charlie Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 70<sup>th</sup> Armor where you also served as a tank commander. What brought about the move from 4-70?

MR. KELLEY: It was the draw down so 1-35 was first and then 4-70 and then 2-70 was last. Then when I left 2-70 it was in the draw down stage also.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you were basically just filling positions?

MR. KELLEY: Yes we would keep jumping from one to the next.



MR. WATERHOUSE: So during that transition, what kind of training were you guys able to do or was it just transit?

MR. KELLEY: We still did training. We still shot gunnery and did those typical things that you do. Actually, when I was in the Army, the only award I ever kept in my office was the ARCOM that I got and it was for shooting 1000 points in Germany. Back then, we had that team that always graded you so it wasn't people from different battalions. They were experts at it and I shot a 1000. Colonel McKinnon, I think it was at the time, he came down and pinned the ARCOM on me.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Looking back at your three years there at Erlangen, what were some of the things you experienced there that influenced you later in your career, things you took with you, lessons learned, that sort of thing.

MR. KELLEY: I think you understood how important training was after being in combat for the first time. Until Desert Storm, it was kind of just a

job and it was training and something that we did. You thought that but after that it was reality. I knew at that point, we weren't done with Iraq. We cut it off and we stopped them and they called it victory. But in the back of my mind and I think most other soldiers knew, hey we're not done with this mission.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In July 1993, you were assigned to Ft. Hood, Texas where you served with Charlie Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment for approximately six years. Upon arrival there to 2-8 CAV you served as tank commander again. Any specific challenges or anything you faced there in 2-8 CAV that you had to overcome?

MR. KELLEY: That was the first time that I had been anywhere for longer than a couple of years. So I think the challenge there was maybe stagnation. I've never been anywhere -- you get to a new unit, you're challenged and then a couple of years later you start getting to that mode where you feel comfortable. I never had had that before. But luckily I had come in as a staff sergeant. I think one of my biggest

challenges was navigating. I come in with my platoon sergeant and what are your strengths and weaknesses. I told him, hey navigating from a tank. It's one thing when you're walking on the ground but it's a whole other thing when the tank is moving 25 to 30 miles an hour and you're trying to figure out where you're at and get to where you're going. His solution to that was to make me the lead tank in the platoon which was the lead platoon. I had an additional stress put on me which actually in the long run made me a much better navigator.

I would say one of my primary duties was they made me the weight control NCO and the EO NCO. The challenge from that was that same platoon sergeant that put me there, he was one of those platoon sergeants that stayed at the office and drank coffee for most of the day and you see him at the end of the day. I had the opportunity to run the platoon for the majority of that time there. Unfortunately, that platoon sergeant was on the overweight program. You could see there was a conflict of interest there. What

do you do when your boss is the guy that you've got to enforce the standards on, it was pretty challenging. My solution was, hey you got to (inaudible) and then we'll do it in front of you and then that way I'm out of the deal. He ended up getting QP'd out of the Army because of the overweight program. I always remembered that and always promised to say, I'm never getting myself into that position as a leader. That's what I took out of the 2-8 CAV.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So in May 1996 about three years into your time there, you were promoted to Sergeant First Class. You took over as a platoon sergeant in Charlie Company 2-8 CAV. Were you made a platoon sergeant before that or because you got promoted or how did that come about?

MR. KELLEY: They sent me to -- one of the platoon sergeants retired and I had already went to ANOC so I was the next guy in the shoot and it wasn't the same platoon. It was the natural thing to do was to put me over there. I was a staff sergeant promotable as the platoon sergeant.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So they moved you from your previous platoon to the other platoon?

MR. KELLEY: Yes.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That's good. Do you feel you were prepared to do that?

MR. KELLEY: I did. I had been promoted for over a year already. That was back when you could be on the list for a couple of years. I had already attended ANOC. Like I said, I had that platoon sergeant that kind of let me run a platoon and he was good with it and so was I. I felt well prepared for it.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So when you were actually getting paid for it, so to speak, did you have any mentors or anybody that helped you?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah my first sergeant, Sergeant Booker. He's the same guy I had to bring my platoon sergeant in and weigh. He took time with me. It was a little bit challenging being a staff sergeant in a platoon sergeant position when the other two platoon sergeants are all sergeant first class and

you're the junior guy. He kind of took me under his wing and made sure I was tracking.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In September 1998, you deployed to Bosnia in support of Operation Eagle. Did you deploy with 2-8 CAV or were you attached to some other unit?

MR. KELLEY: I deployed with 2-8 CAV. We were there as part of the peace keeping force to monitor the Serbs and Croats.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So that was your basic mission?

MR. KELLEY: Yes. In my platoon, we did everything from inspect inventory to weapons. If they moved things across boundaries, we'd escort their convoys basically just to keep the peace between those two.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So there was obviously units there before you guys got there?

MR. KELLEY: There was. We took over from the 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division, I believe it was.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So any significant challenges you or your soldiers faced over there?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I think for us the biggest challenge was that was the first time we seen the up armored Humvees. Prior to that, we had the regular and lightweight Humvees. It was a big challenge and we didn't have any drivers training on that. As you know, they stop a little different, take off a little different. They handle a little bit different. So that was probably one of the biggest challenges and we had to spend a lot of time on the base operating them trying to make sure drivers were confident with them once we went outside the wire. Being taken off our tanks and put into Humvees was a challenge and we had to change our tactics a little bit. We spent a lot of time on drivers training.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Any other particular type of training you guys had to do before or after you got there since you were doing like non-tanker type work?

MR. KELLEY: We had the typical IED mine check. There were a lot of mines left in that area.

Some new search techniques and some typical peace keeping training we got a couple of weeks prior to leaving.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That was done by other folks?

MR. KELLEY: Yes it was contracted.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So overall, how do you think your guys did in Bosnia? Any key takeaways from that tour?

MR. KELLEY: I think they performed well. My key takeaway was look, in my platoon, I told them the enemy out there is looking for the weakest link. At any point, we're never going to be the weakest link. When we get out, I always tell them and I use Star Wars. You know how the Darth Vader stormtroopers looked, that's how I want you to look. When we get out of the Humvee, they all no their position they look to and look strat. You're setting an example for these Bosnian's or whoever they are and to make sure they think the last person I want to mess with is these guys. So that was our perception but I think



the biggest challenge, we'll go back to that Humvee. My platoon actually rolled one over there on Christmas Day escorting somebody to the border for something. On our way back, they hit a snow bank, pulled everybody out and luckily nobody was hurt. We got a recovery team out there and got it recovered but then we ended spending Christmas night at some base other than our own until we were allowed to leave.

It was a good time. The only thing I wish I could have changed about that tour was I had to leave a month early because I got assigned to Germany. I had to go back and refit. It was tough to leave your platoon. At that time it was considered a combat zone.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you were over there for five months.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I guess in January 1999 you had to redeploy back to get ready to go to your next unit. How much longer did your guys stay over there after you left?

MR. KELLEY: Only about a month or so. The only reason I had to get back and they decided to take me and I wanted to go. I knew I was on the summit to Germany prior to the deployment. I was kicking and screaming and I can do it and every leader wants to deploy with their troops. That's the last thing you want is for somebody else to take your platoon at the last minute. They were only there for about a month. I came back, transitioned and took off to Germany.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So overall your time in 2-8 CAV was about three years as a platoon sergeant there. Any key experiences positive or negative that you kind of took with you in your kit bag that you would use later in your career?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah the first one was the NCO I didn't want to be like and the platoon sergeant I didn't want to be like. Sometimes we can learn some of the best lessons from some of the worst leaders, unfortunately. I think the most positive thing was it was my first real officer NCO relationship. It was the first time I was put with the platoon leader and

you realize how much responsibility you're given as a platoon sergeant. The way he sees the Army for the next who knows how many years, you're kind of shaping that and how he sees the NCO corp. I had a really good relationship with John Dunn. We turned out a West Point Ranger. I can remember him saying hey your platoon leader is going to be this guy. I'm thinking golly why do I've got to get the ranger, West Point guy and the wood pecker lips. This guy shows up and he was Audie Murphy. 5 foot 5, 145 pounds and I'm like holy smoke, you're John Dunn, but it turned out to be the best relationship ever. He's still my friend today.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Talk about your next assignment. In March 1999, you were assigned to Germany, like you said. This time, what was called back then you were assigned to the Combat Maneuver Training Center and now it's the JRMC in Hohenfels where you served as an Observer-Controller for about three and a half years. As we discussed earlier, you spent some years overseas in Korea, 1987 to 1988 and

then three years in Germany from 1990 to 1993. What led you to being assigned to another overseas tour so early in your career?

MR. KELLEY: I guess I just had a great branch manager.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So it wasn't on purpose?

MR. KELLEY: It wasn't on purpose. I did my platoon sergeant time and I was certified and this came up on orders. I kind of thought back then that's the way it was done. I didn't realize until after this point that I could call somebody and say hey how about sending me here. I didn't know that and nobody really took the time to explain that. Yes, by coincidence, the Army assigned me.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So what kind of training did you receive when you got to Hohenfels to prepare you to be an Observer-Controller. Nowadays it is called Observer Coach Trainer but back then Observer-Controller or OC and was that training effective?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so when I got there, I went through a two week course that they called OC

certification at that time. At the end of that two week course, that's basically just teaching you about all the rules of engagement and how to react to different types of scenarios out there that is happening and conduct AR's. But at the end of that, you have to do the final certification. You have to ride along for an exercise with an OC and do the AR's and then that OC signs on your certification.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you are out there as a student and you have a seasoned or experienced OC showing you the ropes.

MR. KELLEY: Yes, we called them the deltas. They were the senior guy on the OC team.

MR. WATERHOUSE: When your were an OC, what level of units would you be working with?

MR. KELLEY: So I was the OC for maneuver exercises at the platoon level. I would conduct AR's initially and then I was selected to be that delta, that guy who was certifying the team. Basically, he's the senior NCO and he covers down on the first sergeant in headquarters platoon. Then I was promoted

just before I left to Master Sergeant and they selected me to be the 3-B which took me to the battalion tuck. Covering down on the MDNP process and that stuff with the 3 or the 3-A.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So going to my next question, as a person with platoon sergeant experience, being assigned to kind of observe or coach, if you will, and observe a first sergeant when you really didn't have any experience, how did that work out?

MR. KELLEY: Great question. It was challenging. You've got a guy here who is a first sergeant, a guy you've grown up to respect and then I was supposed to be covering down on him to tell him what he is doing right and wrong. I had to spend a lot of time with, first of all, the sergeant major for our OC team which was an SGM. I think they were at that point, I might have been the first sergeant major coordinator position, I don't know, but he had plenty of first sergeant time. That's when he made sure that

we had a checklist basically. Look, did he meet this, did he do that, is the soldier brushing his teeth.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you had trainers to kind of tell you?

MR. KELLEY: Yes we had lists that we owed to the sergeant major everyday and then we had a list that we owed to our captain who was on the team of X Y and Z. So there was that piece. I did a lot of reading manuals to understand what is doctrine and correct. It helped out a lot and the same thing with the TOT. I never experienced the MDNP process.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Military Decision Making Process.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. Now they're talking about how they make the decisions and I'm the TOT coming down. Once again, I had a little books for dummies. The Army has got them for everything and I also had checklists.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Was that by design, was it typically a sergeant first class that covered that or was it a first sergeant or a master sergeant?

MR. KELLEY: It was typically a senior sergeant first class covered down on them. All of the team was OC's or sergeant first class for the most part. Like I said I made master sergeant and they put me into the 3-B position which was on the staff for the OC team up in the TOT.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you kind of hinted on that already, some of the positive things you took out of that experience. Any negative things?

MR. KELLEY: I think another positive thing was I was able to watch a large number of companies execute their mission in a tactical environment. Here I am and the next step is I want to be that first sergeant that's doing that. So to be able to see which ones were successful and which ones were not and different TTP's they used, I would say that's a positive thing to see all those rotations. It kind of shaped how I wanted to do things as a first sergeant.

A negative one is definitely not have done that position. Covering down on somebody that they may feel you're not qualified to cover down on them



type of deal. You can get it done and say look you're just here doing your job but these are things I'm going to be checking for. That goes back to that position helped me, maybe the sergeant major (inaudible) formation. I could tell instantly whether it was a disciplined or undisciplined formation just from that three and a half years of being the OC. There were certain indicators that I looked at.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Now were these all at the time American units or did you have any foreign units come to your platoon?

MR. KELLEY: No they were all American at that time. Every once in a while we'd had right seek riders from Sweden or some other country would come in and ride in and cover shadows. They would shadow but we never did a foreign OCT.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In April 2002, you already mentioned you were promoted to Master Sergeant. About three months later in July, you were assigned to Ft. Hood, Texas again. This time where you served as the First Sergeant of Alpha Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup>

Cavalry Regiment for about three years. When you arrived, your division, the 1<sup>st</sup> CAV Division, was in the process of transforming into what the Army called a Force Twenty-One Division back then. How was that transition with your predecessor previous 2-12 first sergeant?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah, it wasn't a good one. There wasn't a first sergeant there. We had one of the platoon sergeants was filling that position and he had been filling it for the last eight months. Later he was a platoon sergeant that I ended up having to relieve so you imagine the friction that's there. You've got a platoon sergeant sitting in the seat doing supposedly the first sergeants job which he wasn't doing a very good job of. So there was no transition basically hey, go back down to your platoon. So I ended up doing a lot of -- I had a lot of challenges. There wasn't a transition.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What was the state of the company when you got there and what did you set out to

try to improve and what did you go after first? What were your initiatives you had to go into?

MR. KELLEY: When I first got there, the administrative side was a mess. I started pulling out additional duties and the A-6's and started looking at, it was nothing. It was all two first sergeant type of stuff that may have done. I had to revamp all of that stuff. The way I had to do that was go to next door to one of the other company first sergeants and say what do you got and I started pilots from peers. Those are the guys that if you're in a government job you need to go to because they've probably been there and done it and they've already done it so you don't have to completely recreate it. So there was that challenge. The DA-6 was just an AU thing, not actually a DA-6.

