

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

PATRICK DOLL

Heavy Machine Operator, U.S. Marine Corps,
Operation Iraqi Freedom & Operation Enduring Freedom

2012

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Doll, Patrick., (b. 1984). Oral History Interview, 2012.

Approximate length: 2 hours 34 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

Patrick Doll discusses his service as a heavy machine operator in the Marine Corps during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, his time at Camp Lejeune [North Carolina] and Marine Corps Base Hawaii as well as how military life changed him. Doll explains why he enlisted in the Marines, as well as ultimately why he left. He outlines his training in San Diego in 2003, Marine Combat Training, and Heavy Equipment School at Fort Leonard Wood [Missouri]. He describes his deployments to Iraq with the 8th Engineer Support Battalion, Support Company Heavy Equipment Platoon from 2004- 2007, including time spent at Camp Al-Taqqadum. Doll outlines his service at Marine Corps Base Hawaii with Combat Logistics Battalion 3 and mentions life on the base with his wife, Mindy. He details his 3rd and 4th deployments in 2008 and 2010 to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom to Camp Bastion and then Camp Dwyer. Doll makes comments about the state of Afghanistan during his deployment and his interactions with Afghani nationals. Additionally, he explains the impact the Marine Corps had on his life.

Biographical Sketch:

Patrick Doll enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2003 and was trained as a heavy machine operator and served twice with the 8th Engineer Support Battalion during Operation Iraqi Freedom at Camp Al-Taqqadum. He deployed a third and fourth time during Operation Enduring Freedom with Combat Logistics Battalion Three to Camp Bastion and Camp Dwyer [Afghanistan]. Upon returning to the United States, Doll finished his enlistment at Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

Interviewed by Joe Walter, 2012.

Transcribed by Joe Fitzgibbon, 2014.

Reviewed by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Abstract written by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Interview Transcript

Walter: All right so the first thing I'm going to have to ask you is, do you go by, do you go by Patrick?

Doll: Yeah, Patrick is fine.

Walter: And your last name is Droll?

Doll: Doll. D-O-L-L.

Walter: Doll? Patrick Doll. And did you serve in the Marine Corps?

Doll: Yes.

Walter: Okay, and were you in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom?

Doll: Both. Twice. Both each twice.

Walter: Wow. All right so the first thing that I've gotta do is start off--well, a couple of things that I'll tell you is that--the intent of this tape is to capture your story.

Doll: Okay.

Walter: Not to hear me talking, so you probably won't hear a lot of words coming from me--.

Doll: Okay.

Walter: --in agreement, but I'll be nodding, 'cause I'm definitely listening and paying attention and following, but that might be a little bit different than what you're used to. And we can take as much time as you want, if you've got a time limit, if you want to take a break, just let me know and obviously if we don't get through the interview I can certainly schedule a time to come back.

Doll: Okay, yeah, I've just got to be at the VA [Veterans' Affairs] at two.

Walter: At two? Okay, so you want to leave here by--.

Doll: Probably like 1:30, I guess.

Walter: Okay, well feel free to stop me--.

Doll: Okay.

Walter: --if you need to take a break.

Doll: It's only 10:39.

Walter: Yeah. So I'm gonna just title the tape. This is an interview with Patrick Doll who served with the United States Marine Corps during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Two tours in both theatres. This interview is being conducted at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum which is at the address of 30 West Mifflin Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703 on today, which is the 8th of March 2012, and the interviewer is Joe Walter. So with that title, let's start with--it's hard for folks that are listening to this tape to sometimes picture things, and it's good, maybe kind of a good exercise by starting off by trying to describe yourself in words so that someone can build that mental picture.

Doll: I'm 27 years old--height? [coughs]

Walter: Anything, any kind of descriptor that you think that is important or relevant, or--

Doll: 27 years old, college student [laughs]. 5'7", little overweight. Yeah, I don't know.

Walter: Okay, well then let's--from there let's talk about your background and your circumstances before entering the service. Things like when you were born, where you were born, any education, your family, you have any family members [inaudible].

Doll: Yep, I was born in Madison, I think at Meriter [a local Madison hospital] correctly. Lived in--was brought home to Deforest where my parents lived and then we moved to McFarland when I was probably three and then I grew up there the rest of my life until I joined the Marine Corps in 2003. I graduated from McFarland High School and there I played football, basketball, baseball. Was pretty--I was in to sports, you know, that whole thing. And then I knew I was going to join the Marine Corps--I tried to join when I was like, thirteen, but they wouldn't let me. They told me to call back when I was a little older, so that's what I knew when I was like a freshman in high school that's what I was going to do, so-- I had my plan, and kinda my grades didn't do so good 'cause I knew--I asked the recruiter what I needed, and he said, "Get a high school diploma." So--

Walter: So what year were you born?

Doll: I was born in 1984.

Walter: And when you were thirteen, about what year was that?

Doll: That must have been, probably like '99, is that right?

Walter: So this was before 9/11?

Doll: Yeah.

Walter: You knew that you wanted to be in the Marines. Okay.

Doll: Yeah 9/11--well, let's see, 9/11 happened my sophomore year in high school. I was in my computer class, it was like computer, like design, you know, you make little games on the computer and some kind of computer class, and the people that weren't paying attention, maybe going on the Yahoo site and play cards, and somebody said, "Hey that says--people are talking about the World Trade Center just got ran into by a plane." And so, normally the teacher would get mad, but he turned it on the big screen, and I saw the second plane come in. And then, that's--I think a sophomore when that happened, 2001. Yeah that would be right. So-- But I already knew that's what I was gonna do, and then when the invasion of Iraq happened I was on spring break in Mexico. Was in Cozumel, Mexico when the invasion happened, and so that was kind of--and I was already enlisted, I was just waiting to go, so it was kind of a--an awakening to see what I was in. They had Marines all over the TV running around and, so it was kind of an eye-opener, you know, it was kind of my last hurrah having fun [laughs].

Walter: What--do you recall, did you have family members that were in the service, or--

Doll: I had, well my dad was in the Army from I believe '70 to '73, he was stationed in Germany. My uncle Dennis, he was in the Navy, I think he was--he was in the Navy for three or four years, and that's for like my uncles and family, and then my cousin Devin joined, she was an Army nurse, she was in Iraq. I think she did one tour in Iraq and then my cousin Troy is a sergeant first class in the Army now, he was in the Wisconsin National Guard at the time, and he went to the invasion of Iraq. So we had a little bit of family history.

Walter: Did that play into your interest?

Doll: No. Just watching war movies with my dad, and just always wanting to be--I always knew it was going to be the Marine Corps, I never--I only talked to one recruiter, I never talked to any other branch, I made it pretty easy for 'em [laughs]. I just walked in there and said, "Sign me up."

Walter: All right so you did that when you were thirteen--.

Doll: Yeah and then I--.

Walter: --then you came back.

Doll: Yeah then they called me on my 17th birthday, they called, and we started--I was a junior when I enlisted, 'cause I was seventeen still, had to have my parents sign the release waiver. They were pretty happy to sign it, I was a troubled youth [laughs]. The Marine Corps saved me, so they were happy to get me out of the

house. I think they were just happy to see me grow up and get my act together, and it was the Marine Corps that had to deal with me now, so it was very good for me to get out and get away and grow up.

Walter: Yeah. So when you went to training, where did you go to training and what was that like?

Doll: I went to--Marine Corps recruit depot, San Diego in San Diego [laughs]. It was good, it was pretty much--it actually took me three times to go, I went to the MEP [Military Entrance Processing] station in Milwaukee, took me three times 'cause I kept--right before I was supposed to leave the first time me and my buddy were wrestling around and, you know, fighting, and he hit me in the side of the head and I perforated my ear drum. So then when I went down there they said I couldn't go 'cause I had to wait for that to heal. And then about a month later I went down and they had some waiver things I had to fill out for my bad behavior [laughs]. And then so they sent me back, I had to see more people. And so finally on the third time I think my mom barely stopped the car and just like pushed-- [laughing] and said, "Get out of here!" So--.

Walter: So what--do you elaborate at all on what bad behavior?

Doll: Yeah I had underage drinking, and marijuana, and just being a dummy in high school.

Walter: So since you joined the Marines have things changed?