MR. WATERHOUSE: The challenge to determine who was on different tasks.

MR. KELLEY: Exactly. And the company commander, so he was doing the first sergeants job too, he was doing everybody's job. He was as stressed

out as they come. My first mission was to get my responsibilities back from him. Here's a guy holding formations in the morning and he was down in the motor pool all the time which is not a problem having officer involvement but he was doing things that was taking away from his responsibilities, in my opinion. My priority was to take back those and fix some of these administrative challenges which that OC piece didn't prepare me for. Tactical, I was prepared but the administrative piece I had to rely on my peers. That sergeant major I told you about, Booker, he happened to be my sergeant major in this battalion. That was fortunate. I could go to him and ask, hey what should I do in this situation. How should I get this admin thing squared away, et cetera so that was kind of a good thing.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Was there any first sergeant type course back then that was offered of was it all just kind of on the job training?

MR. KELLEY: There was a first sergeants course and I don't know if it was, I think it was down

at Ft. Bliss. I was actually scheduled to go when Desert Storm popped up. I had already in the position for a long time at that point. So that was probably one of the challenges, there wasn't a course on, you kind of went into that piece blind. The tactical piece, one we got into the field, hey I was a rock star. The admin piece was a little bit challenging.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What were some of the most significant changes, if there were for your company, that you had to implement under the Force 21 construct?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so when I got there, they were going through that. We were getting the N1A2 tanks. The biggest thing I remember as a first sergeant was the FBCB2. So everything basically came online digitally now. All the reports, I mean you call for fire now digitally, you send all your requests for logistics digitally. Everything went from the old paperwork shuffle and FM radio. The tankers hated it because it wasn't CN2 coming on the radio it was, they got sent a digital message. So you got the little

digital message telling you to move out or all your instructions were coming on that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: And you guys were testing that stuff with the Army right?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. It was a little bit challenging for me and as a first sergeant, I'm just starting out as a first sergeant. I picked it up fairly easy because there was no other way but that was the biggest challenge was the FBCB2. Now you had tactical knowledge of where everybody was located on the battlefield and you could see them so it was an improvement.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In January 2004, you deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for about 14 months or so. Once you were notified that your unit would be deployed to Iraq, how did that change your Force 21/company's training. Did that change anything?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah that changed a lot. We were supposed to went in initially but Turkey, I think it was (inaudible) maybe they didn't let us come

through Turkey. So it jammed everything up in the pipeline so we were kind of in that squat and hold. The training, we were a bunch of tankers so now what is the mission now that we're going in there. Everybody else has already secured the thing and now we're going for a stability operations. For us, we got a lot of COIN operation training of go in and clear a building. That's not something tankers did or core down and search.

MR. WATERHOUSE: And COIN was Counter Insurgency?

MR. KELLEY: Right. So we had to learn all these tasks. I remember, because we got cross attached to 1-5 CAV to deploy so we had all the infantry guys teaching us.

MR. WATERHOUSE: And they were still part of the same division?

MR. KELLEY: Right, same brigade. So they were teaching us all these different things like how to search an individual. It was a big change. That's the first time tankers started -- everybody got an M-4

or 45 9 mm by then. That was another challenge of getting all these guys qualified. Before, only the loader and the driver had to get qualified with that and it wasn't that big of a deal.

MR. WATERHOUSE: But now you had two weapons.

MR. KELLEY: You did and you had to get all these guys qualified on this M-4. That was a little bit of a trainer distractor for us.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So your company, you said, was attached to another battalion. Were you the only company from your battalion?

MR. KELLEY: I was. We swapped A company. 1-5 went to 2-12 and A 2-12 went to 1-5 so we just kind of swapped. The major challenge of that also now, you're used to -- that was back when everybody was all tanks, all infantry. Now we're in this infantry battalion.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you were the only tanks in the infantry battalion.



MR. KELLEY: Yes. Growing up, we always harassed the crap out of each other. The infantry guys, there was no love lost there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So was your company pure like you went over there as your regular company and none of your platoons went (inaudible)?

MR. KELLEY: We did and then once we got on the ground, I think the infantry battalion commander said this isn't working. They don't have enough butt to do a core down and search.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Not enough people.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah you talk about a tank platoon, you're talking 16 guys. So it was not enough to man your tanks and do those kinds of things. What he did was he cross attached a platoon from one of the other infantry companies to us which is as large of my company. It was like 40 dudes and we gave a tank platoon to that company.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So was this a mechanized platoon?

MR. KELLEY: Yes.

MR. WATERHOUSE: They were in Bradley's or Humvees?

MR. KELLEY: Yes they were in Bradley's. So we had two tank and one Bradley platoon and then we had the onslaught of Humvees so we could do even more.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Did you have your Force 21 type equipment over there during that deployment?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah we deployed with everything.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Stuff you were trained on?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah we took all with us. The only challenges that we had was, and you may remember, but there was the blue force tracker that came on. Some of the stuff we took over there we had multiple sets and we were trying to get it to work with each other. FBCB2 had to be within a bubble, I believe and the other one didn't. We were still working through some of those challenges and deciding what system it wanted.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Over in Iraq, you were with a different battalion but that taskforce or whatever

you guys called it, what would you see as your primary mission over there?

MR. KELLEY: Our primary mission at that point, like I said, the invasion had already happened. Our job was just to maintain the peace and keep security and stabilize Iraq at that point.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Were you in a particular area or town?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah we started out in Al-Kadhimiya which is in Baghdad. I think it was the third holiest shrine in Iraq, something like that. There was plenty of challenges with that initially. And then we ended up, I don't know if you're familiar with Najop but the fight in the graveyard started up. A couple of Marines were killed trying to execute a checkpoint and it ended up (inaudible) ended up taking over the old city and the shrine. That's when we got calls that said you've 24 hours. That became our mission. I can't remember, we only had been there for a few months. And then from there, we jumped into Fallujah and from there --

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you guys had a tour around the country.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah we called ourselves the 911 battalion. After that point, every time something struck up it seemed like they sent us up there and that battalion was just a good mixture, I guess, of armor and infantry. We were the lucky ones, I guess.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Obviously there were some challenges with all the movement and being with a different battalion. What were some of those challenges and what did you guys do to overcome them?

MR. KELLEY: I think after that first one when we got called, because we got into, there in Baghdad, some old intelligence buildings there in base Bonsai. So it was an old intelligence thing and we made our home inside these burned out buildings and started getting comfortable there. As you would get comfortable, guys were buying things and collecting things. They had their own little rooms and it was getting a little too comfortable probably. We realized at that point when we got that first

notification after that, we had to live light. That was our primary mission was to cut down everything. Whatever you don't need to survive for x number of days, it can't come with you no more. We collected no more things. That was our first lesson of we've got to stay light and mobile over here. We couldn't carry all the stuff that we had. We had to get rid of a bunch of stuff. That was probably one of the biggest challenges.

The other one, I think was the loss of some of my soldiers there in Iraq. Just dealing with the temperatures over there. How you deal with that in a tank when it's a hundred and some degrees and you're wearing all this gear and you had to prepare for that. We went into Fallujah and the guys got off the Humvees and opened up the tanks and the Bradley's which created a whole new problem. The tanker you're supposed to (inaudible) every day. Some of those skill sets that they should have been maintaining they were a little bit rusty on and it showed initially when they stopped at that graveyard.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Overall, how do you feel the Company performed in Iraq and what were some of the things you took away from that deployment?

MR. KELLEY: They definitely performed well especially from what we threw at them. The guys were tired. That was 15 months and they got extended twice while we were over there. They did well and I will tell you that the one thing I took from that was you've got to be prepared. This stuff is real and at that point, there was no end in sight to Iraq so you knew you were going to be back there and you better be ready. If you don't want to lose soldiers, that's what happens to either undisciplined or untrained units, they end up losing soldiers. That was one of the biggest takeaways that I had.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In February 2005, you were redeployed to Ft. Hood or you continued to serve as the 2-12 First Sergeant until October. In October, then you were assigned to Headquarters and the Headquarters Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division there at Ft. Hood, where you served as the Operations

Sergeant Major for about 17 months or so. In April 2006, not long after you took over there as the Ops Sergeant Major, about six months into the job you were promoted to Sergeant Major. Six months later, in October 2006 you deployed to Iraq again in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, this time for another 15 months. How challenging was it to serve as the Brigade Ops Sergeant Major and I think you were assigned to the Non-Resident's Course Sergeant Major's Academy?

MR. KELLEY: No.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How did that go about?

MR. KELLEY: So I was scheduled to go to the Sergeant Major's Academy and I want to say it was class 55. One of my mentors, Neil Satatolla, he was my brigade sergeant major when I was a first sergeant and now he's the division sergeant major for the 1<sup>st</sup> CAV Division. He came to me and say, hey look, if you'll stay here and do the brigade ops sergeant major will deploy with us, I'll get you one of the sister services. Just don't worry about it. (Inaudible)

sergeant major and moved out. And then about half way through that tour, he sent me to the (inaudible) course in the Navy. I left Iraq, went and did the (inaudible) course which was, I think, six weeks long. A course that they stole from the sergeant major's academy, basically. And then did two (inaudible) and then went back to Iraq.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Okay so you actually got to do a resident course at the Navy.

MR. KELLEY: I guess that was my break from Iraq.

MR. WATERHOUSE: We'll get into that later about the Navy course and the challenges that came along with that. That would be good. So when you got to Iraq as Brigade Ops Sergeant Major, was it your typical Brigade Ops Sergeant Major duties or what were our major roles?

MR. KELLEY: I think it was. It was kind of what I trained and was prepared for for the most part. My duty was establishing a brigade technical operations center and then making sure that all the



enlisted soldiers were trained in their tasks and make sure the command was getting information from those new systems that we had efficiently. That was what I did. I ran that TOT for the most part and made sure soldiers didn't get lackadaisical and that they stayed vigilant. When they (inaudible) because of what our mission was. Our mission was to secure the green zone.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you were in Baghdad.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah our brigade was right there in the green zone and that was our primary mission.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you guys were in the green zone. Most of your units were inside, that was their mission was inside the Baghdad area operations. Any significant challenges? You and your brigade staff, anything that you guys, unclassified side. Anything that you guys had to deal with that maybe other folks could learn from and what you personally took with you.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah for me personally, for me the challenge was not getting to be outside the wire. That's where they drew up in the Army with what a soldier is supposed to do. I didn't have any time for folks to (inaudible) computers. So that was the biggest challenge for me. I would turn it into a positive and if I hadn't know those things or done that I could not have mentored a number of operation sergeant majors throughout my career. I would just not have had that knowledge. Where by doing that for that amount of time, there wasn't nothing about a TOT that I didn't know. Establishing it, setting it up, tearing it down. What type of training soldiers needed. It didn't matter if it was the S-6 or the S-1. I knew what their jobs were as the ops sergeant major. I had to know all of that stuff. So I took that as a positive and it gave me that empathy later on in life as hey look, this guy is one of my peers as a sergeant major. I know his job sucks a whole lot more than mine does as a command sergeant major. Because I'm the one out having the fun being with the

troops, he's the one down in the trenches making sure everything is happening.

MR. WATERHOUSE: And your time probably back in Germany at the Combat Maneuver Training Center as an OC probably helped you right?

MR. KELLEY: It did. Initially it helped me. This is where everything happens at this operations center. And as a brigade ops sergeant major, you learn how important that information is that is coming to the commander to make that decision. So now as you're down at a lower level, you understand the importance of what these guys are asking, the questions they're asking and why they're asking them, et cetera.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Looking at your time there in Iraq, how did you feel your section did. Any moments that stand out?

MR. KELLEY: No the team did what they were trained to do. They went in there without any hiccups and that was the green zone. Nobody blew up the green zone, it stayed secure. Governments continued and we

were doing what our mission was. It is not the mission that most brigades want but it was a very important mission. I think they did well.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In January 2008, you redeployed back to Ft. Hood and you continued to serve as the Brigade Operations Sergeant for about three more months. Looking back at your total time there, deployment before and after and during, what are some of the key takeaways that you had. You already mentioned some of them but if you could reiterate what influenced you throughout your career.

MR. KELLEY: Like I said, it was my first time getting the experience to understand how a brigade operates. That's a key thing for a battalion sergeant major to understand. And then also for me it gave me links. Luckily I was assigned with the brigade that I had links and touchpoints back into the brigade to assist me. It taught me about how important those relationships between a battalion and a brigade staff were. And then it also, like I said, it helped to mentor my operations sergeant major and

not take him for granted. I think that's what I took out of that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So in April 2008, about three or four months after you got back, you were reassigned to another unit on Ft. Hood, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, where you served as the Battalion Command Sergeant Major for two a little over two years. I'm tracking the Army back then we didn't have the Centralized Selection process of selecting and slating eligible Command Sergeant Major and Sergeants Major as the Battalion and Brigade. That probably wasn't until 2009 or so. So how were you chosen and notified that you'd be the next 1-5 CAV CSM or Command Sergeant Major?

MR. KELLEY: So I made the selection. Actually, I declined the first select as Command Sergeant Major as my son had just graduated and started his first year at Texas A&M. I wanted to keep my family stabilized. That was my second look but I found out anyway that I made the selection while I was there in Iraq. And then normally what would happen,

you'd get a call from branch, sergeant major branch that would say, hey look, there's a job open at whatever battalion at Ft. Polk, Ft. Hood wherever it may be and then you kind of took that job. From my understanding of it, if you didn't take that job you went to the bottom of the list.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So kind of like the process now for SGM or staff sergeant major position, you had choices.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah kind of. This position would open and you'd be stupid if you didn't take it and that type of deal. But we had just came back, and like I said before, my brigade sergeant major was the division sergeant major now is the core sergeant major and basically him, the division sergeant major and this guy name Johndro and the brigade sergeant major actually had a hand in deciding who was going where. So I got told by my brigade sergeant major that I was going to 1-5 CAV. I was a little excited about because I sort of look at the 105 CAV as the first sergeant which is kind of cool. What happened was, at

the end of that last, when we deployed back as a first sergeant, 2-12 stayed in 1-5 CAV. That was when we started making the changes. Then A 1-5 stayed in 2-12 so now you have these tasks organized. It was a permanent position in the battalion. So it was kind of cool to go back to that unit that I fought with.

On the flip side, a little concerned that I'm a tanker. We had multiple infantry companies. They had multiple engineer companies and females for the first time in my organization at the battalion level. So I had some concerns going into it.

MR. WATERHOUSE: When you first got there, how was the transition with your predecessor, the previous 1-5 CAV Command Sergeant Major?

MR. KELLEY: It was great. Luckily I had already known him, Sergeant Major Gomez. I served with that unit and he was the ops sergeant major when I was the first sergeant in that deployment. So I knew him well and it just meant for a great transition. Usually if you don't have (inaudible) people in there, usually you're ready for them to go.

It was a great transition. For the first time I had ever seen the continuity books which I took that on in my career. It was how things worked and how they got to the that point. He had very good systems in place which helped me immensely.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So it sounds like the battalion was in a pretty good state when you got there. Any initiatives, things you had? Everything can be improved, obviously so anything you went after like initiatives?

MR. KELLEY: So the battalion, just the brigade, had just returned from Iraq. It was reset and as you reset, your equipment is going in and getting reset, soldiers are getting redeployed to other units or you've got your enlisted soldier going off to school. So the biggest challenge was just a shortage of personnel and to make everything happen. I guess fortunately, me and the commander came in at the same time. We kind of went around to each company and got a briefing. This is what the challenges are and then we kind of went from there. The great thing



about it was this commander was a infantry guy, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Jackson. So we really balanced each other well. He knew about the infantry things and I knew about the armor and we could really help each other out. We made a good team.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What would you see as your primary roles and responsibilities now as a battalion command sergeant major?

MR. KELLEY: My role was number one advisor to the commander and staff. I was responsible for the welfare and discipline of the battalion. Primarily it was to mentor a first sergeant. I know a brigade sergeant major that said that's my job, mentoring, but I kind of mentored the first sergeants. I managed the platoon sergeants. I got to decide who was a platoon sergeant and where they went, where the brigade sergeant major would do that for the first sergeants. I felt that I had got mentored then and the guy had just come out of doing that a couple of years ago and could help them get to that next step.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In January 2009, just about nine months into the job as the battalion CSM, you deployed to Iraq for a third time in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for about a year. What was your battalion's primary mission this time in Iraq?

MR. KELLEY: We were there as an advise and assist battalion. We still had that stability operations but now we're in this advise and assist operation thing. Basically, we were pairing up with brigades, Iraqi brigades, I want to say we had three of them that we were paired with and then we were kind of coached, teaching and mentoring them along the way.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Would you harken back to some of your OC duties to kind of help the company?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I did. I used some of those TTP's but then a lot of them, the challenge, our Army you can give them an AR and they expect that and they're trying to get better off of it. Versus the Iraqi Army, it was a little more challenging trying to get them to see things your way. You had to go about it in a different way and drink the chai. You had to

go through a whole process so it was extremely in a painstaking way. It took a lot of time to get wherever you wanted to accomplish. You had to keep in there and keep at it. I would say, it would depend on what kind of leader you had in Iraq in the Army too. Some of them would listen to what you had to tell them and then some of them would actually incorporate some of the things you were trying to tell them. Others didn't have any time for you. They were doing it because their commander said suck it up.

MR. WATERHOUSE: It seems like that was a challenge. Any other significant challenges you guys dealt with?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah for me, the biggest one was, I didn't have a counterpart as a sergeant major, command sergeant major. So I'm going to the meetings with my boss, the lieutenant colonel and we're kind of setting the example for these Iraqi's. This is how the American Army works and this is what the NCO is and give them a first touch. Maybe not the first visit but maybe the third or the fourth one they're like

hey, who does what I do in your Army. There was no NCO, there was a warrant officer.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Some of our allies are like that.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so it was a warrant officer. So I finally found this warrant officer and he was the guy that had formations in the morning and go back to PT. So I said okay, let me talk to this guy. I kind of took it from there and that's when I started getting in and see what we had to exhibit to those folks. The commander would go one direction and I would go the next. To culminate that was when we were meeting with the Iraqi's and my counterpart was actually at the same table too as the battalion commander and me and these other folks. So you started seeing some progress which kind of gives you hope that maybe we're making a difference here.

Speaking of challenges, so at that time, close to the end of our tour we started transitioning the control of the cities back over to the Iraqi's.

You can imagine the challenges. Now we're taking a back seat for the first time.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What area of the country was this?

MR. KELLEY: This was in Baghdad. So we were returning control of it back to the Iraqi Army and we end up moving to Tahj outside the city. There was friction. Iraqi checkpoints would stop American patrols and nobody really knew, hey how's this working now. You're in charge again now and American's are leaving and it was challenging. There were some high friction points. If guys hadn't been patient and coolheaded, it could have really went down. We just had to make sure the soldiers knew how to deal with that challenge. I understood, this is what victory looks like to us. Going back and take care of their stuff unless you want to keep coming back over here. Someday they've got to take this on. That was probably one of the biggest challenges.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So overall, how did you feel the battalion performed over there and what are

some of the things you look back on. I know you mentioned turning over the bases and stuff and areas, is that kind of the positives you take away?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah the team did an outstanding job, of course, and just the challenges of constantly moving like that and transitioning with them. It is disruptive for them too. They are on a certain installation and it may take them somewhere else. We understand the people and it was challenging for them. My proudest thing that deployment is I didn't lose any soldiers. When I say I didn't lose any, I didn't have any soldiers die during that deployment. We had injuries. My crew was hit by an IED and took the whole crew out and come and picked me up at the sergeant majors conference the division was having down in the green zone. But we didn't lose anyone during that rotation so that was kind of one of my proud moments. You get them there, get them back.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Yeah. So in December 2009, you redeployed to Ft. Hood where you continued to serve as the 105 CAV CSM or Command Sergeant Major for

about another eight months or so. In looking back at your two plus years as the battalion sergeant major, what were some of the positive and/or negative things you experienced that influenced your future thoughts, actions, decision making later in your career?

MR. KELLEY: The positive one was, I think for me it was mostly a positive experience. It was a great time being a battalion sergeant major. The biggest takeaway was how important that command relationship was between me and my commander. I seen other command teams where the sergeant major and the colonel might not have seen eye to eye on everything and how tough and challenging his job was versus mine. Me and this guy Jackson to this day, communicating with each other, he's starting up the new S-5 brigades there in Stewart, I think it is.

MR. WATERHOUSE: S-5 brigade??

MR. KELLEY: Yeah S-5 brigade. But to this day, we have that kind of a relationship and understanding that you know what, when you've got that kind of relationship, everybody knows the commander

has got your back and you are totally empowered. Number two, you notice the company commanders and the first sergeants have the same kind of relationship. You talk together because of that example we set at the battalion. That was, I think, a big thing that I took away from battalion sergeant major.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In September 2010, you were reassigned to another unit on Ft. Hood, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> CAV Division, where you served as the Brigade Command Sergeant Major for 18 months correct?

MR. KELLEY: Right.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How were you chosen and notified that you'd be the next Brigade Sergeant Major there?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah that's a funny story. I actually interviewed. Back then, it was the same thing, you weren't on a selected list. So I interviewed for a blackjack brigade. I was first sergeant of that brigade, ops sergeant major of that brigade and now battalion sergeant major. Maybe we were a little inbred back in those days but the Army



has since fixed that to some degree. So I interviewed for that job and didn't get it. Another sergeant major came from JRTC and ended up being selected. I supported him and moved out. That brigade came open and I came on the list to interview for it. I was told, you're interviewing, and I kept waiting and waiting and never got a call. Finally, my brigade sergeant major said hey, all of the other sergeant majors have interviewed for 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade. Have you done your interview and I said no I haven't. He was like, let me call the Division Sergeant Major Roy Malloy. He's like oh yeah, tell him to be up here at 12, forgot about him. I was like really, that's how things were going. So up in his office, they put me in his office. I was sitting there for 30 minutes and my brigade sergeant major came and said hey, sergeant major wanted me to be here also during the interview. So he started out asking me some questions and then he said hey I'm just kidding, you got the job. That's kind of how it worked out.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Just based off of what he knew about you?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah just my reputation. He was the division sergeant major when I was with them when we were in Iraq.

MR. WATERHOUSE: When you took over as the brigade sergeant major there what did you see as were your primary roles and responsibilities?

MR. KELLEY: Again, and I keep going back to it over and over. My number one primary responsibility was advise the commander on all enlisted matters and the same thing for the staff. I'm the senior enlisted voice for that brigade and that's kind of the role I assumed.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So how was the transition with your predecessor?

MR. KELLEY: I think it was a great transition. It was Sergeant Major Pippen, great guy. He got to the that point in his career where it was time for him to retire and go. The unfortunate thing was the brigade was about six months out from

deploying. At that point, we were starting to get good with transitions so I stayed with him for a week and he went over things and I sat in the meetings. He kind of shadowed me a little bit there and then we did the change of responsibility and he disappeared. It went well, I thought.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What do you think the state of the Brigade or what shape was it in when you got there and what did you set out to try to improve?

MR. KELLEY: So from my assessment was, like I said, six months out from deployment and they were extremely short on key personnel. I was trying for the first time really understand the whole manning piece. Even as a battalion sergeant major, I'd go up to brigade S-1 and work through, hey this is who I need and what my shortages were et cetera. But I didn't understand the whole manning piece. I had to work with my battalion sergeant major. For the first time in my career, I had other sergeant majors or command sergeant majors that are in my charge to try to figure this problem out. Luckily, the division G-1

helped me but we're six months out and we're short people and I found out we never requisitioned them. We had a sergeant first class in our G-1 shop that didn't know she was lost in the sauce.

MR. WATERHOUSE: The requests weren't actually --

MR. KELLEY: They weren't going in and now the Army is beating up the division on why we're so short because we're coming up on the chart. On top of that, all these non-deployables that we had. That's the first time I actually starting having to deal with non-deployable soldiers. So that was my initiative. That's the what the commander said, hey I need you to help me fix is all these non-deployables. So I ended up pulling every sergeant major in, the sergeant, the G-1, the lawyer, everybody's problem whatever it might be, medical or legal and we started doing that every single week. We were clearing that bubble of folks out. That was probably my biggest initiative and my biggest challenge up to the point of deploying.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Speaking of deployment, in February 2011, you deployed to Iraq for the fourth time for you. This time in support of Operation New Dawn. So under this Operation New Dawn, what was your brigades primary mission?

MR. KELLEY: Counting Desert Storm, that was the fifth time. I should have been able to vote and had been a voting member over there. At that point, our primary mission, we had southern Iraq from Maysan all the way down to Basrah. That would have been several divisions back in the day. That was our brigades footprint. We were set up there at (inaudible). We were still in the advise and assist mode. I don't know if you remember but we were teeter tottering are we going to stay or are we going to go. We would have been told, hey we're going to go, we can't get this deal but they were still working on it. In the back of your mind, you're wondering if you were going to stay.

MR. WATERHOUSE: It was a sofa agreement.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah that's exactly right. Everybody was dragging their feet getting out and then all of the sudden they said, hey we're going. It was a mad drive to turnover equipment, turnover the bases and of course the biggest challenges were putting the Iraqi's in charge completely at this point. The only thing we were doing was providing ISR and other minor things to them. It wasn't guys out doing patrols and stuff. The only patrol we did was around our bases for our own security. That was a different feeling altogether.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Over there did you have a transition with a previous unit's sergeant major or the unit you guys took over for?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I did. Sergeant Major Wilson and that was a good transition. Like I said, at this point, we were getting really good at these left seat right seat rides. Both me and him, he was ready to go and I was ready to take the job. It wasn't friction between the two of us. Good transition.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You kind of hit on this a little bit but were there any key differences between that particular New Dawn deployment and the previous OIF deployments?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so like I said, basically we were no longer in charge. Iraqi's are, it's their country and at this point we're doing what we can to assist them and what assets that we still had on the ground. It was kind of a weird feeling to have. They would come into your bases and they're inspecting the equipment or the housing that you're leaving them. It was real different to be not in control of something. They say it's bittersweet because like I said before, Bosnia this was victory for us and my brigade was the last one out of Iraq. So 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade, we collapsed from the north to the south and we were the last ones out. We had the last NRAP in Iraq and it went to the museum.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That was like in December of that year?

MR. KELLEY: Yes it was. I had Geraldo Rivera riding in the back of my truck. It was kind of bitter sweet at the same time. I told my soldier, I think it was on a YouTube video, hey look you're going to look back on this and you made history.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Any key challenges during that deployment for you or the brigade?

MR. KELLEY: The number one, not being in the lead. We were designed to lead and not being in the lead was a challenge that we had to work through. I think the second one was not only did we transition to the Iraqi Army but we transitioned into the State Department. So you're relinquishing that control and now the State Department is coming and you've got American civilians what to do and how to do it. It could be challenging. One of our missions was to establish a consulate in Bossier. We were working with that so we had all these staff guys come in. They're like State Department guys and they were like hey we can't live in this. Everything was substandard to them and it was very challenging to deal with.



I'll tell you, one way we dealt with that was we brought them into the team. We brought them into our footprint and incorporated them with our staff. Now it is a little more personal, it's not an us against them, which seemed to work out really well.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So December 2011, your Brigade you redeployed to Ft. Hood where you continued to serve as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> CAV Sergeant Major for a few more months. Looking back as your time as a Brigade Command Sergeant Major, what were some of your biggest positive or negative experiences and key takeaways that you put in your back pocket and took with you that helped you in your later career.