Doll: Yeah [laughs]. You know, everyone who knows me, it's a 180. I always had a--I think part of my problem was I knew what I wanted to do, I just thought, "Oh if I get a high school diploma, it doesn't matter what I do." You know I wish--while I was in, I try to sign up to become an officer, but my high school grades were so bad that, and I hadn't been in college, that they were like, "You know, you're not--" so I got denied for that. That is one of my bigger regrets, that I didn't take high school seriously. That I kinda held me back, you know, five years later when I wanted to do something, I know at the time I never thought it would be something that would play into that at all, so--that's kind of a regret I have from high school. I had fun--no one had more fun than me, but it held me back a little later.

Walter: So, but when you got to San Diego then and did start the training, what was it like? Do you have anything that kinda stands out in your mind?

Doll: Yeah I always remember all the commercials, you stand on the yellow footprints-- I didn't get to stand on the yellow footprints 'cause there were too many recruits there, so I was in the back, I ended up at the back of the line and they just told me

to stand on the grass. So I never *actually* stood on the [laughing] yellow footprints, but I did it later after I left.

Walter: And the yellow footprints, that's--.

Doll: That's where everyone lines up, when you're right off the bus from the airport, you're on the bus, you see the drill instructors for the first time, and that's the beginning. That's called--the yellow footprints is the beginning of everything, all the training, so--I was on the grass.

Walter: Did anything happen while you were at training, meet any good friends, or--.

Doll: Yeah I met--I mean this was, I guess I left--I went to boot camp in September 9th, 2003—all right, yeah. September 9th, 2003 is when I went, and I had one good friend, his name was--I always remember--Bunch was his name, I don't even know his first name. But we were like best friends for the three months in boot camp, and then I saw him when we went to our Marine Combat Training after boot camp, that was the last time I ever saw him. Never talked to him again, but we were like, we were best friends, you know, for that quick three month period, we were cleanin' buddies, and you know, we were always hanging out, you know, when there was time to hang out or talk, which wasn't much, but-- So it was kinda interesting that someone you know, you meet *that* short amount of time and then never talked to him again. Didn't have a number for him, didn't have a--I think a few times I've tried to find him on like Facebook, or something like that, but I've never been able to find him. So--.

Walter: You mentioned that you guys were cleaning buddies and hung out, what kind of things did they have you doing in basic?

Doll: Oh we would do everything--well you had the field day pretty much every day, wipe clean the floors, mopping, swabbing the deck, wipe the windows, cleaning the windows, everything. I mean, so we'd always go--you had to take q-tips and clean out the vents for heaters, so we'd go on the pen in the corner and away-- when the drill instructors were running around we'd be kinda in the corner cleaning our vent, we just clean like one spot really good, so that way it looked like--'cause if you stopped cleanin', then you ended up on the quarter deck doing pushups or jumping jacks or whatever they'd have you doing, so you always had to stay busy so it helped to have somebody, kind of a partner in crime to always look busy cleanin' something. But you didn't want to clean too fast, because I'm pretty sure they just allot time for cleaning, so it doesn't matter *if* it's clean, you still have to clean, so you gotta--you learn that pretty quick though, you don't want to--you can't do anything too fast if they have nothing else for you to do,

'cause it's just going to lead to, you know, pushups or jumping jacks, or whatever to fill the time.

Walter: So you guys figured it out--.

Doll: Yep. We had a good time with that.

Walter: Cool. Well anything else from the training that you want to talk about, or--

Doll: Yeah, I mean boot camp was, it was easier than I thought it was going to be. I mean, not easier, but--it wasn't--just from playing, you know, being in high school, you know I was in football, a lot of weight room, and running. I ran track my junior and senior in high school to get ready for all the running and so I didn't think the actual physical part was that bad. You know it was the--I'd never been away from home, that was the first time I'd ever been, you know, actually for a long time. I'd been to like camp or whatever, but I'd never been--that was the first time out of the house I guess you'd say. So it was a shock for that, but you know, pretty much easy to follow the rules, you know, it's pretty much set. As long as you don't quit you're going to make it through.

Walter: What did you miss, something about being at home, was it--what made it kind of difficult?

Doll: Yeah it was--I had my girlfriend Mindy who I ended up marrying, so listen to this lovey, yeah we were dating in high school and then I went to boot camp and that's--so that was hard, you know, being-- I mean I was ready, I was pretty independent you know, in high school, and growing up, but I just think the shock, I mean it's culture shock to go from not a care in the world, not a--able to just run around doing whatever to someone--every second is managed, so it's a shock. And it just takes a while to get used to.

Walter: Did you have a chance to--during the three months that you were in the camp, boot camp, did you have a chance to call Mindy or write to Mindy or get any letters?

Doll: Yeah we wrote a lot. Wrote a lot of letters. And I only called, well they give you the first call right when you get there you get your--basically a robo-call, calls, you say your name and then an automatic voice says, "Patrick Doll made it to boot camp safe." And then that's pretty much it. So your parents know that you're safe. And then--I did call her, I think my mom was a little mad, I called Mindy about a week or two before we graduated boot camp I used my phone call to call her and I didn't call my mom, so--might have been a little mad about that. But, so

yeah I got one phone call and I think it was only like five minutes, but at the time it seemed like it was awesome.

Walter: So after boot camp, did you have a specialty or some training after that?

Doll: Yeah I went to--well right after boot camp it was, I graduated December 5th, 2003 and then since it was so close to the, to Christmas, for Marine Combat Training, that's where if you're not infantry or grunt, you go--infantry and grunt goes to the School of Infantry, SOI, and then everybody else, the "Pogues" [pejorative military slang for non-combat, staff, and other rear-echelon or support units] as they call us--goes to Marine Combat Training, that's where I went--that's at Camp Pendleton, California. So since Christmas was coming up, they gave us an extra-long break, you normally get ten days of what they call "boot leave." You get your ten days and then you're supposed to report to your combat training. With Christmas, they gave us all the way until after the first of the year. So I was on recruiter's assistance with Sergeant Brown, Sergeant DeSean [sp?] Brown, he was in my wedding. He was my recruiter, and he was at my wedding, and so I had thirty days to go hang out with him, and he was pretty good. Call him in the morning, make sure I was still alive, and he hooked me up pretty good. And then I went to, that must have been like the, January second or third, I flew back out to California for the combat training. And that's a month I want to say, it's about thirty days. And that's where they tell you exactly what your job's gonna be. So I was a--I enlisted as construction/utilities which has eight fields, you could be bulk fuel, electrician, reefer mechanic, water purification specialist and heavy equipment. Or combat engineer. And I ended up with heavy equipment operator, so that's where from California they flew me out to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and that's where I went through my heavy equipment school. Learned--we did bulldozers, forklifts, front-end loaders, compactors, graters, scrapers. I eventually got my crane license while I was in the fleet. And that--school was fun I met, I had a roommate--there's two guys that I met at school that ended up following me throughout the--well one of them was half way, I ended up being roommates with my first roommate at school, he was my roommate when we got to the fleet, we both went to the same unit. And then the other guy, he was in my same platoon when I was in Camp Lejeune [Jacksonville, North Carolina] right after school, so I met a lot of good guys. It was fun, there's nothing there it's real small. One of those military towns where it's--you get off base and it's tattoo shops, strip clubs, and bars. That's about it, there's not a whole lot there.

Walter: How long was the heavy equipment training?

Doll: I think it was--how long was it? Must have been thirteen weeks, I wanna say. Two months?

Walter: And you had mentioned earlier that after basic training the kind of split, that there was infantry--.

Doll: Yeah.

Walter: --and then there was what you had done, and what--do you have any idea what kind of, did the majority of folks go into infantry? Was it smaller?

Doll: Majority are not infantry just because there's more jobs that are not infantry, but it's a smaller community I guess. I mean, the Marine Corps is only, I think at the time I enlisted was about 185,000, maybe 190,000, so outta that you have--most people are you know, support for the infantry, is what the--you get 'em the beans, bullets, and all that stuff, but-- So I mean everybody else, all the infantry guys go out to their school of infantry either on the east coast or west coast, and then everybody else is all over the country. If you're--radiomen go to Twentynine Palms [Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms], combat engineers go to Camp Geiger and Camp Lejeune. Yeah, you're spread out all over the place so then, that's where you get in your community kind of thing where you meet the people who are going to be doing your job and the kind of Marines you're going to be with. You get a feel for each MOS [Military Occupational Specialty code], though. The Military Occupational Specialty is a little different, every one. Some are more laid-back, some are more strict, some think they're grunts and infantry when they're not, and that's how they kind of compensate for their not as glamorous role, by just being--try to be harder, and try to be, you know, put it out there. So--.