MR. KELLEY: I think that the brigade being undermanned and the non-deployables is what I really took for it. I understand that this was going to be a future problem of the Army and the pain that I went through with that. I took that scar with me. I think the other biggest one was the importance of communication with the staff. At the battalion level, I may have communicated with the staff on some degree

and maybe the S-3 himself because the ops major is there but nowhere near like I did as the brigade sergeant major. I had to have my finger on the pulse of the S-1 and the 2 and the 3 and the 4 and understand I was doing a lot more -- or at least it was a lot more important to me at that point as a brigade sergeant major. I understood the importance of communicating with the staff at that point.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In March 2012, you were assigned to Ft. Bliss, Texas where you served as the Command Sergeant Major of 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division and Ft. Bliss for about 20 months or so. When did you find out you were going to be the next "Old Ironsides" Division Command Sergeant Major?

MR. KELLEY: Funny story. So I was on assignment to go to Alaska to be the striker brigade sergeant major 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade which my wife wasn't happy about.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Is the 25<sup>th</sup> infantry?

MR. KELLEY: Yes. Coming from Florida, she wasn't looking forward to the whole Alaska experience.

I was like hey look, I signed up for it, I'm going, and you're coming with me. Good Army wife. I had forgotten, because back then, to be a division sergeant major, a nominative sergeant major they call it now, they have these lists of positions that are open. They get sent out usually to the division sergeant majors and then they would flow down. The problem we had, which today's system kind of fixed, everybody would go for the division sergeant major jobs and wouldn't go for these other positions that were out there. The one that I was open and wanted was the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. I put my name on that list and then I had Arthur L. Coleman who was the core commander called me and said, hey I don't think you're qualified, x, y, z and he talked to the division sergeant major and they debated and said, okay leave his name and we'll see what happens.

I had forgotten all about that. I was back at Ft. Hood resetting the brigade preparing to move on to Alaska when I got a call from the CG's office of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division saying hey, they're trying to

set up a VTC. I was like holy crap I completely forgot about that. I did it when I was over there and everything was going on and I forgot about it. So I did the interview with Major General Pittard and he called me back a day later and said hey, congratulations, you're part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. I need you down here in two weeks.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Two whole weeks.

MR. KELLEY: Two weeks.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How did the family take that?

MR. KELLEY: Not so well. We were already thinking we were going to have to pack up and move out but we hadn't done anything. So I did what a good soldier does, yes sir, roger, I'll be there. I'm not sure how I'm going to do that but the first thing I did was head to the Division Sergeant Major's office and said hey look, I did this interview, he told me I got the job and he wants me there in two weeks. He's like two weeks. That's Sergeant Major Malloy. Then (inaudible) Sergeant Major down there at Ft. Bliss.

So I said okay so what I did, the agreement I did was I went down there on February 14<sup>th</sup> I think, did a change responsibility and then flew back. So at one point I was Division and Brigade Sergeant Major at the same time. It was really interesting because I let my garrison sergeant major because he was a prior brigade sergeant major in charge of the folks up there and said hey, I'll be back as soon as I get my stuff transitioned, maybe a month. I got back and I was going through trying to clear different stuff and the first SM of the Army Sergeant Major Woolrich lived down there, he got ill. So I started getting phone calls about his status. There is whole (inaudible) on what to do if the first SM of the Army dies. It's a big deal. I know there is case lines, things got laid out and he was getting worse and worse and then he passed. My division sergeant major said hey, we'll clear you, we'll finish everything up here up, you just go. So that's what I did and the wife ended up coming down later. That was my first experience as the division sergeant major was the first SMA passing.

They had to bring all the sergeant majors in to execute funeral detail and --

MR. WATERHOUSE: He was buried right there?

MR. KELLEY: He was right there at Ft. Bliss in the cemetery. Bit challenge, SMA, everybody is there and you're kind of on the spot. That was my first experience. Of course, Dave Davenport was the outgoing sergeant major and he had been selected for (inaudible) so he came down. I think that might be the next question about transitioning.

MR. WATERHOUSE: About (inaudible) or (inaudible).

MR. KELLEY: (Inaudible).

MR. WATERHOUSE: Like United States Army.

MR. KELLEY: Yes. So he came back to do transitions so we're doing this whole two of us transitioning and there was nobody left there (inaudible) back out.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Going back to putting in for the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division, you were the 1<sup>st</sup> CAV too so why would promote to 1<sup>st</sup> Armored?

MR. KELLEY: Number one, the 1<sup>st</sup> CAV Division wasn't one of the openings on that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Oh it wasn't available.

MR. KELLEY: It wasn't available on that list. And then number two, that was my first combat unit I was in, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. So I thought that would be really cool if I had the chance to go back as a young sergeant there, go back and be the division sergeant major of that organization. I thought that was cool.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That would be cool. So when you take over as the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored in Ft. Bliss Sergeant Major, any significant roles or responsibilities that maybe you didn't foresee that you took on?

MR. KELLEY: There was a lot. I mean, Dave Davenport did a good job of transitioning. We spent, I guess, about a week drinking from the fire hydrant. But getting that's getting into a division headquarters and you don't expect the size of the staff. It's like a battalion plus staff. I think

there was like 18 staff sergeant majors plus all the ones from the academy that didn't have somewhere to go they put over in my headquarters and they were finding things for them to do. I had all these folks. On top of that, for the first time I had a chief of staff. I never had that before. I had two deputy commanding generals. So it was a pretty steep learning curve.

I think probably the biggest challenge was not understanding Garrison Operations. I mean, who teaches you that. When do you learn how to be a Garrison Sergeant Major. You really don't. They send you to a school to do it and then you kind of OJT. So that was understanding my role as the Ft. Bliss Sergeant Major and the civilians and all the different entities. You've got several different one start commands over there and the (inaudible) is considered a three star command because of the sergeant major over there. So really it was a steep line curve on that side of the house, the brigades and those things.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Plus you had air defense school back then didn't you?



MR. KELLEY: No they had already moved. They were teaching a few things there still but for the most part it had already moved. In the brigade, the division had just deployed there from Germany about eight months ago. It was all kind of new.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So speaking of that, the division just setting up shop, so to speak, there at Ft. Bliss, what was kind of the Division's mission when you first got there? What was on the horizon at the time?

MR. KELLEY: So the division wasn't at that time on the patch chart. We had, our primary mission was to prepare the brigades to deploy to Afghanistan that was on the patch chart.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That were on Ft. Bliss?

MR. KELLEY: That were on Ft. Bliss, yes. We had one brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> brigade that was already deployed to Afghanistan and then 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade and we were training up and preparing to deploy.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Speaking of challenges you hit on a couple of them already. How challenging was

it from you to move from that brigade, and you mentioned some of the things, but brigade to division level or a nominative level as we call it now. Were there any significant differences between those two jobs?

MR. KELLEY: Like I said, one of the biggest ones is up until that point, you and the commander are kind of like this command team. The two guys that have each other's right hand man type of deal. For the most part, you're as a battalion sergeant major you either had more experience than your commander as far as time and service and maybe about the same amount of time as a brigade. But when you go to a division the commander has got more time in the service and experiences than you do.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That was that common?

MR. KELLEY: That was the first different thing, yeah I think so. So he's gotten more time and experience. And then now, so just being the two of you as (inaudible) you had a deputy commander general for maneuver, a deputy commander general for support

and then you had this guy, the chief of staff. I didn't realize how important and how critical he was to me. So that was a steep learning curve. And then all these other sergeant majors and then there were meetings than you could shake a stick at to go to and which way do you go. Because now, the DCG is handling certain meetings, the S's have certain meeting, the CG's having things and so if the chief of staff and there is one sergeant major. How do you collect all this information. I didn't have a clue. I had never been mentored in that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How did you go about --

MR. KELLEY: I felt like a one legged man in a you know what contest. It took me a while and these were some of my lessons learned here later. I ended up, that's how I ended up mentoring my staff sergeant majors. I would make them come brief me prior to a meeting that was about to happen. So is a chief of staff was having a meeting on whatever and maybe it's the G1 that's sitting in there because his team is

briefing the team, he'd come brief me first. Then he'd come brief me after.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you could kind of determine which ones you would go to.

MR. KELLEY: Exactly. And if I wasn't at it, I had the information. I had the feedback of what happened in that meeting and here are some of the issues and challenges and it gave them face time. So it gave us that mentorship. What I found out is a lot of them weren't going to the meetings themselves. I became a forcing function of getting them involved in the process of that staff work. That was something I took away for the fair Army.

My other big challenge was civilians. For my first time, other than like maybe a safety guy, I had a whole bunch of civilians that worked me.

MR. WATERHOUSE: First time?

MR. KELLEY: First time, yeah. So now how do you deal with civilians. My thing was and just like anybody else, I stuck my foot in my mouth a few times. You can't treat them like you're the sergeant major.

Why are you messing up and embarrassing them in front of the two star generals. I finally had, we had, it was called the MSC, so if we deployed he was the guy that ran the base type of deal. We had these guys in everything. The G3 side, everywhere there was civilians and he was kind of the head guy. He came to me, hey look Sergeant Major, come talk to me and this is how you deal with that. So he kind of coached and taught and mentored. He was probably what we call the big five. When we had a meeting, he was there with me, the chief of staff and the other generals. He kind of coached me, hey look, these guys are important too. You've got to go around and talk to them. He opened my eyes to the whole civilian side.

And then the other piece was for the first time as a nominated sergeant major Dave told me, go buy yourself like three suits. Suits, what do I need suits for. I've got class A's. He was like no, get yourself three suits, a couple of sports jackets, x, y, z, you're going to need them here. And that was the next thing. So now I'm going to mayors houses for

dinner, we're hosting senators and congressmen and even the President of the United States came to Ft. Bliss. That was a challenge in itself. So how do you deal with this. You come from being a combat soldier and now you're dealing with civilians and all these different VIP's. That was a little bit of a challenge. You kind of tend to be a little extroverted and try to listen more than you speak. I got through it. Most of them really, really, I found out want to hear what the sergeant major has to say. Because you're not the guys out there trying to feed them a bunch of BS. You're the guy sitting back there waiting for them to ask you a question.

MR. WATERHOUSE: The assume the commander is going to tell them what they want to hear?

MR. KELLEY: Exactly right. That's what most of those senators and congressmen believe. Is that they're going to tell them what they want to hear for whatever there agenda is. Where the sergeant major's reputation is they're going to tell you the hard cold truth whether it is something you like or

you don't like. You really don't care. So that was probably another one of the challenges.

MR. WATERHOUSE: As the Ft. Hood overall Sergeant Major, how did that work with the Garrison Sergeant Major. How did you guys tackle or what was the responsibilities? Was there any overlap?

MR. KELLEY: A big challenge was, like I said, the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division had just got there. They had been there eight months. Prior to that, it was an air defense post. There was a big friction between the air defense community and the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division who now just occupied this base and it had been theirs forever. The community outside were retirees from air defense with the exception of a few ACR guys that straggled down there. It was mostly all air defense folks so the community wasn't happy about the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division being there other than it was bringing on some jobs and opportunities like that. The air defense by a two star general, he's also the senior mission commander of the post. So there is

that friction and then you've got the Garrison Sergeant Major in the middle of it.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That's true with any Garrison typically.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. He's stuck in the middle there. And what we did is I got with mine, (inaudible) which was a great dude. Luckily he was the brigade sergeant major that was down there, I think, when they did away with the 30. So they moved in a brigade from 1<sup>st</sup> CAV and called it 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division because of the movement. So he had been that brigade sergeant major so he had kind of that feel of the post. He understood the frictions. He walked me through that.

We started a campaign. I made him one of the towers with the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division patch and I made him put Home of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division at the gates and then I started putting tanks on pads at the gates. Hey look, people are going to accept it. Everybody resists change but then I think the initiative, and the commander told me this was a problem was how do we build this team. We started with the Team Bliss was



our campaign. So now how we built all of them. I started having a meeting once a month with all the sergeant majors on the post and we started doing things at my house. After hours, I'd have a function, so we'd get that comradery. By the time I left there, things had improved. It was Home of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division and Team Bliss. It was a little bit a of a challenge to get through for a new organization to come in like that. The old organization that is sitting there has all that history, that transition.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Before we move onto your next assignment, is there anything looking back at your time as Division Sergeant Major and of the Division and Ft. Hood, whether there were challenges or things you took away with you in put in your bag. Any other thing you'd like to discuss about your time there?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so I think one of the biggest things I took away was I guess about a year into that, we established a CGTF in Jordan. The whole (inaudible) was exploding, all these people are coming

across the border into Jordan, one of our good allies. We had a combined joint task force. Luckily I had gone through that Keystone course so I had a little bit of experience with establishing this. I'm sitting in this office with General Pittard, the two DCG's, the chief of staff and the civilian. The CG's asking for recommendations for how we establish this joint task force. I just starting spitting out things. Like South Carolina is a state partner for that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So it was a joint task force located in the states or it was over in Jordan?

MR. KELLEY: It was in Jordan. So we had to split the staff. We created JMD, XYZ and it kind of fell under the third Army's logo/CENTCOM. They were just kind of there to monitor the situation and be prepared if something does go crazy. I'm spitting out about South Carolina state partnership and what TRANSCOM can do and all these generals were looking at me like where did this guy come from. Sergeant Major, where did you learn all this stuff. I was like hey,

Keystone course. Of course, when I went to that course I didn't think at the time I should have been there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Did you put in for that?

MR. KELLEY: I did that. The SMA said you're going. I got scheduled for this.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Because of that mission?

MR. KELLEY: I don't know. He may have known about that mission before I ever did and maybe that's why he sent me or maybe just because of the possibilities of something like that happening.

MR. WATERHOUSE: It ended up being a good course.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah it turned out to be a really good thing that I went to. Never underestimate what you don't know.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How long was that course?

MR. KELLEY: I think it was a week. It might have been longer. They flew us down to GITMO and we went all over the place learning about the joint staff. It was a good deal. That was something that I took away. Of course, one of the challenges while we

set that JTF up was, so I'm trying to start building their NCO corps. They were going to send soldiers to Kuwait for PODC but the Kuwaiti's were like no. No way in hell are the Jordanians going to a school in our country. They wouldn't approve their passage. I said hey look, I'm the Ft. Bliss Sergeant Major, you can come to Ft. Bliss. The next thing you know --

MR. WATERHOUSE: A lot of students go the academy there right? Jordanians, sergeant majors.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah exactly. So we figured out the logistics of it and we ended up bringing like the first 12 of them to Ft. Bliss. They went through PLDC there and then we kept them. We let them shadow us and then we brought them back in and let them shadow our instructors. And then we took those instructors back and we built Jordan's first primary leadership development.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So they were young NCO's.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. We built their first academy.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Are they sergeant major's now?

MR. KELLEY: Yes. We went back later and saw them as their Army, it was kind of cool getting to see that progression. Those are some of the things I definitely took away. The other one was how important the civilian workforce was to me as a nominative Sergeant Major and then also that staff. I can't over stress how important they were. And then the communication piece between DCG's and the chief of staff. No longer are you the only guy with the most experience that's telling the CG hey, here's what I think you need to do. Because you may say, here's what I think you need to do and two generals say I think we need to do this. He may go that way and you're not the commander and you can't be chapped about it. You could say hey look, I gave them my advice, that's my job, but you've got to be able to accept that at this point, you've got other folks with just as much experience there that's advising him on issues.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Usually like a brigade and battalion, a lot of times you're tied in with the XO as kind of another -- instead of going to the commander you've got the XO to help you out. Was the chief of staff that guy for you?

MR. KELLEY: He was. There wasn't nothing he didn't know about that was going on with the staff or within the division. That was his job. He was probably the hardest working officer in the division.

MR. WATERHOUSE: A lot of people I know, they do this in their future and it's like hey, who should I go to.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah he was great. Anything staff wise, the chief of staff is the guy. I spent a lot of time with the deputy commander from (inaudible). Training is an NCO's job still. It doesn't change because you're a Division Sergeant Major, so I spent a lot of time with the deputy commander. I was going out and observing training with him just as much as I would and the CG didn't have nowhere near the amount of time in training.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So it depended on what you were checking on?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. You've really go to know who you're responsible for which goes back to as a normative sergeant major, the first thing you find out is the TOR, Terms of Responsibility. Who is responsible for what, what you're responsible for and who's responsible for everything else so you know who to go to.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So for readiness, obviously you have the support of ADCS.

MR. KELLEY: Exactly right. If you have an issue, you know where to take it.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Okay moving on to your next assignment in December 2013, you were assigned to Shaw Air Force Base where you served as the Command Sergeant Major of the United States Army Central and 3<sup>rd</sup> Army for about two and half years. How did you find out about that particular job and when you were going to get it?

MR. KELLEY: Right. For the first time, I fell under the current slating of the nominative sergeant major. So the process that we kind of know now is the one I was in for that. I had, I think, five interviews that SMA gave me. One is, what's the one down in Leavenworth, the CAC?

MR. WATERHOUSE: Combined Arms Center.

MR. KELLEY: The CAC. So I interviewed with General Perkins for the CAC. I had been in the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division at that point probably 18 months, I guess, and hey I wasn't interested in leaving. I liked being the Division Sergeant Major, you know what I mean. I'm good. I could have done that the rest of my time and been fine with it. So I told General Perkins, I said I'm honored but I wasn't looking forward to living in a school house. That's not what I saw myself advancing too. So I kind of told him, hey thanks for this. I had just got a new commander in, General McFarland, and I said hey look, you lose continuity and this and that. I didn't know that SMA calls and gets feedback from these interviews. Well,



the next call I got was from the SMA and basically told me you blow another one of these interviews and I'm going to come down there and kick your butt. So that was a lesson learned.

The next one I really wanted was ICORE. I interviewed for ICORE. My good friend James Norman.

MR. WATERHOUSE: First Core up at Joint Base Louis McCord?

MR. KELLEY: Exactly. And James Normley got it, he was a good friend of mine, and here in the local area too. And then I interviewed for West Point and the day after I interviewed for West Point, I interviewed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. You know how it works, the same that it is today. Whoever is first has got to say I selected you. General Terry called me right back after our interview and say, hey look do you still want the job. I was like yeah I just talked to you six hours a day.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You must have been the last person he called.

MR. KELLEY: I guess. I said yeah, of course I do, I knew it. I had been in Jordan as a CJTF there, I've been to Iraq five times.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What they call their knowledge skills attribute.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I knew that area. I was feeling pretty comfortable about that interview and he selected me. That's kind of how I found out. Luckily I got three months to prepare for that move.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So when you got to Shaw Air Force Base, did you have a transition with your predecessor or did you show up and there was nobody there.

MR. KELLEY: I did. My predecessor was, if you remember last, when I task to 1-5 CAV as a first sergeant, he was my battalion sergeant major. So Sergeant Major Faniere probably helped me with that whole interview process too. As we look back, we know that Command Sergeant Major got that General's ear. It holds a lot of weight in that whole interview process. Your reputation is everything.

But anyway, he did a good right seat ride with me there at the headquarters. But as you know, the challenge is and your mission is overseas. 20 countries spread across (inaudible).

MR. WATERHOUSE: And your other headquarters was in Kuwait?

MR. KELLEY: In Kuwait, yeah.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you had to do transition two places.

MR. KELLEY: You do. So the bottom line is, he set it up where he made sure I understood everything, his initiatives, and then he set it up for me to do this transition around. So after I took my chain of responsibility, I went forward and I went to each country that we were actually on speaking terms with. They kind of briefed me and squared me away and filled me on what the status was. It takes a whole lot longer to do a right seat ride when you've got folks spread across like that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I bet. So this may be hard to summarize but --

MR. KELLEY: The other piece was, the DCG forward. So the way USARCENT works is you have the same thing, two deputy commanders and you've got a two star deputy commander for the first TFC and then there is a deputy commanding general that's forward was General Pittard, my old Division Commander. So yeah, it's a small world. I'm sure he may have had something in that whole process too. So he, once I got forward, he made sure that I was transitioned into that loop. It really was a pretty smooth transition but it was drinking from a fire hydrant just trying to understand.

MR. WATERHOUSE: It may be hard to put in a sentence but what would you say the mission of U.S. Army Central 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was in a nutshell? What was the mission for that command?

MR. KELLEY: First, our mission was to support CENTCOM with Army forces, being the component command in that theater and the second was to maintain access into the AOR. For example, if we started another engagement or we had another conflict, we had

a launching pad for those forces. And then to build part and capacity and prepare for continuous operations inside to AOR.

MR. WATERHOUSE: When you got there, I mean it being such a huge organization, your assessment probably took a while, I assume. Once you were able to make an assessment, what kind of initiatives did you set and try and improve the organization over time?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so the biggest challenge coming out of the transition was you've got a headquarters that's in South Carolina and you've got a headquarters in Kuwait and the staff is split between those two. And then for my assessment, it was like two entities, like two organizations. There was the forward guys and the rear guys. Sometimes the rear guys didn't want to talk to the forward guys and they didn't know what each other was doing.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So they don't go back and forth?

MR. KELLEY: They do, that's the crazy thing. Like every six months, they would rotate folks in. I think the officers went a year at a time. So that was my first challenge was how do I get my NCO's on the same sheet. I started a VTC where I made them update me and then the staff do an update. You had, I think it was like 26, 29 staff sergeant majors in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and then probably another 25 command sergeant majors. So that's the staff sergeant major side and that's the command sergeant major side.

So how do you bring all those folks together when they're in multiple countries, some in the states, some in Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, all over. So I said hey, we'll do a VTC and then here's the format. I want you to go down, hey here's what you're doing, list any challenges, issues and then I had the staff brief. Here's what hot in our lane right now. So if they had a problem they could talk to the staff about it because of lot of the staff was staff sergeant majors were back in the rear portion of this thing which is another thing that changed. I said hey look,

sergeant majors are going to rotate in and out of Kuwait just like everybody else does. So those were kind of some of the things I did.

The other challenge was I had a large number of National Guard and Reserve. All three compos are serving there so it was kind of the first time of how do you deal with this. These guys were coming in and coming out.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Was that your first time with that component?

MR. KELLEY: It was. For the most part, they may have been in and out of the organization but for the first part, these guys were a big portion. My chief of staff was a National Guard General. I wouldn't of known it and probably shouldn't have unless he told me. But that's how the organization is built and that's the only way it can survive with all these different entities pulling together but then it creates whole other challenges. You're constantly putting these organizations together and tearing them

apart every nine months or so. It was a little bit of a challenge.

One of the initiatives that I did after doing my transition was I went to visit all these state partners and I learned the value of them in Colorado and Jordan. I went out and got back to the states and visited every one of our state partners. Then Sergeant Major Connelly, started to invite me to everyone of the state conferences that he did. I started going to their functions too and kind of became a part of their team. Those relationships are key. They paid off many times. There were things I couldn't figures out how to do that National Guard or Reserve came in and helped me with. So you never underestimate their skill sets.

MR. WATERHOUSE: As Central Command or CENTCOM's Army Component Command, you and the Commander had over 20,000 soldiers or so to lead and air responsibility that stretched from Northeast Africa across the Middle East to Central South Asia area, about 4 million square miles and 20 nations or



so, millions of people, 18 or so different languages, religions. How did you prioritize who you visited?

MR. KELLEY: That's a great question. I didn't have a clue. How would you know. So what I had to do was humble myself and go and ask my Commander. Hey, how do I decide where I'm best to fit in to this and plug in. I had heard Sergeant Major Finere was constantly on the move. So he kind of set me down and said here's tier one, tier two, tier three. Different countries are considered how important based on what they can do or what we need or where we are in the partnership with them. So he kind of broke that down to me. Then he showed me what his engagement plan was. The only problem was they didn't have the sergeant major in the engagement plan, they had deputy commanders on engagement plan and CG. So I said hey sir, why don't you get me in on this engagement plan.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So he didn't really plan for your --

MR. KELLEY: No it was go do what you want to do. A lot of organizations you come to, that's what they'll tell the sergeant major. Hey do what you want to. You're going to be valued added or not it's kind of up to you. Don't get me wrong, I still was a pain in the butt on trash. If I saw trash somewhere the Garrison Sergeant Major wasn't liking me. I wanted to figure out, how do I get in this engagement ring because my job is to advise the commander. How can I advise him on all these countries if I have no clue about any of them. He said, okay great point, Sergeant Major. He said, how about you start going in after me and I'll tell them about NCO corps and you come in after me and then you can talk to them about the NCO corps, how is that? Sounds great sergeant. Some of them I went to him with and he talked to them and I got a point of contact. Others, he went in and mentioned it and then I went in behind.

In every country, we have a team at the embassy that sets stuff like that up for you. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, we have all kinds of desk officers for each

country. So if you want to get in there and do something, there are people that can get you in the door. It is kind of on you from there. So he would go in, tell them about the NCO corps, the biggest super that the American Army has is the NCO corps. That's kind of how I came up with where I was going. Also he said, okay you're my directed (inaudible).

So if there is a problem somewhere or I'm getting feedback that things aren't hunky dory, he would send me to that location. People kind of knew when the sergeant major comes, hey the general probably sent him here. If I'm coming to visit a unit, more than likely there is a reason I came because I was too busy to go visit every single unit. I was like any other sergeant major, his eyes and his ears and I kind of did that role for him out there. So between those those two things is kind of how I decided. Later on, as I started building those NCO corps or started seeing improvements in certain countries and I focused my energy on places where I

knew I could make a difference. So that's kind of how I came up with that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So U.S. Army Central and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army also served as the Coalition Forces Land Component Command for CENTCOM or Central Command, sometimes referred to by the acronym CFLCC or C-Flick. Can you explain CFLCC's mission back then during your time as command sergeant major and your roles and responsibilities you had with that organization.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah we still did a number of exercises with the different countries. It was multinational and service. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army would take a role setting those exercises up. We have a number of those every year. I would, same thing, CG couldn't make it to every single thing so between the DCG and myself, the engagement plan, I would go through some of those.

And then the other big thing was Afghanistan. We were in, and a lot of people might not know that, but being the Army Service Component, we were responsible for all property, all logistics,

everything inside Afghanistan that belonged to us. That included all the medical, dental, signal, logistic support, that's all 3<sup>rd</sup> Army guys that is in there doing those missions.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In September 2014, about nine months into your tenure as the ARCENT and 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Command Sergeant Major, President Obama authorized the formation of what was called International Coalition-based organization called the Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve or CJTF-OIR, which was created to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIL. Some people call them ISIS. How did this new organization have an impact on your role and your responsibilities in your travel, if any?

MR. KELLEY: I wasn't too far into my tour there when that happened. We were starting to see the effects of it and starting to prepare for it. When that happened, like I said before, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army staff is already in South Carolina and Kuwait. So now we're creating this whole other entity, a CJTF. So the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army's mission was to create it, we're creating it

from scratch. So now we're splitting our staff again to create this.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you weren't getting more folks?

MR. KELLEY: At that point we weren't. Our job at that point was hey, we've got to go assume this role. There was 90 of us, me and General Pittard and a few other folks that went into the embassy and we got that initial foothold for that CJTF so we started back. We had to split that force again, so now you've already created the friction. So now that whole rotation thing that was going on just cease fired. So we're leaving a skeleton crew back at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and we're pulling all these folks up. Now we've had the responsibility of creating a JMD.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What's JMD?

MR. KELLEY: Joint Manning Document. This is, hey what do you need for a G-1, what do you need for a G-2, what do you need for x, y, z. Everybody who makes up this CJTF, we need to figure it out and now these are all joint folks. Then you send that

back to CENTCOM who sends it to the chief of staffs and then they decide, hey look, the chief of staffs decide the Navy is going to give up x, y, z for this one, this one and this one and that all takes times. So meanwhile, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army is trying to hold this all together and accomplish what the President's mission is. And then on top of that, you're only authorized, at that point, so many troops on the ground. That was probably the biggest thing was, and I, at that point, I didn't go back home anymore. That was a permanent forward assignment for the most part. If I did, it was for some type of conference or engagement that we were doing back in the rear but short of that, I didn't go home.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I don't know if there's anything else with your mission with the CJTF-OIR and how it affected your particular 3<sup>rd</sup> Army's mission or responsibilities with the CFLCC. Was there anything there?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah if you can imagine, you just took that staff and tore them apart again. So

not only the staff are not working with these exercises that are different engagements with those countries but the most important one was the commander. So you just took out the command presence in that AOR. Now he's focused on predominately that CJTF because now he is the CFLCC for that mission. At that point, he's the CJTF Task Force Commander and the Navy, Air Force, Marines, special operation, everybody is reporting to him and he's reporting it to CENTCOM, General Austin. So you just took him out of that capacity, all that stuff in the theater and focused him directly onto the mission there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In January 2015, a new North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO-led mission to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and their institution called Resolute Support was launched, replacing the International Security Assistance Force or ISAF mission which had been in effect since December 2001. What impact, if any, did this change of mission in Afghanistan have on your organization and you specifically?