Walter: So how did you make that split from basic training? Was it just--did you want to go into this, and then did you pick--.

Doll: What the recruiters do is they--you can pick an occupation field, so like for me it was construction/utilities, and it was--there was eight jobs within that field, and you couldn't--you could just pick the field, but you couldn't pick the specific job, so like a lot of guys, if you, in that field, in the construction/utilities field--it has combat engineer and *every* kid wants to be a com engineer because you blow stuff up, you build stuff and you blow it up. I mean that's what com engineers do, so all the recruiters, I mean it's kind of a notorious thing that about 90% of people in that field said, "Yeah my recruiter told me I was gonna be a combat engineer." And then they get to MCT [Military Combat Training], or boot camp and they're like, "Yeah, you're not a combat engineer you're a water purification specialist." And they're like, "No my recruiter told me I was going to be this!" "Sorry." You know, there's nothing they can do, they sign the--'cause they tell 'em, they didn't *really* lie to 'em, they said, "Oh hey,"--I think they do it under their breath--"Yeah

you could be a combat engineer." But I didn't mind, I knew what I was gonna get, I knew what I could be, so it wasn't a surprise to me and I thought it would be cool to drive heavy equipment, that's fun. It was fun to start I guess.

Walter: When you found out were you excited about--.

Doll: Yeah! I thought it was going to be pretty cool, I thought, you know I'd work--we did a lot of work with combat engineers, we do, you know, we're kinda in the same--we build stuff, we tear it down, we, you know, basically everything you see on the side of the road. If you'd see it on the side of a construction site, I can drive it pretty much. It's fun, it was cool.

Walter: And you'd mentioned the crane?

Doll: Yeah I got a 25 ton crane license when I was in Camp Lejeune, and then later I got the 50 ton crane license, actually never *really* got the license, but I knew how to operate it.

Walter: Is that license required for your work in the Marine Corps, or is that something--

Doll: Yes that's just for the Marine Corps, they don't really transfer over. Some states will let you transfer 'em over, some won't it just depends on the state. So it was fun, it's a good skill to have, but I was done with it. Got kinda burnt out.

Walter: Okay so you're not doing heavy equipment operation now.

Doll: No.

Walter: So you told me about your 3-month boot camp, and about the thirteen weeks of heavy equipment training, is there anything before we move to the next step, is there anything that happened during heavy equipment training? Any funny stories or good friends that you met?

Doll: I met Brewster was the one, we ended up being roommates. He was--we called him "Prince d'Tutu." His middle name was--his mom was from Africa, and his dad looked like a National Geographic photographer. So, and his middle name was d'Tutu and he was African so we called him the prince. He was an interesting character. He's hard to describe, but--yeah he was good. I lived with him for about two years, so-- And then Navarro, Enrique Navarro, he ended up--I followed him from school, we went to school together, and then we went to Camp Lejeune in the same platoon and deployed together, and then we were both in the same platoon when I went to Hawaii, so-- He's a recruiter now out in Boston, but yeah.

Walter: Was that the next step after your heavy equipment training, did you go to Hawaii?

Doll: No I went to Camp Lejeune first.

Walter: Okay, okay.

Doll: And then, yeah from after school--school's fun I met a lot of the people that, my instructors in school ended up coming to my platoon in North Carolina, in Camp Lejeune, so the community was pretty small, and you know a lot of the same people. School's fun, the Big Louie that's the big place, that's where all the young guys go to the strip club in Fort Leonard Wood, is Big Louie's. That's the place to be. And you could tell people, if they don't believe you are a heavy equipment operator, it's like the code word. If you say "Big Louie's" and they're like, "Yep, alright you're good." It's [laughing] kinda like the community word for you know what you're talking about. So, yeah school was good. Nothing too exciting happened there. Besides cold. I mean it was--I guess it was the end of winter when I went there, so Missouri gets pretty cold. But--.

Walter: So how long were you at Camp Lejeune?

Doll: Camp Lejeune would have been--I got there on the Easter 96 of 2004, so that would have been like April, must've been? Yeah. Like the first week--somewhere in April, I can't remember the exact date. So I got there, they flew me, and I flew with Brewster, the guy who was my roommate in school. And it worked out pretty good, I remember when we flew out we had--since we knew it was a 96 and obviously nobody was expecting us, 'cause everyone was on vacation--the plane, they gave us our tickets, we went to the airport, and then they asked if anybody--the plane was full, so they wanted to know who wanted to give up their seat for a free plane ticket. So we did that, and they put us up in a hotel and fed us, and gave us free plane tickets for anywhere in the country, so that was pretty cool. I used that to go home for the first time when--that was a good deal. So then we got there, and we went to Receiving in Camp Lejeune, it was just kinda--had no idea what to expect, you know, when you go from boot camp to MCT to school you're always kind of a--this was the first time where actually like you really felt like a real Marine. You know, you're not in school, you're not--you're finally in the fleet. So it's pretty exciting the first couple weeks you're there. It wears off, [laughs] but--you know first when you get there and you feel pretty cool. I think I was at that time I was a private first class because I had. I had gotten meritoriously promoted, 'cause I got other people to enlist in the--I referred other people that ended up enlisting, so I got--I had three people that did that, so I ended up--I was meritoriously promoted to PFC, and then you got a free set of dress blues [the US military's dress uniforms of the respective branches]. That was kinda cool. Yeah when we got to Camp Lejeune, I was with 8th ESB, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, Support Company, Heavy Equipment Platoon. And that's where it all

started. I was there from April--I have a plaque at home that says the exact dates on it, but--it was like three years. It was really close to four years I was there. Three years and like eight months. So I was there from April 2004 to November of 2007. So that was a good time. That's where I met, you know, my two best friends, Mike Mossarian [??], Bryce Davis. Mike Mossarian is the godfather of my son, so from there I was--that was 2004 in April, I was there about a year before we deployed to Iraq for the first time. I had fun, I learned a ton when I was there. The first time I ever, you know, the *first* day at work, everybody gets back from the 96, you know, we're the new guys, the--nobody even knows who we are, we're just some--they told me to--there's a big bulldozer in our shop, in our bay, and we had fuel pumps out back. My very first day there, and they go, the corporal says, "Go get in there, take it out, fill it up." I can do this. Like, you know this is something I can do, they're not giving me something too hard. So I get in it, I turn it on, and it dies [laughs]. And I'm like, "Oh no." So they all freak out, you know, they're yelling, "What'd you do, what'd you do?" I was like, "I think I ran out of fuel." I mean, it did. And they were like, "Why'd you let it--" And that's like the worst thing a heavy equipment operator can do is run something out of fuel. It's like that's what they taught you from day one, if you run it out fuel, you're just the dumbest guy ever to walk the earth. So I do this my first thing there, but then I think they set me up. That they gave me one that was gonna die anyways—.

Walter: 'Cause it died immediately.

Doll: Yeah I started it up, and it died. So I had to take the five-gallon jerry cans and walk back and forth with fuel to fill it back up and get it started. So that was kinda my initiation into--so I don't know if they really planned it, but it seemed like it, it worked pretty perfect.

Walter: Sounds like it.

Doll: I mean, you know we got--it was kinda a good icebreaker I guess, you know I didn't mind, it was whatever. So that was good and then we had this old crusty Chief Warrant Officer Four Arwood [sp??]. He was this *old* guy. He used to-- He wore a nicotine patch, and he smoked, and he dipped, and he drank about a gallon of coffee a day. He was that old crusty Marine. He was funny. He just didn't--and that's how I can sum him up, just an old battle axe [laughs]. He was funny. But he was only there for a couple months. I didn't really get to know him that well, but--then we kinda went through a few different chief warrant officers, you know they kinda just cycled in and out. And then--we was there for about a year before we deployed to Iraq in--when did I leave--February of 2005 was when we first deployed, so--I moved in, that's where I met--before we deployed, I guess that's

where I met Bryce Davis who just got promoted to staff sergeant and he's in the Reserves now. So we were both PFCs together, we kinda came up together. PFCs, lance corporals, corporals, sergeant, so it was fun I moved in with him and Steve Heinrich, we lived together in the barracks. This was before I got married, so we had a good time. Living the barracks life. Field van, cleaning our room. We used to have to bleach the stairs, wash the stairs of the barracks with bleach and water, and clean the dust bunnies under our beds, all that stuff that seemed kinda dumb at the time, but now you look back and it was pretty fun. So--.