MR. KELLEY: Yeah so kind of what I was telling you before, we had owned all that property so my commander, it was on his books, legally responsible for that stuff, equipment, buildings. So everything that was coming down or getting transferred over there was coming back through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. Then on top of that, I told you we had those organizations over there. 3<sup>rd</sup> Med, the signal brigade, all these folks are in theater. We have to pull them back and then what do you do with all these folks. So then we're putting them in Qatar, Kuwait and different locations. That created a little bit of a challenge. Then the big challenge is you're kind of in charge of that and you're the Army's component. There are real grey lines when commands get to this level. And then you've got the ISAF is a four star general, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army is a three star general so you just kind of, it's a gentleman thing, hey we're all working the same direction to get things accomplished. I worked with the ISAF's our major was a gentleman kind of thing to makes things happen. It was a little bit interesting for all that

to be happening at the same time. You think about the set of the AOR at that time. The unit I went to, the credit is going, Syria is falling apart, Iran is creating all kinds of problems, Afghanistan, Egypt. We've got the peacekeeping force over there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I guess you weren't bored.

MR. KELLEY: They were at each other's throats. Then this ISIL was popping up all over there. It was definitely a challenging time.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Looking back at your time there while you were forward there, what were you most proud of your guys over there during that mission?

MR. KELLEY: I think just being able to handle all those missions at one time. It was basically the flexibility of the American soldier and leader was incredible. I can remember back where some Russian general said, you never want to fight the American Army because war is chaos and the American Army operates in chaos on a daily basis. It was like that. We were very good at just those 50 meter targets and I was very proud of the team that no

matter what mission we did, they figured out a way to execute it. I think on my time there, was building those foreign corps. That's the thing I am personally most proud of as I look back. I really believe I made a difference there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Looking back at y our time as the ARCENT and 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Command Sergeant Major, do you feel that you were adequately prepared to be the Senior Enlisted Advisor of such a diverse and geographically dispersed organization? I think you pretty much described this pretty well but how much more of a challenge that assignment was compared to your previous assignment as a Division Command Sergeant Major?

MR. KELLEY: Luckily the SMA sent me to that Keystone course. So as far as the joint piece of that, I had some understanding and then my time in Jordan helped some too. I don't think no, it was a steep learning curve. Prior to this, everything was lined up neat for me. A division, brigade, battalion, company, platoon, they're all in one location, it's

the normal thing. Now all of the sudden, you've got headquarters in two different locations, people are spread across 14 different countries at that point. So no, and I don't know if anything can prepare for that. I think at that point, you just have to rely on those experiences that you had and then kind of figure those things out and humble yourself a little bit and ask questions when you don't know the answer.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What were some of the key experiences over your two and half plus years as the U.S. Army Central and 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Sergeant Major that influenced the stuff you took on with you?

MR. KELLEY: I'd say number one is you've got to pace yourself. When you take on a task that large and we're all motivated in the beginning, you've got to pace yourself. That would be the first thing. I would say second, you've got to delegate and trust your subordinates because there is no way you could have your finger on everything with that large of an organization. And then hey don't forget your family, that's a big one. And then create some balance

between your family and that mission that you have. And then the last thing I would say is take care of your body. It's the only one you're going to have. As I was doing so much traveling, I spent like 30 days total at home during that time, you're traveling all the time. You're on different time zones, your sleep is all messed up. You're not getting PT in like you should so take care of your body, it's the only one you've got.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Up until now we have talking about your military career, your assignments, duty positions. I'd like now to switch gears and ask your thoughts about the NCO profession and the future of the NCO corps and the Army. Throughout your career, you attended and completed all of the military NCO education courses. Do you believe that those, what we call Institutional-domain courses, I know the Keystone one you talked about. Did your ANOC and BNOC and PLDC's, did those help prepare you for your positions and your responsibilities and roles as sergeant first

class, et cetera. And if there was something missing, what would you add?

MR. KELLEY: Right. I would say it validated what I learned at the organization. I don't know if I was a fast tracker or if it seemed like by the time I got to that course whether it was BNOC was a challenging one but ANOC for sure. I had already experienced that and the ANOC basically was the validated and gave you like the book correct answer or what you already knew. I think they're important but I really think what you're learning down at the unit level, I think that's the most important piece. I had great leaders along the way and I think the school just kind of gave me what was doctrinally correct. So kind of made sure you're tracking and validated you as a leader.

I think Missan for me was the first sergeant course. I kind of told you before, I had a good grasp from my OC days but on the administrative side, I was lost. I know now we've got master leader course and at every installation you've got a first

sergeant commander course which is great. It kind of lets the first sergeant commander know what you've got, what resources they have on the installations and we give those guys a lot of responsibility and stuff to do. That was the biggest piece I thought was missing was the first sergeant course for me.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In your opinion, what are some of the key things a Senior NCO, your sergeant first class, master sergeants, must do to be an effective leader of his or hers NCO's and soldiers?

MR. KELLEY: First, he or she must be competent and you've got to know what you're doing and you've got to be confident. You got those two things I think soldiers are going to follow you. The next thing is you've got to show that you care for your soldiers. When I say care, I'm not talking about giving them hugs and days off. I'm talking about making sure they're trained physically, physically fit, mentally fit, that they're prepared for that mission that they're going to go into. That is caring for them. So somewhere down the road we got that

confused with what caring means. Caring means make sure they can do their job and come back alive. That would be my advice to a young leader.

MR. WATERHOUSE: In your opinion, what are some of the key things a Senior NCO must do to be an effective advisor to his or her Commissioned Officer or as a Platoon Sergeant or as a First Sergeant?

MR. KELLEY: The first thing they've got to do is build a relationship and trust with that individual. I think that's the key to it all. Then they have to know that you're supporting them and their mission. Sometimes we as senior NCO's forget that we're supporting that commander and his mission versus our initiatives. It is important to understand that you're there to support him.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How important was civilian education to your development as a Non-Commissioned Officer?

MR. KELLEY: I'll put it this way. If it was that important, you wouldn't be talking to me today. I say that because what I told you is that in my



family, education wasn't a high priority. I always wanted to be a soldier. If I wanted to go to college, I would have gone to become an officer, in my opinion. Don't get me wrong, I think sometimes in those experiences, the best teacher sometimes is better than a degree. Where I think the civilian education comes in is after. If I didn't have the education, once I retired there was a lot of doors that are not open to me out here. If you don't have an education when you retire, there are a whole lot of doors that are closed to you.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Like a degree or some type of technical skill.

MR. KELLEY: Something. You betting have something because if you don't a lot of doors are not open to you. I believe in the soldiers getting a civilian education but I don't necessarily believe it should be related to if they get promoted or not.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That's my next question. So in your opinion, should an NCO civilian education, let's say they earned a degree before they came in, is

that worth promotion points and then senior NCO's look highly upon. It is usually good thing if a guy or gal has gone to college if they could do that while they're in the Army and they've earned a degree. Some people have several degrees. Do you think that should have any bearing on a person's selection to sergeant major?

MR. KELLEY: I don't personally. I think the experience piece, his performance piece should be enough for what that mission is. If you get a college degree for business management and maybe it may help you in your military career. How does that transform to that experience. So a guy who stays down the line and does his thing there and has the experience, does that mean the guy that departed from that -- I'm not saying that it's not an important thing to have. I'm not saying a guy who has the education should get selected over a guy that doesn't, if that makes sense. That's my opinion.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you pretty much already hit on this but how important was your unit level or organization training to your development?

MR. KELLEY: I think it was the key. It was the key element in my development. I was taught by experienced officers and NCO's at that organization that I trusted. Today people tend to think that it is up to the academies to teach our soldiers certain things and I just think those academies should be validating that soldiers know what they should at that point and not the other way around where they should be teaching them land nav. If that's the first time they're seeing it then some leaders have failed, in my opinion.

MR. WATERHOUSE: It's almost comparing parents relying on day care to teach their kids right from wrong.

MR. KELLEY: Exactly.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What training events do you believe were the most important or had the most impact on you development as an NCO over your career?

MR. KELLEY: I would say the CTC had the biggest impact. The reason why is it was a test. All those unit organizational training events that you conducted and now it is being tested in the battlefield against the best the American Army has to throw at you.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Combat Training Center?

MR. KELLEY: Yes. So I think, in my opinion, those are the best. Of course, I got to see all that as an OC and how it can affect units.

MR. WATERHOUSE: We haven't always had those as an Army but they are there now so that's good. On the flip side, is there any particular mission or event during one of your deployments that had the most impact on your development?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I think the deployment or mission that had the most impact on me was I talked about (inaudible) and losing the soldiers. We had a tank crew, and I like I said, it was probably 110 degrees. It was very hot inside those tanks with the electronics and hydraulics running. But they had all

been told, hey look, stay buttoned up in the grave yard. Keep your hatches closed. And this specific tank crew, the lieutenant decided that hey it was just too hot. He made the command decision to open that hatch, him and the loader and it resulted in their death. The sergeant jumped on the tank and just sprayed inside of it with an AK-47. That probably had the most impact on me. I lost two soldiers right there because of discipline and a leader not upholding standards. From that point on, I was terrible. I was terrible as a sergeant major on standards and discipline because of that one moment that happened.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You mean you were enforcing that.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. I don't care if you didn't have your sunglasses on. I had relieved squad leaders in my battalion because I'd roll up on them and they were out without their protective eyewear on. There was no exceptions. There wasn't a second chance for that in my organization and everyone knew that.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You touched on it, you went to the Navy's version of the Sergeants and Major Academy. Tell me a little bit about that experience there since a lot of our NCO's obviously don't get that opportunity. They go to the Army Sergeant Major's Academy. So how was time there and how do you think that was different than what we do at the Army?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah it's interesting. Basically what the Navy did was took the Army's core element curriculum and used it as their six week course. I guess the biggest thing I got out of the whole piece was it helped me be a little bit better speaker. Because I had to get up in front of folks and give a speech on several occasions and it helped me write a little better. I had to write those speeches and give them. Hindsight, they made me honorary command chief master sergeant too. So now I had an in with the Navy and Marine guys because the Marines got that same course. All these things came back to my benefit. We had something in common, something to talk about and I had way in to the

NAVCENT and MARCENT for sergeant majors. I was the valedictorian. For us, the leadership piece of it was easy. I enjoyed it, made some good friends. All Navy guys and it took me a while to get all their acronyms down but it paid off later. As a CJTF Sergeant Major, I would go out and visit the Marines on their ships and the Navy on their ships. So it wasn't just Army guys so it kind of paid off to have a little, hey I got my anchor too here type of deal.

MR. WATERHOUSE: A lot of folks realize that once they serve with the other services so that gave you an opportunity to learn a different culture. There is a different culture with the Navy and the Marines. Did you want to comment on that a little bit?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I think some of the most interesting one I found was how the chief's mess and everybody eats in separate areas. I'm like you don't eat with your soldiers and they're like no. They've got their own little tradition. To have be a chief you have to go through this deck plate scenario which

is like and initiation. It's definitely different. Their warrant officers they look at as traders. These are guys that were enlisted chiefs and then went to warrant officer school. The chiefs just hate those guys.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That's a norm?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah so they have a very more split force. We have our own things in the Army but we're all one. We eat together, live together and they're kind of in a segregated kind of style. I thought that was interesting. That and just trying to understand what the quarter deck is and the different things are.

MR. WATERHOUSE: But like you said, that helped you with the joint environment. You could understand where they were coming from.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah exactly right.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So looking back from that course, is there something in there that maybe you heard from peers that went through the Army's course that maybe you wish they would have incorporated?



MR. KELLEY: I think the Army, of course, it has come a long way since then. When I talked to most sergeant majors back then, unfortunately they would all tell me, and even after I graduated and went back to Iraq and I'm talking to some of the other command sergeant majors and I'm feeling a little less because I went to the sister service academy. I need to go to the real sergeants academy and certify. The only thing that we really got out of it was the relationships they built and the networking they built all over that year they were there. It was the biggest thing that still stuck with them. I'd asked them, I said did it help you to be an operations sergeant major and most of them said no, it didn't help them one bit. Now today, they are doing some things, it's a different course completely today and I'm 100 percent behind it. Back then, you just should your willingness.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So you didn't feel that you not going there didn't hurt you.

MR. KELLEY: I did not. It was a joke, they got me that ring when I left the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. They bought me a sergeant major's ring.

MR. WATERHOUSE: The way Sergeants Major are selected to serve in Battalion and Brigade-Level Command Sergeant Major positions, has changed over the years. Obviously, because you lived it. In your opinion, how should NCO's be chosen to fill those? Now the question of the command select list. In your opinion, how should NCO's be chosen to fill those slots?

MR. KELLEY: I think the Army has got to rank, I honestly do. It is a fair system that is put in place. One thing that I was a little concerned with is the 19 series and a lot of those positions that used to be strictly 19 series did not process when it changes, it levels out. But over the years, I've seen that they just selected the best leaders for the job and I've come and think it is some of the best initiatives we've had.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What advice would you give to NCO's newly selected to serve in their first Battalion-level Command Sergeant Major position?

MR. KELLEY: So the first thing would be set the standards from day one. That goes back to when I was a big standard I believe the NCO is the standard for that organization. Don't try to be the commander because you're in a supporting role but build that relationship with the commander. It's the key to success. If you and that commander don't get along and don't have that relationship, it's going to be a rough 24 or 36 months for you. You're going to end up losing that fight. The second thing was the non-deployables. Start focusing on those non-deployables right off the bat. Figure out where your unit is at in that process and start working on it.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Did you have any particular TTP's or tactics and procedures that worked for you?