Walter: So during that time right up before you deployed, you were using the heavy equipment, were you still doing like some, any kind of training at all? Were you actually [continues ??]--.

Doll: Yeah we were doing--it worked, kinda both, I mean all of our projects kinda were training I guess you would say. They didn't let us do a whole lot, 'cause they have--base maintenance is all civilians now. And even then it was that they have their contract to do all the base work so we kinda had to find our own projects to do. There was a little digging pit that we could use to go practice building our berms, digging our tank trenches, and all stuff like that. So we would train with that, we would do kinda--you know one of the things like the younger guys would do, we called 'em "tank trails"--they had for the tanks and all around Camp Lejeune, that's a huge base, so every day you'd have to drive the gear. If it just sat there, it would start getting leaks and break down, so we had to go drive 'em around for about an hour or, just run 'em so--we'd all volunteer to do that and go drive around and then park the gear and hang out for like an hour. And just kinda, you know, hang out and then drive 'em back and do that all day. Take different piece of gear and drive around. That's kinda how you'd kinda hide from the corporals and the NCOs [non-commissioned officers], you know with the "out of sight, out of mind," as a young Marine you don't want to get stuck seen standing around not doing anything. So, that's kinda how we did. You know, we learned a lot of stuff doing that, though, just operating the gear, you know, tricks of the trade, it was fun.

Walter: Was there another group of Marines that were tasked with maintaining all the equipment?

Doll: We had mechanics--well, when I first got to the fleet we were all separate. There was 2nd Maintenance Battalion, had all the mechanics, and then we were 8th ESB, we just had the operators. And it wasn't until like 2006 that they actually gave us some mechanics. So at first we had to do all of--we called it first echelon, just the oils and just the basic stuff you can do with a wrench and pliers kind of thing. Changing batteries, fuels, oils, tires and then if it got bad then we would

give it, you know, induct it into the maintenance guys to fix. So we kinda had a love-hate relationship with the mechanics, 'cause it was kinda, we break it, they fix it and it was an endless cycle of no matter what we did, it was always our fault 'cause we were--you know, things break no matter what, no matter how careful you are, but to them it was always "the operators don't know how to use the gear and all they do is break it." Well that's all they see is broken gear, they never see anything good, so it was a love-hate relationship with them.

Walter: And then you said eventually they started to embed some of the maintainers?

Doll: Yeah they ended up giving us--that was for our second deployment, we ended up with a, like a section, I think we had five or six mechanics. So that actually helped us out a lot where we could--we were more self-sufficient or self-sustainable when we would do our projects, we didn't have to ask for any help from anyone, we could just bring our own guys. Which, it made it good. But--I guess that's about--yeah my first deployment was--.

Walter: Where did you guys deploy to? You said it was Operation Iraqi Freedom?

Doll: Yeah it was Operation Iraqi Freedom. It was February 2005 and we went to Camp Al-Taqqadum [central Iraq, west of Baghdad]. Also, it's called "TQ," that's what everybody calls it. Right across the road from Habbaniya. There was a bridge that connected them. Habbaniya was an old British base that was there I think in the fifties, so they kinda--Habbaniya was down the--you had to cross a bridge to get to that, and then the big base, it was an Iraqi air base that we turned into an American base. Camp TQ, called it "Lakeside." Lakeside. And then there was the more main side where all the headquarters and all the--the PX, and the bigwigs stayed. So they kept us away from everyone.

Walter: If you've got Baghdad kind of in the middle of Iraq, where would Al-Taqqadum be?

Doll: If I remember correctly, it would be--southwest I guess, maybe eighty miles southwest-ish?

Walter: Okay.

Doll: I mean we were kinda in that--that we were still in the--what do you call it--we were by Al-Asad [the airbase], Ramadi.

Walter: And Al-Asad is almost due west of Baghdad.

Doll: Yeah.

Walter: That's like the big Marine--that was the big Marine air base?

Doll: Yeah. There was Al-Asad, that was--I mean, we called it "Camp Cupcake" because they had swimming pools [Walter coughs], they had a movie theatre. I never got to go there. And that's where--I mean, they had the girls got their own--well, that was Ramadi, too. The girls got their own dorms, like running water. So all the stuff that we kinda took from the Iraqis that still worked so they would give--they got to live the good life. When we first got to TQ I remember we flew--we landed, and I had no idea what to expect, and I was thinking, this was my first deployment, I was green, I didn't know anything. And it was night time when we landed. And I thought we were gonna be like jumping out of planes in a movie, like I didn't know. And it was all dark, and we just--a bus picked us up from the flight line, took us over there and it was night, and we're all like--we think, we had no idea what to expect-- a lot of us. We had this really young platoon, we had five or six lance corporals that were kind of our--they had been to the invasion, so they were the salty young guys. They kind of like led all of us. They'd been to the invasion, they'd done all this, they'd been there before, and then we had a huge group. It was about fifty Marines in the platoon, so they were kind of our leaders as the young, you know, junior Marines. And then they taught us everything that we--I'm just trying to think about all those guys. We had fun.

Walter: What kind of stuff did they have you do after you got there? How long--were you there for about a year or?

Doll: No we were there seven months. We were there--yeah 'cause it was [coughs]--we left right after Hurricane Katrina [a 2005 hurricane that greatly affected the greater New Orleans area] because for the longest time, it's kinda funny--for the longest time I didn't know what Hurricane Katrina was. I just thought there was a flood, I didn't know. Because we didn't--the reason we ended up getting delayed there--is that right? [inaudible] Or is that 2005? I think that's right. Or was it 2007?

Walter: 2005 sounds right to me, but I could be wrong. So you were delayed from deploying because of Hurricane Katrina?

Doll: Yeah that's right, yeah it had to be because I was going to get married. Because--we got delayed there because there was no planes. All the planes were diverted for Hurricane Katrina. So, but I was supposed to get married at the--my wife had planned our wedding while I was gone, so she had the whole wedding planned, and they were like, "Oh yeah, we're gonna be home," like in October, beginning of October we were supposed to be home, so had the whole thing planned and then there was no planes to get us home and I guess, so my chief warrant officer got me on a plane to go home so I could get married. So he made sure that everybody else had to stay like another week and a half I think. Yeah, because

they didn't know when they were going to get out of there 'cause everything was diverted to the Hurricane Katrina.

Walter: Wow.

Doll: Yeah, my wife was--she was scared she thought we're gonna like miss the whole wedding, and she had the whole thing planned. So--that's a good way to plan a wedding, go to war [laughs]. I didn't have to do--I picked out the center, or I told her I wanted floating candles, that's all I planned for the whole thing.

Walter: Because you were busy--.

Doll: Yeah I was a little--I was preoccupied. So--.

Walter: Did you keep in touch through e-mail, through letters?

Doll: Yeah at that time it was--it wasn't as bad as the invasion, like those guys had, like, nothing. It was basically letters they had set up. But when I got there, they had set up the phone centers and they had the--you could call to the DSM numbers, you could call through--I would use our phone and I would call the base in Madison, and then they would connect me to Mindy. So that was--I kinda got to know--I always knew what guy, what operator was working at the base in Madison, 'cause I'd always call at the same time, try to call and talk to her. And then--.

Walter: Which base was this, was this [??]

Doll: No that was Truax [Truax Field Air National Guard Base in Madison, Wisconsin].

Walter: Okay so you called to the air base--.

Doll: Yeah I'd call through Truax and then their operators would connect me to--I mean, they'd connect me to any number as long as it was a local, a 608 number they would connect us. So they--and that's how I talked to pretty much everyone. And I did spend a lot of money on AT&T calling cards 'cause I had--that was--they had an AT&T center set up, but it was real expensive. I mean I must have spent--'cause it was hard to get one of the DSM phones because that's--you needed some rank to be able to commandeer one of those. So yeah we spent--all of us spent a lot of money on calling cards and I think that was one thing that everybody asked for was just--send calling cards, you know. I spent a few hundred dollars just calling home, but--it was good, a lot of e-mails and letters. I wasn't so good at writing letters, mostly e-mails and phone calls. 'Cause you know at the time we talked about something, and I wasn't gonna write it in a letter, tell her the same thing I already told her, so-- Yeah the first deployment was mostly--we were pretty much base--I don't want to say like base maintenance, but TQ was

expanding at the time, and it was pre--they still hadn't come up with the idea of doing the surge yet, so the whole--nothing was expanding, they were still on their--you know, just have your bases and then send small things out from the base. So mostly what we did was, we expanded the base, we did a lot of filling Hescos. [Both a modern gabion used for flood control and a military fortification. It is made of a collapsible wire mesh container and heavy duty fabric liner, and used as a temporary to semi-permanent dike or barrier against explosions or small-arms.] Which, I guess, Hescos are the--it's a barrier you fill up with sand--like a chain link fence with fabric in it, and then you fill it up and they stretch out like an accordion so you can make a berm, a barricade or whatever.

Walter: Does it look like a large cube?

Doll: Yeah, yeah, it's a big-- like eight by eight. Or there was the seven footers, there was two footers, four footers, and eight footers I think, or seven footers. So yeah there were different sizes you could make, so if you wanted to make a perimeter, or a bunker-type thing or--you know, instead of just pushing dirt up into a berm into a pile, they use these, they look nicer and they were nice but we grew to hate 'em just because they're a pain in the neck to get set up. I mean, these giant metal accordions that it took four people to manhandle 'em, get 'em up, and try to keep 'em straight, fill 'em up with dirt. We'd have the front end loaders and try to fill them up with dirt, so yeah it's a skill, you know it looks--we got pretty good at it, and everyone thought it was so easy, but it took some time to get--you know, if you do it too fast they fall over, so yeah we spent a lot of time doing that and we had--we heard that--at that point we hardly ever left the base because there was just so much base maintenance to do. We started doing a project, we made a new ECP, an Entry Control Point for the base. It was a big project. It was a three month project. That was my first experience with, well, *really*--we were 24 hours a day, and it was--you didn't stop. The only time the gear ever stopped was to put fuel in it. We had two teams, we had night team and a day team, and we just worked around the clock.

Walter: So it was what, twelve hour shifts?

Doll: Yeah. And we doing--yeah it was--we had guys falling [laughing] asleep driving-- Like it was bad, like one guy fell asleep and he was in a scraper, and all of a sudden we're like, "What is it--" Everyone's lookin' like, "What is he doing?" And all of a sudden he's just driving off into the--finally he ran into the outside edge of the base, the berm wall and that's what stopped him. He fell asleep [laughs]. But I mean, it was kinda monotonous because when you're moving dirt like that--we moved hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of dirt, but we turned--it looked like hills, it was rolling hills is what we took and we made it flat. So we--that's when, I

guess I should mention--my two favorite sergeants were Sergeant Merryman [sp?] and Sergeant Bazuska [sp?] were the two that led it, and they were the two that were like our mentors--like the real mentors, they were the older guys, the ones that--they had all the experience, they had been on ship, they had been, you know, they'd already deployed--they'd been all over the place. Okinawa. So they were the ones that really--they were almost like our big brothers I guess you could look at it as. The ones with all the experience. They weren't like the staff NCOs where they were just, you know--they were more mentors to us about how to be a Marine, and how to do your job, so they were good guys.

Walter: So anything else during that first deployment?

Doll: Yeah at the end of that deployment we started doing what became known as "road repair" where all the IEDs that were so prevalent--we started--so if there was an IED blast, what the insurgents started doing was--a truck would hit, an IED would go off, there'd be a big blast hole. So then what they would do is start using that blast hole to put another bomb in, so that when people would come up to it, or they'd use it to hide other bombs, and you know obviously then if we were on a road you had to--you couldn't drive over that spot, so it would tantalize you to go to the other side of the road, and then there'd be another IED there. So, we--well, since we were the heavy equipment guys we had all the equipment to do it, we started going and fixing 'em, basically doing road repair. We would take concrete, we'd go out there, we'd cut out the road if we had to. We had Bobcats with concrete saws on 'em. And we'd go out there and, you know, cut out the road, fill it back in, and we came up with a thing--we'd stamp it. Because--at first we started doing it, we'd go out there, fix it, but then, you know, concrete takes a while to dry even if it's quikrete it still takes, you know, for it to really set it takes a few hours. And we were just doing it and leaving, and then what they--what the insurgents started doing was putting bombs in the wet concrete, so that way-- So we'd fix the roads, and then we'd send out a report to everyone that says, "Hey we fixed this shot hole, we fixed the blast hole here, it's all good." So then they would go over it, and they'd hid an IED in it, so then what we had to start doing was putting a stamp and painting 'em, so we had a special 8th ESB stamp, and we'd paint around 'em with spray paint, so that way when people were driving you could tell if it was disturbed. And we were using--I mean, it was kind of a evolution thing. And it worked out that my next deployment after that we went back, I was in the same base for my second deployment, in the same squad, everything--that it was just an evolution, like we picked up--like, we started it, and then when I went back in 2007 we picked it back up again, it was just an evolution of trying to basically outsmart the enemy. 'Cause then when they started

using a lot of metal detectors to find IEDs, we were using metal rebar, so then we couldn't use metal rebar, we had to switch to using--not graphite--.

Walter: Some sort of a composite?

Doll: Yeah, like a plastic rebar. Fiberglass rebar, the word I'm looking for. So we had to start using fiberglass rebar, and then we had to start waiting. Like, we'd fill in holes, and we'd have to actually sit there and wait for it to dry, because we couldn't--we were having so many problems with them putting stuff in it, but yeah that pretty much ended--we only had one actual IED during my first deployment when we were going. That was pretty--at the time we still didn't really understand that it was an actual war. Just because we were doing so much work that, we were out there, we were in the back and they had just came out with the new Armadillo, the troop carriers. The big seven-ton truck with the armored sides, and-- So they'd take us out and we'd do road repair, we'd all--ten or twelve of us would pile in the back of it like a big road trip, and so you put a bunch of like, eighteen to twenty-four year old guys in the back of a truck for eight hours at a time--we weren't real serious all the time just because it got so--it was hot and boring, and so we were taking pictures, and when the first IED went off we were all standing out taking pictures, and driving down the road, and--*boom*. So, that was kinda my first, "Wow this is pretty real." But I mean, no one got hurt, everyone, everybody was fine, it was a couple hundred yards back in the convoy, but that was my first, you know, it's real. But yeah we got lucky that, I mean, we made it through that deployment. I don't think anybody died or anything that time.

Walter: And so you were initially doing a lot of base work, and then you started doing this road repair, and when you'd go out to do the road repair, I mean obviously that was a location where an IED had gone off, did you have other Marines providing security for you while you were fixing the roads?

Doll: Yeah they would do--sometimes we'd do, let's see--gotta keep my deployments right. They did, yeah the first time we did it, they had MPs [military police] that they used as the kinda provisional security teams. We would more or less just embed with them. They'd take us out and they would provide security. Or we would use the CAT teams, they were basically like mobile mortar men kind of thing. Like pretty badass guys. They just drive around shooting mortars. They were pretty cool. So yeah we didn't have to provide our own security, which was nice. They just let us focus on doing our work. It was hot. 'Cause this was, I mean we were doing this in the middle of like, August. Yeah, July, August in Iraq. It was like 110, so we're out there--and this was, we just real primitive with it, we were mixing--we had our welders make, we had our Bobcat, and we had to make--it looked like a big cake mixer. We called it the Betty Crocker, it was a big cake

mixer and it attached into it, and it spun. And we had a big 55 gallon barrel that we'd mix the concrete in, so we'd be lugging around fifty, seventy-five, hundred pound bags of concrete that we'd mix basically by hand, I mean we'd have to dump 'em in there, dump the water in, until you got enough concrete to fill in this blast hole. So we were doing that in the middle of the day in the middle of the sun, so we had a few guys go down as heat casualties--heat exhaustion. Yeah, so they were long, hot days that you'd come out, they'd give us some coolers full of ice and the water was hot by eight o'clock in the morning, so you'd drink water, I remember it'd burn your lips it'd be so hot, trying to drink that water at three in the afternoon when you're just dying. You could drink, like--they had the big 1.5 liter bottles, you drink six of 'em, still wouldn't go to the bathroom you'd be so hot, so sweaty. I think, I guess at the time I just hated it--we all hated it, it was just--and then you look back on it and it was cool, it was fun. I mean it was kind of our--that was the best platoon I was ever in, that first deployment. Was the most tight-tight-knit, just--that was the best platoon I ever had.