MR. KELLEY: For me, like I said, I brought all the staff in. I would go to each individual soldier, and it is painstaking, each individual

soldiers thing and we had a little chart of where he was in the process. 30, 60, 90, 120, where he was, what he was doing, who he was seeing. It was painful and I made it painful for a reason. They knew they had to brief all these details to me, those individuals know what was going on. If you're going to sit there and brief me you better know what is going on and it is going to be painful. It forced them to be proactive and by it's own activity, it was fixing itself.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What advice would you give Sergeants Major preparing to serve in their first Nominative level of Division or higher or one or two start level position?

MR. KELLEY: First, I would say get a copy of that TOR, Terms of Reference, and figure out, it's going to tell you what the commander is supposed to do, what is your job, it's going to tell you the deputy commanders job, it's going to tell you what the chief of staff's job is and the responsibilities and the staff and everybody else. A lot of times you'll

find that TOR in the staff SOP. So go in and get your hands on that so you understand. General officers, unfortunately, they're going to say sergeant major, focus on what you're going to focus on. At that level, they kind of give the reigns and they're trusting that you know what you need to do. Sometimes you've still got to figure out what is it that they really expect of you. So understand what you're responsible for.

Generals are looking for sergeant majors not another officer. I don't know how many generals I've talked to that says, I get these guys who now they want to be the officers. They've come to that level, they think they need an aid and think they need this and that and a sense of entitlement. We're not officers and don't get lost in that role. Remember what got you there is a sergeant major, that's the reason you got there.

Just because you're in that new nominal role and you're working for a general, you've still got to take care of things. Like hey, don't be so high on the totem pole you can't go down and inspect the barracks.

Because if you're not inspecting it maybe nobody else is either, or that you can't stop because an area is trashed up and getting it fixed. There are still those types of things. I go out to training events and make recommendations. There are still those types of things you've got to do versus wanting to sit in meetings with the CD all day. If you're in there, you're not getting a lot of information for him. It is a challenging balance but don't try to be the officer.

The thing I always would tell my sergeant majors is the issues have changed. The issues have not changed, only the environment. So if you look at, you're still dealing with the same things and what the sergeant major of the Army is doing with non-deployable folks. You look at, it's the same issues that we're dealing with but the environment changed. The magnitude of the issues are changing but the issues themselves, for the most part, are the same issues you've been challenged with all the way through your career. So you really know, stick with PT or

physical fitness. It's the same issues making sure our troops are ready to deploy and win the nations battles.

One last thing, the key thing to know about generals is they don't have much time. They don't have much time at all and once you get a copy of their calendar when you first get there so you can see what their time looks like and then figure out how do you plug yourself into that. Whether it is PT, whether it is lunch, whatever that might be, you've got to figure out, it is much harder to build a relationship with a general officer than it is your brigade battalion on down. You get more time together but a general, everybody wants a piece of him and every second of his day is just amazing what these guys do. I don't know how they can do it but every second of there is planned. So to get in and get time to build that relationship, travel with him, do PT with him, figure out ways to spend time with that commander.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That's good advice. So this is for any level Command Sergeant Major position

but in your experience, what must a Command Sergeant Major Be, Know and Do to be a good command team member?

MR. KELLEY: First, you must be his confidant and someone he can trust and talk to. You must know and understand their intent. And what you must do is pass that understanding of their intent down to your subordinates and give that commander feedback. So basically, you are the eyes and ears and you've got to be able to relay his message down to the lowest soldier and bring the lowest soldier back up to him. You've got to be able to trust you and that you've got his ear.

MR. WATERHOUSE: As you progressed up through the different levels as Command Sergeant Major, do you think your basic duties and responsibilities changed or more or less stayed the same and how?

MR. KELLEY: In my opinion, some of those sergeant majors would probably tell you different, I think the duties stayed basically the same. However,



like I said before, I think the environment changed and the magnitude of those duties changed. But they are still the same responsibilities. Go read the NCO Creed as a sergeant major or corporal, it's the same mission. I don't think they change.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How were your relationships, you mentioned this a little bit earlier but your relationships with your subordinates Sergeants Major over the years and the various units. How was your relationships with those subordinate Sergeant Majors?

MR. KELLEY: I think personally they were good based off of some of the 360's that I got back enforced that or reinforced that. But first, I think you mentor those guys by setting the standards. They're all seeing you. If you're not doing the right thing, then it is pretty hard to mentor somebody. And then by spending time with them, you're going to learn what their strengths and weaknesses are. I told you once before, somebody told me what my strengths and weaknesses are and I was already TPP. I would go in

and ask the sergeant major, give me 3x5 card with your strengths and weaknesses. On the other side, I want to put your short, mid and long term goals. Those were the things that they gave me. I had one of those from every one of my sergeant majors so I could help them along the way. How are you working on whatever it might be, navigation, administrative things or where are you at in your associates degree. I had an idea and how can I help them based off of their strengths, weaknesses and in their goals.

And then the best way, develop and mentor a soldier. In my personal opinion, you've got to spend time with them and everything. The more senior you get, the harder that gets to be. As a Division Sergeant Major, I would pull two battalion sergeant majors in the morning to do PT with me. Now we did it at 6:00.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Before their unit PT?

MR. KELLEY: Before their unit PT. So I had 30 minutes and we did a little thing called tobias. I had a little thing that would start, go, start, go and

a little routine that I put them through that smoked them good. But during that time, we're not calling any cadence so we can talk. So I would get feedback and say, do they understand the commanders intent. And then these are a few levels down and then I could get their issues. I kind of got to know my battalion sergeant majors just in that 30 minutes a day. It would take you forever to get through all of them but you got that time with him. I had plenty of sergeant majors come back down the road and say hey, that was the best, just getting to do PT and getting your ear for that 30 minutes. The key to any development mentor program, I think personally, is invest time into the soldiers.

MR. WATERHOUSE: We've discussed this topic a few times earlier today but looking back over the entire span of your military career, what would you say are some of the most memorable or proudest moments of that time?

MR. KELLEY: I would have to say I spent a lot of time during the combat missions. It is one of

the things I'm the most proud of. When my granddaughter asks me down the road, what did you Grandpa, I can say I made a difference in this country and this region. A loss of soldiers is something you're never, ever going to forget and if you do, shame on you. I'll tell you, one of my proudest moments was when the President visited Ft. Bliss. I got to take the picture. He got off of Air Force One and he met General Austin, he was the chief of staff at that time. Then he met General Pittard SMA then he got to me and he stopped and he said, hey you're the new guy here. I had only been there for like three or four months, aren't you, I'm like yes sir. That's when he gave me his coin.

MR. WATERHOUSE: This is President Obama?

MR. KELLEY: President Obama. I actually got the President's coin which I thought was pretty cool.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I didn't know there is such a thing, that's nice.

MR. KELLEY: Yeah and then he mentioned me and my wife on national TV. He gave a speech while he was there and we spent the whole day with him basically. After Air Force One, he said you all want to ride with me over to the hanger so we got to ride in the President's limo. He did the speech and then families came from everywhere. That was a really proud moment of you have arrived, the President is talking about you.

I will tell you, the last thing was the Army leadership conferences. I still think about them. It was just a look around that group. It was all two star and above commands. You've the SECDEF and you've got the Secretary of the Army and folks like that that is in this conference. These are the people that control the Army. I thought hey, that's pretty cool, you get to part of that group that made those types of decisions. I was pretty proud of that piece.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Can you describe some of the major initiatives or programs that you created or led as a Nominative Command Sergeant Major?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah I think the biggest one is building the Foreign NCO course. I told you I started with Jordan with the POEC tanks so it kind of let me know this was possible. As I got into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, I continued that work with the joint (inaudible). So I saw them go from the POEC to a basic force to a senior, they call it a platoon sergeant course over there. They were sending their sergeant majors to our academy so I was seeing a big change in the Jordanian Army and it was getting to the point where they had named a Jordanian Sergeant Major of the Army too. So they making great changes.

That and then I started Kazakhstan. I just went in, like I told you, they mentioned me and then I'd go in and hey what can we do. The Kazakhstan model was soldiers would do three years in the Army but they selected them based on a test they took. If you were enlisted or an officer based on how you scored on the test.

MR. WATERHOUSE: It wasn't education based then.

MR. KELLEY: No, it was based off of this test. So then the officers go to like officer academy like a college and then the rest of them go to an enlisted thing. If you scored a certain thing you could automatically become an NCO so you're going to NCO school. I thought man, that's really kind of crazy. You can become an NCO but you don't have any experience, how does that work. I spent some time with them. We finally got some of that fixed. The other piece was they didn't have a centralized training. If you lived down in the south and it was time for you to do your three years, you just put it to the closest installation to you and they train you there for the Army. You did your three years and then you got out. They wanted a more collective type centralized training. So we brought in some teams and we built up the drill sergeant course.

First, we had to certify drill sergeants and we had our own little drill sergeant course over there to certify drill sergeants, help them build a drill sergeant course. Now they had drill sergeants for

basic training and now we created a basic training based on basic infantry skills, is what they wanted. We created that basic training. That was kind of the point it got to when I had left. But just seeing, hey you changed a whole countries Army, it's amazing. I would say those were my most proudest initiatives as a Nominative Sergeant Major was building those foreign armies.

MR. WATERHOUSE: There are lots of topics out there that people like to talk about and you may not have one. Any kind of controversial or high profile issues you personally had to work through over your career as a leader and how did you choose to lead through those challenges?

MR. KELLEY: I think probably one of the best examples I can give is General Pittard's suicide comment. I don't know if you're familiar with that. We had soldier that shot himself and General Pittard made a comment, I don't know if it was to the local paper, but it was a comment that it was a selfless act.



MR. WATERHOUSE: What was your position then?

MR. KELLEY: I was the Division Sergeant Major. He said it was a selfless act to shoot yourself, commit suicide. That just brought on an onslaught. Of course, the chief of staff, everybody and their brother was coming down -- again what most folks didn't know was the context. It was Christmas Day and a guy shot himself that morning. The kids came down Christmas Day, saw their dad deceased on Christmas Day, they'll remember that for the rest of their lives. He was thinking that was a selfless act, he was thinking of nobody else by doing something like that. He's a human being too. That's what we forget too is that these leaders are human and he was emotional about it.

So how did I deal with it, I had my commanders back. I knew, I understood I had the whole picture and I tried to train that the best I could to others. Eventually, you end up having to take that back and write a statement and say, that's not what I

meant and x, y, z because of the number of senators and folks that just tore into it. One small error in our comment, that basically ended his career. He was the deputy commander of ARCENT after that and then retired. He was on the fast track to go and do great things for the Army. But one comment in an emotional state probably ruined it for him. I'd say that the two cents I take from that is think about everything prior to hitting send because you can't take it back nowadays.

MR. WATERHOUSE: So that was a news article?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. Once you send an email or do an article, you can't take it back. Make sure you work through it and you've got a good PAO. That was probably one of the biggest. There were several others that you'd be surprised. The other one, of course, was all the sexual assaults and the like, the things the Army is working through. You just put things in place and try to do your best to minimize those types of things from happening.

MR. WATERHOUSE: For the future force, how did you handle the transitions from the tactical level to the operational level to the strategic level as far as an advisor for your commanders. What was the most valuable for you in those transitions?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah the first thing is you've got to humble yourself a little bit. They're not going to prepare you for something like the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. You've got to humble yourself a little bit. If I didn't understand something, I'd ask, or I'd get feedback to make sure that what I thought was what the commander was explaining was what was really his intent. Most of the time, I had to learn from my subordinates. As you get to those senior levels, there are many subordinates out there who have all the pieces to the puzzle. You've got to reach down there and you've got to be able to learn from those guys or else you're not going to be able to advise your commander on things.

Like is was saying before, the brigade and the battalion levels, you kind of got that experience

level with your commander. The battalion, you probably have got a little bit more and you've got his ear. At the brigade level, you may have about the same level of experience. But as you advance to the nominative levels, the general there is a good chance he's been in the Army longer than you and there is a good chance he's got a couple of deputy commanders that are generals too. The chief of staff, that's a general, so you're not the only one that is advising the commander. If he doesn't take your advice to heart, don't take it to heart because you're not the only person that's advising him on those types of things.

MR. WATERHOUSE: I know you've mentioned a couple of guys by name earlier. Who were some of your best mentors over the years and how did they help you?

MR. KELLEY: Like I said, the first real mentor, I didn't know it, was Corporal Grace, that first line leader. He sat down the basis for the type of soldier I was going to be. Even though I hated that guy so bad, he just harped me every day, he

didn't give me no breaks. Sometimes I say, taking care of soldiers, he took care of me. He took care of me for the rest of my career, I just didn't know it at the time. I tell that to all the POEC graduations all the time. Tough love.

MR. WATERHOUSE: It shows you how important the direct line supervisor, we used to call it, is.

MR. KELLEY: That's exactly right. And then Sergeant Tierney as a platoon sergeant. He was the first NCO, this is the guy I want to be like and it was because it was more about teaching you and taken care of you then screaming and yelling and abrasive type of guy. You knew he cared about you and he was always there. If I had a question, and I don't care how many years down the road it was, I'd call back or email him and he was there for me.

And then I mentioned Sergeant Major Neil Serota, he was my brigade sergeant major, division corps. I think he finished up at (inaudible) but he was always the guy asking questions. I remember I was the battalion sergeant major. We were having problems

with (inaudible) and they were just, golly, it seemed like every night we were doing field article fifteens. Sometimes it's like, hey what actions have the company taken before they brought this up there because most of the time it was nothing. The Sergeant Major would say hey look, let's get the battalion commander to take care of it. I'd say okay and I initiated this program. I called the IG and JAG and all kinds of different folks. I said, from now on, if a soldier gets put on extra duty, his first line supervisor will be there to supervise him. The IG, JAG, everybody told me I could do it. Of course, my brigade sergeant major at the time said, no you can't do that because the NCO corps was raising up on me because I was making these guys that hadn't done anything in their opinion be there supervising their soldiers. Imagine that. So it got all the way up to the corps headquarters that I was doing this. Neil called and said, you keep doing what you're doing, I got your back. I'll never forget that. Hey this guy from the time I was a first sergeant on up, that guy always had

my back. And you know what, guess what happened to the field article 15's?