Walter: What do you think caused it to be tight-knit like that? Were there certain individuals, or what you were doing, or?

Doll: Yeah, it was--I think it was kind of the mixture we had. We had really good sergeants, we had two really good sergeants and then we had--the makeup of the platoon was just great. The corporals were great, they were--and I think for like the lance corporal group, which is the majority of the platoon--we had those groups of like three, three and a half, four year lance corporals that--they weren't necessarily, they weren't *bad* Marines, but they were just like, they were seasoned, and they good, they were smart, but they weren't, like, they weren't bad Marines, it was just how the promotion system was working at the time that they ended up with a lot of experience but at a low rank, so I think it just, it was something about the platoon that was just the--it worked, and it was fun.

Walter: What do you think about taking a quick break?

Doll: Yeah. What time is it?

Walter: It's about eleven thirty.

Doll: Okay.

Walter: And then--so, we've kinda, I think you've done a good job covering your training and all the way up through that first deployment, and then maybe we can pick up--if there's anything else in the first deployment you want to talk about or we can get into the second, third, and fourth.

Doll: Okay. Yeah.

[Doll and Walter seem to leave tape running, indistinct voices in background; tape runs from 00:55:00.04 to 00:55:43.08 when they both return]

Doll: I can't drink beer out of the tap.

Walter: [inaudible]

Doll: [No discernable transition back to interview about his service] They changed the name of it at some point. Yeah it must have been 2007, 'cause we--yeah we flew into, on our way there we went to Germany from Camp Lejeune, we drove and took a bus, they picked us up on buses. That's where you say your goodbyes and everything, you had a big formation. Families, well I guess at that time, the first deployment I was by myself, so that's actually the best way to go. It's harder when the family's there. They go up to Cherry Point [Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in Havelock, North Carolina] to fly out of, it's about a 45 minute bus ride. They fly us out of there on a commercial flight. We went to--I think we went to Germany that time. Germany or Ireland and then you go into Kuwait. There might have been another stop along the way. I remember some of the later ones, but yeah we flew into Kuwait to Camp Victory [occupied the area surrounding the Baghdad International Airport], which is, that's what you think the desert is like [laughs]. It was nothing but desert as far as you can see. Hot. [inaudible] The tropical hours-- most of the people there only come out at night because it's so hot. Both my Iraq deployments were in the summer, and those were hot. But yeah it was Camp Victory, and they have--the thing I remember about Camp Victory is they have the *best* USO [a nonprofit organization that provides programs, services and live entertainment to United States troops and their families] I think, on the planet. That is, you go there they'd have the big shag carpet, you'd take your boots off, and they had movies and phones and all that stuff. So that was good. That was on my way back from the first deployment is when I found out I was going to get promoted to corporal, so I remember that's where I found out, was in the USO there in Camp Victory. I was by myself 'cause I was flying back, they had sent me back earlier so I could come back and get married. And so I was, you know, it was just kind of like a mish-mash of--I was flying with some truck platoon that was a bunch of dorks, but--I didn't really like, something about their platoon I didn't really like. So anyways, but I was there, and I was in this thing and I was looking online, looking at the thing and I found out I was getting promoted, and I was like, "Yes! Aw, I got no one to tell 'cause nobody cares," [laughs] like, "there's no when else I know here." So it was kind of anticlimactic to--I got all excited, and looked around, and was--no one that cared, but-- So, that's where I found out I was getting promoted to corporal which was pretty cool, I took--that

was a year or how was it? That was two years into the Marine Corps I got promoted to corporal. It was two years and one month I believe it was. So yeah, October 1st I got promoted, was my promotion date and then, so that was pretty cool, that I got that. Two years, took corporal. Then I headed back home and got married. We had a--my wife, well fiancée at the time--Mindy, she drove down with my dad for the homecoming and they were about two hours late to the homecoming, or when I got off the bus, so that was kind of funny. That she missed it. Then we ended up getting back. That's where I had-- So we got back from that deployment, and I turned 21 in Iraq, I was a dispatcher at the time, I was doing dispatching duties for--all the gear has to get dispatched out, keep a log of it, what goes out, what comes in, the hours, who's doing it and all that, so-- That's what I did for my 21st birthday, was stay up all night dispatching heavy equipment. It was a pretty rowdy time. So I didn't have my first beer until--my first legal beer I should say [laughs]--until I got home, with my dad. We went to Sharpshooter's, a little bar, sports bar outside of Camp Lejeune. So had my first legal Budweiser with my dad, that was fun. We got back, so they only stayed for a little while and then they had to drive back. And then I flew home a little bit after that and we got married and Mindy drove--we had the wedding and then we packed up her parents' van and what'd we take--yeah, her car, we packed up her car and her parents' van, and her parents drove, they followed us and we drove to Camp Lejeune. And we got on-base housing, and that was-- We got married October 22nd, 2005. [laughs] Make sure she knows that. And, yeah we went back to North Carolina, married, and we got this little tiny house that was on base, so-- it was the old base housing. What you think of when you think of military housing. It was probably built in the '50s maybe. A one-bedroom, was a little tiny shack, and they told us they were re-doing--all the money was coming in for the military at this time--and they were re-doing all the base housing, and they said, "Yeah take this house, six months you'll be in a brand-new three-bedroom townhouse, it'll be great." I'm like, "All right, we'll do it. We can live in this for a little bit." So we get there, the first night we're in there, we set up--all we had was a futon at the time. And we set up a little TV, and we had to sign an asbestos waiver to stay in the house, because it was an old house, and it had had asbestos in it. And so my wife isn't--she kind of a hypochondriac when it comes to that stuff, so she's--you know, with a new house, or like an old house but you're first one to live there, there's bugs, and dead bugs, and dust and you know, just--I was okay with it, I was used to living in kinda crud, so-- But she wasn't having it too well. So we turn on the TV, and the only channel we get is like Dateline, and it was about how you were going to die of cancer from asbestos! And so she [laughing] freaked. I was thinking, "Of course that would be the only channel that would come on." And our first night in our new base housing, and it's about how

we're going to die from cancer of asbestos. But, [laughs] so it ended up being a great house. Met some real good friends that were our neighbors there, and that was good. I always liked living on base. Some people hated living on base just for, you know, they wanted to get away from it, but everyone on base was real nice, so we liked that. And then--so that was around, that was like the 2005-2006. Then 2006 we started training for our next deployment back to Iraq. We did--I guess one thing I forgot for both deployments that we did Mojave Viper [name for the pre-deployment training program during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan] in Twentynine Palms [Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms]. You go out there for a month where you simulate being deployed. And it's--Twentynine Palms does a pretty good job at simulating that desert environment. The food's horrible, it's hot. Pretty much miserable. So I did that. Both those deployments we did Mojave Viper. Did that training, do all your convoys, all your shooting and practice and all that. So I went back--that's actually where I reenlisted right before--I reenlisted when I was in Twentynine Palms for Mojave Viper before our second deployment. And *God* that place was miserable, don't ever go there. The only reason--the Marine Corps got it because nobody else wanted it. They--I think it was the Navy had it, or the Air Force--I think it was the Navy had it, and they were gonna--they didn't want it anymore, so the Marine Corps said, "Hey, looks like a good place for us!" And that's how we ended up in that God-forsaken place. But it was good training, you know, we always--we hated it--I guess I keep saying we hated it at the time, but then when you look back it was, it was kinda fun. But we did--out there we did a lot of fun projects. They let us practice a lot, you know, with the gear. They couldn't find their water pipes out in like the way-edge of the base, and they wanted us to fix some like--fix the road and put up some berm, and we hit a water pipe. And they were actually happy we did, 'cause they didn't know where it was [laughs]. So that was good. I guess that would have been--we deployed kind of the same time for February of 2007, so I think that was Thanksgiving of 2006 was when I was in Twentynine Palms for Mojave Viper. And we had--the Boy Scouts came out, that was the time the Boy Scouts came out and gave us Thanksgiving dinner. And I guess that was kinda always the hard thing, that I missed a lot of holidays. And I love Thanksgiving. I got lucky, my first four years I never missed a Christmas. I was able to go home. And I really only missed things like Easter, Thanksgiving, times like that. And that was okay, but--it wasn't too bad. So we deployed, I was in the same unit, same platoon. 8th ESB Support Company. They had changed--I believe in that time frame they changed from 2nd FFSG, or 2nd Force [??] Support Group to 2nd Marine Logistics Group. It's just a name change, same thing. The Marine Corps likes to do that [laughs]. That's the only thing I guess that really changed. At that time I tried to apply for the office program, MECP,

the Marine Enlisted Commissioning Program, and got denied. I was kinda bummed about that. That was when I was almost positive I was gonna do twenty years. My wife, she was all for it. She was happy, she was going to school, at Coastal Carolina Community College and she was liking it, I was loving it, so I figured might as well be an officer. That didn't work out, so I think that kinda took some steam outta me. That I thought I would have been a good candidate for that, but it didn't work out, so-- That was right, yeah right before we deployed and then we went back to TQ, same place. It was kind of a bummer, I wanted to see more of the country. I never got to go to Baghdad or Al-Asad. I was always in-- some of the bigger name places that you hear about I never got to go to, but it was all right. But yeah we went to the same place, the same SWA huts [apparently as in "Southwest Asia"; A SWA hut is usually a 16-foot by 32-foot wooden structure and is used by the Marine Corps as supplemental office space, living quarters and briefing rooms], the same building, I mean, the same, the same *room*. To do basically--not the same thing, but we're still doing that and road repair was a big thing. We had--that was our main mission. We stopped doing all the base stuff. They had more people there. A lot of civilians that they had brought in to do all that kind of stuff, so we were out there on the roads doing the road repair, and IEDs had really picked up, in that 2007 was the timeframe they did--the surge started, so we were part of the surge, not the infantry part of the surge, but the actual kind of envelopment of building bases. We did--we built combat outposts--between our road repair--we'd do road repair, and then we'd take the entire team out and do a three-day, three or four day, five-day, 24 hour round the clock faber. An operating base or patrol base build, and just out of nowhere there'd be a new base up overnight. So that was our big thing. With the road repair, I had--I was always pretty proud that there--well there was four teams, three of 'em were led by sergeants and I was the only corporal that had my own team. So I thought--I was pretty proud of that. We'd go out there, and it became kind of a competition how many holes could you fill in in one day, one mission. I think the most we got--we were up, you know, we could do like twenty a night, you know, if we got some of the smaller ones, if we didn't run into any problems we could--we kinda got it down to a science, we'd just--they'd plot us out a grid, and they'd be like "Here's about four miles or so, and there's about thirty spots we want you guys to try to fill in." You know sometimes we would just fix stuff that wasn't even a shot hole, we would just fix anything we could if it was out there, so-- That was fun, I had a good crew. I think, you know, I was the lowest rank with my own team so I kinda got shafted on the good Marines, I got--they all cherry-picked all the good Marines and left me with kind of the flak. But we did good, I think. A lot of the good stuff we did on Route Michigan. That was a road when we left in 2005, that we weren't even allowed to go on. It was off-limits, nobody, I don't think--barely

any, unless you're Special Forces, were the only ones that went there. And then when we went back in 2007 we actually finished fixing that road, so it was good to see the progress that was actually made that wasn't reported, or wasn't--you know, not many people saw it unless you were there, the progress that was being made. So, things like Route Iron was another big one that was real bad that we ended up fixing. We fixed it up, made it operable. People could use it, convoys could use it. That was fun. A lot of the--some of the combat outposts we built were, they were fun builds. We'd go out there with the infantry, a lot of times it was the Army that went in before us, but they would go in about eighteen hours before us and clear it, and then we would come in and basically overnight there would be a base. There would be--put up Hescos, we'd build berms, and that's how the idea of the surge was. You know, we're gonna surround Baghdad-- So I felt like that--that was one of the times where I actually felt like I was doing something that was kinda cool that actually made a difference. I got a lot of responsibility, me and Bryce, and Mike Mosseri--we were corporals at the time, and we had like one sergeant on this deployment, so--actually we had two sergeants, but we were spread pretty thin. It was a different dynamic for the platoon, so the corporals had a lot more role to play. So we actually were pretty much running the project, which was fun. So we got a lot of good experience with that. That time we had a really good chief warrant officer, it was Chief Warrant Officer Forson [sp??] was a maniac, he was awesome. I mean he was old, he'd been in twenty or 25 years and that guy could run like the wind. He used to take us on--every Wednesday was Chief Warrant Officer Death Run Day. So we'd--every Wednesday, that guy could just run. I guess it's hard to explain. He could run like an eighteen year old, and he was pushing 45.

Walter: So he wasn't the smoking cigarettes--.

Doll: No!

Walter: --just totally different.

Doll: Yeah totally [laughing] different. He was a beast. You know, he was awesome. He had that mentality of, he was all--one of the smartest guys I think I've ever met. He just had--he's like an encyclopedia of Marine Corps heavy equipment engineering knowledge. It was cool to work with him, he always stuck up for us, he never let anybody mess with his platoon, so that made it--it was good we had chief warrant officer for--there's not a whole lot of people that tell him what to do, and--besides the battalion commander and you know, above that, that's pretty much it. So that deployment was good. We had--I spent a lot of time in Ramadi. I lived in a couple Iraqi houses like when we'd go do these builds. One of 'em they said was going to be real short, you know they're like, "Oh we're just going to go

out there for a day, you know, put up some walls, whatever and get out of there." Ended up we were out there for like a week. And nobody brought their sleeping bags, and one of the Iraqi houses, the guy must have been a rug, or a blanket salesman. So we all were like huddled up using these Iraqi blankets and everyone got sick. We got the crud, with the-- [laughing] I mean, it was pretty--when I tell people this story, they're like, "Oh that's gross! How could you use that?" But we were cold, so had to do it.

Walter: You think you may have gotten sick from using these blankets?

Doll: Yeah I'm almost-- we had to use this guy's gross, nasty blankets that--his mats we would lay out on the floor. I mean, he was gone, he was part of a--he took off when the infantry came through, so they just kind of took it over. And we made it our house, and-- A different one we did outside of--where were we? Ramadi? It was right outside of Ramadi, we built an Iraqi police station, it was like the Iraqi police and the militias that they had going on, so one half was going to be for the army, and one half was going to be for the militia guys. But they dropped us off there, and we were the first group to get there, and it was kinda out on the--right off the highway--oh what's that thing called? I'm forgetting the big road.

Walter: This is the main supply route--.

Doll: Yeah.

Walter: --that's going right by Ramadi?

Doll: Yeah.

Walter: Is Ramadi just to the north of Baghdad?

Doll: I think it's still south.

Walter: Southwest?

Doll: I can't think of it. [inaudible] Anyway, it was right up the highway, and when they dropped us off there, the convoy that was supposed to follow us got cancelled. So we were sitting out there, we had a couple boxes of MREs, and no water and no-- just a few MREs and just whatever we had brought with us, and we had to live like that for three days in the middle of June. We had some tanks out there with us that we had to try to borrow, the Army tankers kinda helped us out. And one of the Iraqi militia guys brought us some food which was-- I ate--it was interesting, that was one of the times I actually was interacting with the people. 'Cause where our job was we didn't do a whole lot of interacting with the locals just because they never--it really didn't serve a purpose for us. You know, we were out there,

we were building bases and we were working nonstop, so that was kinda cool actually. I got to fire--when we were doing that build--we took some of 'em out there, we let them fire our M16s, we got to fire their weapons, and so that was fun. Actually getting to--they think cameras were the coolest thing, I showed 'em my camera and took some pictures, and hopefully I can dig those out and give 'em to the museum. So that was deployment was mostly--it was fun, we were outside a lot, we were building, we were fixin', so that felt--that was fun. It went fast.