MR. WATERHOUSE: Drastically reduced.

MR. KELLEY: They reduced. Guess what, now the first line supervisor is taking care of their own problems. They didn't want to be working staff duty outside. Mostly I made them flip tires and do things like that until it got dark and then they'd come in and clean. It just shows you, sometimes you've got to think out of the box. He always had my back and no matter what, he would call you and have an answer. That was kind of through battalion command sergeant major.

So I progressed to brigade and division, Roy Malloy, I kind of mentioned him before, he was the Division Sergeant Major and then later was the USASMA comandante which was still a mentor for me. As a 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division commander, he's right there on the base even though it didn't but it did, all those things answer to the mission. Luckily we had a great relationship and he mentored me through that. If I had

a challenge, this guy had already been division for an x number of years. I could just walk over to his house and say, hey how did you deal with that. So he was a great mentor.

Lastly, was Ray Chandler. He was that guy. He would kick me in my point of contact real quick but he was always there to mentor me and coach me and move me in the right direction from the time I was probably Division Sergeant Major. Most of the time, you say how did they help, it was they spent time and invested time in me. They were always there if I needed somebody to talk to. They were those guys that would check on you, you knew they cared about you.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You've actually been to the Nominative Leader Course. If you were to develop a lecture or a course or something to teach newly selected Nominative Sergeant Majors how to prepared for their upcoming role or future role as strategic level advisors, what kind of topics and themes would you stress?



MR. KELLEY: Yeah I'll tell you that and it's not just because I was a senior facilitator there but I think they got it right. The only thing I would do different as a sergeant major is I would bring in nominative sergeant majors to teach that. Because talking to all of those sergeant majors through those three different courses that I conducted that was the one thing. They wanted more of that contact with the Sergeant Major Schrodgers, with the Sergeant Major Davenports. They wanted those guys to hear those stories like we're talking about now, how to do things and what they expected. Those are the kinds of things they thought they were going to get more of.

It goes back to mentoring and you've got to spend time. The thing I would do different is have sergeant majors come in. And it take some resources to get the Schrodgers and Davenports but there are a lot of nominative sergeant majors out there who come in and teach one of those courses and answer questions and stuff. They could also translate, what does that mean to a nominative sergeant major. That was my

question is how does that translate to the budget or whatever, how does that translate.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What significant changes did you see in the Army at large over your career. In your opinion, how did those changes make the Army better or worse?

MR. KELLEY: Eight different uniforms do you mean?

MR. WATERHOUSE: Well uniforms are one but what kind of changes did you see in your experience?

MR. KELLEY: A lot of, I told my wife that, I said we're America's Army. As you look at it, as the American people start to struggle with a consulate, it seems like the military is the first one to solve it. I don't know if you've ever noticed that but as I look back to whether it was gay soldiers or women, sexual assault, women in combat, we're American's Army. So we're a reflection of all that. And every conflict that America has gone through, whatever it might be, LGBT, we're going to be the

first ones to solve it. I think they kind of look at the military to figure out, hey how do we do this.

We've had this social thing we've been struggling with for a long time. I think we're doing a great job of getting after it because people are reporting it. We're just starting to see on the civilian side that it's becoming that issue and now people are starting to report and we're starting to deal with that.

There has been a number of changes and some people say it's for good or bad, I don't know, time will tell. I think as long as we, and I've said this when they were talking about putting females in tanks. As long as we hold them, every soldier to one standard and they can accomplish that then that's our job. We're here to train soldiers to fight our nations wars and win them. Plain and simple. If they don't meet the standard then they shouldn't be there. If they do, then good for them.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What do you think will be the Army's, put your future hat on here. What do you

think the Army's major challenges will be in the next 15 years, in your opinion and do you think the Army's long range plans that we're looking at now will meet those needs?

MR. KELLEY: I think the Army's challenge is struggling with trying to figure out what the next thing is. We go back through history we never got that right, we never predicted, hey this is the engagement that we're going to do. But the Army always struggles with what is that and trying to prepare for it. The Army survived 242 years. I think it's going to be fine for the next 15 to 30 years. I'll tell you, I'm really retired but General May, the Chief, I think he's got it right. He's talking about hey, let's get back to the basics, let's train our soldiers to fight and win. It sounds simple and everything but as long as we can do that one thing, train them to fight and win the wars, I think we're going to do fine.

What I really, honestly think the biggest challenge for our Army is going to be this whole cyber

thing. If we don't get a handle on it, I think some of our adversaries have probably maybe tried to get a head start. We're starting to figure that out. I was watching something on TV talking about how satellites were attacking each other. These people could this thing with a satellite and those people could do that and I thought holy smokes. Imagine if all of our digital world just ceased at one point. It could be devastating today to deal with all that. I think that's the challenge.

I know we've got the best Army out there and it will continue to be that even with all the internal struggles we have, we're a great Army. We're constantly evaluating ourselves trying to improve, evolve where with some other armies you don't see that. That's the great thing about traveling over to all those countries and seeing those different armies. Nobody even comes close to us and the structure of what the American Army has got. I feel pretty good about where we're at and where we'll be in the next 30 years.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You mentioned earlier a lot of commanders tend to tell their Sergeants Major, hey do what you need to do. Do you think the role of the Command Sergeant Major is understood by the Officer Corps at large?

MR. KELLEY: I think so. It may be a little bit challenging for the battalion at the battalion level. That may be the first level that they're doing that. Absolutely positive that we do a pretty good job with the pre command course and I would suggest they're trying to do it. I don't know if we got there yet where the commanders and sergeant majors go to the course together.

MR. WATERHOUSE: They usually do if you can.

MR. KELLEY: So if they get that together there's a chance to build that relationship so everybody understands what it is they're supposed to be doing. The biggest problem, in my opinion, is sometimes we forget what the command sergeant major's role is. That's what the Army is struggling with right now. You saw that with the last topic and they

gave them the nominative things talking about entitlements and where it goes. Sometimes I think we're starting to lose focus on what we, as the command sergeant majors, and now we've got to be almost like these officers. We're the guys down in the trenches making things happen.

MR. WATERHOUSE: That kind of segways into my next question. The Command Sergeant Major rank has not been around that long. It was approved in 1967 and it started being pinned on folks in 1968. The Navy was something called Command Master Chief. They have something similar, they Marine Corps doesn't have it. They have Gunnery Sergeants. For us, in our big history, long history, relatively that rank has not been around that long. The title itself, Command Sergeant Major probably doesn't help those folks that try to take that to heart that they are somehow in command. In your view, do you think we should even have that rank or should everybody just fill the jobs that are out there? Do you think that is a necessary rank?

MR. KELLEY: Some of my brothers out there would probably shoot me and I approached this when I was in the Army too. I think we should revert back, just like the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major is a Sergeant Major. The term of you're no longer a CSM for life, when I made it to Sergeant Major, hey you're pretty much a Sergeant Major for life. They had to figure out what to do with you from one thing to the next thing. It was Command Sergeant Major from that point on. I think it makes it challenging for transitions. Once you pull it off, you pull off first sergeant and then you're a master sergeant, you kind of feel like you got demoted and people treat you like you got demoted too.

The same thing for a command sergeant major and sergeant major. I see some changes in that as folks are starting to understand how you can be SGM go work on Army staff or go do this and that and still get into a normal job and do this and that. People think that that's a no go. Don't get into that and it is not just the case. I think if we had just one



rank, it would help with the transition. If you're a sergeant major now and then you're a battalion sergeant major or the brigade sergeant major or the division. You're exactly right, command sergeant major gives you that entitlement of are you commanding nothing. That's my take. Being an operations sergeant major, I think, if I had never been one, I may not feel that way. But being one, I can remember battalion sergeant majors treating the brigade operations sergeant majors like they were less than and it was like hey, look. Here's four more taskings for you.

MR. WATERHOUSE: They guy or gal may have already done their job but they assume you haven't.

MR. KELLEY: That's exactly right. I think it should go back and just have one rank for everybody. We'll see.

MR. WATERHOUSE: You retired from the Army last year. You may not have had a choice, I'm not sure, but what led to that decision?

MR. KELLEY: No, I had a choice.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Some people do, some people.

MR. KELLEY: Luckily I got out when I still had a choice. I had been deployed for over a decade in and out of Iraq. When we started that CJTF I was sure when I left there as the brigade sergeant major I would never see that place again. And then here you go, déjà vu (inaudible) and then that kind of changed everything. I stayed forward the whole time and that was the longest period I had back in the states General Terry said, hey go back. It was my anniversary and I think maybe my wife said something to Ms. Terry. So she probably was pulling on his ear but he sent me back kicking and screaming. I said I'll go back if you go back and he wasn't about to leave. So I went back for my 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary and I took my wife down to a beach there in Florida. She was like hey, what are you waiting on, when are you going to retire. She knows, hey there is going to be a next thing after this, what's next. I was like, I don't know.

Honestly at that point, I was getting tired. I knew it was taking a toll on my body physically and there was a lot of traveling and things to try to keep up with and I was just physically getting burned out. I knew that's not good for the troops. What kind of leader could I be at the point I was getting at and it would be better if somebody new with a lot of energy, x, y, z came in. That's when I called Sergeant Major Daily and said, this is how I'm feeling, this is where I'm at. I'll stay as long as you want me to but I just want you to know. He tried to get me to put my name in the hat for another position and I said no. I was ready at that point. Everybody says you'll know when you're ready, or when it is time, and I knew. I think that's a true fact, you'll know when it's time.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Looking back at your Army career, I know we already talked about what you were most proud of. Are there some things you did accomplish that you'd like to highlight and then some things you would have liked to accomplish but didn't get to?

MR. KELLEY: I think number one the most significant thing I'm proud of is I served my country for 31 years 8 months and 11 days. I served those soldiers in those formations. I was their voice all the way through. I kept remembering that I was once those guys. No matter what position I moved to, I had been in that position where he was and tried to remember how it felt in those positions. I think that's probably, and the fact that I honestly believe I made a difference in the world over those 31 years. The things I was a part of, that difference, so I'm most proud of that.

The fact that I got to train all the future Army leaders, who knows where those NCO corps will go in those different armies throughout that region. And then like I told you, getting to sit in the Army conference and hear and be a part of the discussion of the future of the Army and the direction it's traveling and the type of training it might need. To me it was amazing to get to be a part of.

The thing I really wish I could have finished was the development of that NCO corps over there. I really believe that by building that partner capacity, it's going to mean that someday we don't have to either go to that engagement or that mission, they're be able to handle it on their own because of the capacity we've given them. Or if we do have to go fight with them, we've got that relationship that we can coexist. I passed that on to the next guy.

MR. WATERHOUSE: All these soldiers you've served with and leaders, how do you want to be remembered or hope they remember you?

MR. KELLEY: I want to be remembered as a soldier, plain and simple. A warrior and leader others want to follow like Sergeant First Class Tierney. You know that guy that I wanted to be like him. So here down the road some other Sergeant Major is doing this he can say Sergeant Major Kelley did this. That's how I want to be remembered mostly.

MR. WATERHOUSE: How has your transition to civilian life being going? You've been out about a

year now. What are some of the greatest challenges you've had up to this point?

MR. KELLEY: I think the transition was great. I did the ACAP thing when I was in Kuwait to see how that went for my soldiers. We had soldiers do ACAP over there so I said I'll do it too then.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Get out of the Army from over there?

MR. KELLEY: Yeah. So I went and did it over there which I made a lot of adjustments after that. I didn't think it was the best program. The number one thing, and I say for future senior NCO's is start preparing for it. You don't know the job that you're doing now might be the last one. You never know so start preparing for that future and financially start preparing for it. If you don't there's going to be a lot more stress on you once you get out. It's been good.

MR. WATERHOUSE: What have you since you've retired?

MR. KELLEY: Well, as you might know, I took for the last year, I took that position as the senior facilitator for the nominative leader course, prior to that senior leader course. I thought it was my chance to give back to the stewardship of the Army. They asked me if I would do that prior to leaving and I think that's a great thing for any senior leader who's leaving to come back and to give that back to the Army that has given so much to them.

Since then, I'm just kind of keeping my options open. I'm enjoying my granddaughter who is three years old and my family. This is the longest that, I mean, my wife and I have been together we decided we still like each other after 32 years. That's a good thing.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Any definite plans for the future, anything you're maybe hoping to do or you said you're going to play it by ear?

MR. KELLEY: I'm just going to play it by ear. Whatever it is that I do, it will be something I'm passionate about. Me and my wife is financially

insured that we don't physically have to work for the rest of our lives. We are at that point in retirement where we can actually enjoy our lives which is a really great feeling. We've decided that we've spent this whole last year together, we do actually still care and love each other. That's what I'm doing and we'll just wait and see. I've actually thought about maybe going and being a deputy reserve police officer. That was my dream in the beginning was to be a cop so I thought, well I could still give back and do it on my terms with some flexibility. I may do that and be a hand to the community if they need help.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Is there anything else you'd like to discuss, something I haven't asked you or something we haven't addressed today?

MR. KELLEY: Just the importance of having your family. Like I said, I got married two weeks before I joined the Army. She's the one who changed my life, got me back into high school and graduated and stuck with me, a great Army wife, stuck with me throughout all those deployments. We sometimes forget



that they're the ones that are back here with the loved ones that lost their significant other and the challenges they have to deal with back here without us. It's just an unbelievable task that the wives take on. Sometimes we forget that so I definitely appreciate that and how important family is and the great pieces. My son is a captain down in the 38<sup>th</sup> CR so he's continuing the family business. We're just as proud of him and his part in the future Army. I say it's going to be okay, I know when I look at kids like him, I know things are going to be okay. We've got some great leaders out there.

MR. WATERHOUSE: Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to do this interview. We'll talk to you later.

MR. KELLEY: All right.

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## CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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