Walter: When you were up there for a couple weeks was it just your team or one of [inaudible]

Doll: Well we do, we did the big builds, like the FOBs, the forward operating bases and the patrol bases. We took the whole platoon. We would only leave a couple people back in the rear to do just basic maintenance type little things that had to be taken care of. We would go out there with about fifty--must've been fifty Marines, give or take a few. And it was non-stop, it was--they did one headline that was "COP [Combat Outpost] in five days." You know, we did--we would come out there and we could build a whole base, literally I mean, in five days out of nothing. We built one on a Iraqi chemical plant. It was my first experience with chemicals [laughs]. So we did--we had one of the guys--we built this thing in--a couple of my Marines, they were putting up a berm and they dug up two--I think it was two or three barrels of a yellow and purple powder, and they ended up having to get medivac'ed out because they were--it was chemical. They said they almost--their hearts almost stopped, you know, they're vomiting, and this stuff, it was all in the area. You know, they broke it open and they got it the worst 'cause they were right by it, but I knew that we were--I guess me and my buddies were always joking, I knew we were really--not brainwashed, but--we knew we were really Marines when there's chemicals in there, you could smell 'em. You could smell the powder in the air. We were sleeping, and they had just put up the women's SWA huts that were going to be permanent there and we were staying in those until it was our time to work, and they said, "They just hit some chemicals, it's all in the air, we need everybody outside!" We're like, "But that's where the chemicals are! All right, let's go." You know, we didn't really think, I mean, yeah we were like, "Well, all right they said go, let's go." So-- But we never really got affirmed. They brought a SEAL team out there to--that's the first time I saw SEALs like, real life doing their thing was--they brought a SEAL team out there to collect samples and see if they could figure out what it was, and from what I heard, you know, it was--the trickle down rumors was it that made it to the Pentagon, you know 'cause it was chemical injury, but they said it was just bug spray or bug repellent. Which I don't really believe, but it was something. You know, I don't think they would have buried it just for fun, so that was an

interesting experience being out there. But that based ended up getting turned over to the Iraqi Army. It was the 13th MEU [Marine Expeditionary Unit]. We built it for the 13th MEU that was coming in to take it over and then they were going to transition it to the Iraqi Army, which happened. So it was another thing that we could see that we're actually doing something good with our time.

Walter: So how many people were on your team? You said that you led one of the four teams?

Doll: Yeah we had--it was about eight or ten, I had at that time. And we would, we'd kinda rotate you know if we needed an extra guy, if it was going to be a big job, but we kept about eight Marines that were just on my team, and you know we all had our systems. You know we had this--this thing was called the Creep Mobile, which was this big--we got it from the Navy--was this big truck. It was pulled by a seven-ton, but it was a big trailer that basically mixed concrete and shot it out the back, and that was kind of the evolution of--between 2005 and 2007 was they finally got us better equipment and, well they got us this big concrete, you know, mixer thing but there was only two of 'em in the entire Department of Defense. So--and they're hard to get parts for, so they break and then you have to have our mechanics try to jerry-rig it up to keep it workin', and then they bought us a little--it looked like a miniature, it was a miniature cement truck--the same one you'd see driving down the road, but it was miniature. So we had that thing, we tried that out, it was made it like Italy, so it was this weird contraption. They did good, they tried to get us all kinds of different things to make the--to make our job easier, but, while we were doing road repair. It was just an evolution of, you know, there was never--there was no rule book, there was no playbook for how to do anything, we just to make it up as we went. That was fun. I mean just to get out. Sitting on base was boring, so everyone always wanted to be off doing something.

Walter: Had it been like the first deployment that you had, this deployment? First deployment sounded like you might go off base to do road repair and then you'd come back at night.

Doll: Yeah.

Walter: This time you would go far enough away that you'd actually stay.

Doll: Yeah, yeah we would stay a couple--I think the most we stayed was about a month, we stayed out building. So that made the deployment go real fast, which was good.

Walter: Did you have a different type of security this time from the last time when you guys--

Doll:

Yeah we did our--we ran our own security. 8th ESB put up their own, or stood up their own security platoon. Which was, it was good, they had the--everyone was jealous of them, they had the--'cause everybody else, we were in the engineering battalion, we had stuff to--everybody was busy with--we had the motor transportation guys, and the utilities guys with all the generators and all that. The water, the fuel, the guys and us with all of our equipment, we were always busy, always doin' stuff, and the security guys, they had some trucks. They had nothing to do, they never had--all they did was get in their truck and drive, so you know, we'd be out there slaving away, and you know we'd get back from a mission, and we'd have to clean up all the concrete mess, or if we were doing a build, clean our gear and all that. And like the security guys would just go, drop their stuff and go to sleep. So we were jealous of them for--we thought, I mean their job was boring, they would just sit out there and sit on a gun all day, but they had it a lot easier than us in terms of manual labor. Yeah it was fun, I mean that was the big thing on that deployment was those builds with the surge. So yeah that whole time I was still a corporal for that whole deployment. I missed it--the way the Marine Corps works is they have a point system, your cutting score to get promoted. And I thought--I missed it by five points in December of--well it would have been December of 2006, I missed getting promoted by five points. And I didn't get promoted, that whole time it's when, I guess I'll just say--around that time is when they did the ramp-up, or they expanded the Marine Corps to 202,000. So all the--everybody reenlisted, they started getting bonuses, the bonuses and the extra points for being promoted, and so the scores went really high, so I chased it for about a year. I didn't get promoted to sergeant for another year almost. So I missed out. My enlistment bonus was--I ended up with like \$12,000 as a reenlistment bonus and then my--Bryce, my friend, he got--he enlisted, reenlisted--must've been three months after me, and he got almost \$30,000, so it [laughs]--I was so gung-ho about reenlisting, I should have waited, I would have gotten another \$20,000, but-- Yeah so that--I was a corporal that whole time, but it was fun, I mean I liked that role as being with those Marines, it was fun. I think that's pretty much--that deployment was me, Mo, and Bryce--Mossari--that's where we really became best friends. We did everything together. We ran the projects together, we did all that, so that was fun. The next four years in the Marine Corps I never met friends like that, so--I still talk to them, I talk to Mike all the time. Bryce is down in Texas now, so--It was a good time. My time in Camp Lejeune was fun, a lot of people didn't like it, 'cause there's no big city. Guys out in San Diego, they have San Diego, LA, Vegas is right there. And then Camp Lejeune is kinda in the sticks. You got--there's really nothing there, you gotta drive 45 minutes to Wilmington to go to a college town, but I liked it. It was better for a guy who's married and wasn't looking to go out and party. Staying at the house

and have people over was good. That deployment--[inaudible] end of that deployment pretty much. Not a whole lot else happened. And after that it was pretty uneventful. We came back home, and I ended up getting promoted to sergeant--let's see what would that bring us to? That was on--it was, okay, about October of 2007 and then I turned around right away, I reenlisted--when I reenlisted I deferred my choice where to go, I had asked to go to Hawaii for my reenlistment. And I could've gone right away, but I didn't so I could deploy with them. It was one of those things, where you know, at the time I was like, "I want to deploy with them, these are my guys, these are my friends, I'm gonna go with 'em." And then halfway through I was like, "What was I thinking? I could be in Hawaii right now!" So, but I came back, and my wife had graduated from Coastal Carolina, and then we PCS'ed [permanent change of station] to Marine Corp Base Hawaii about a month after I got home, we packed up and moved, and we landed in Hawaii on November 15th of 2007. And that's where I joined, at the time--they had just changed the name--well we are CLB Three, is what we are now--Combat Logistics Battalion Three is what they changed--they were-- I picked to go to that unit, it's definitely because they were non-deployable, and that's what I wanted. CSSG Three, that's what it was. Combat Service Support Group Three was the name that I went to, and they were a non-deployable unit. The way they did it was, Hawaii's so small, I mean there's only about--it's roughly like 5000 Marines on the whole island, so we would just deploy as little augments, three or four guys would go, and everybody liked that, which it was good. And then, three or four months later they changed it to CLB Three, and it became a deployable unit, so that was the end of that, just staying in Hawaii. I figured--I thought I was just gonna get four years to hang out and sit on the beach, but that didn't happen. So in--I was there, we did a lot of things on the big island. They have the Pōhakuloa Training Area on the big island, we'd go up there to the army base. That's where if you're in Hawaii, that's where you do all your training in terms of like, you know, convoys and if you actually want to shoot anything--mortars, artillery--for the Marines that's pretty much where they go. We supported that a lot, we'd go up there and the grunts would go up and do all their training, so they needed truck drivers and they needed their heavy equipment support, for us, you know moving everything around. That was a pretty miserable place, kinda like Twentynine Palms where somehow the Marine Corps finds these places, and the Army--that, you're in Hawaii, but you're about 8,000 feet up in the mountains and it's freezing. So I didn't think I go to Hawaii and be freezing, so--we did that. I ended up going there about three times. Went to the big island about three times.

Walter: Where were you typically based?

Doll:

We were at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, it's in Kāne'ohe [on the island of O'ahu]. Kāne'ohe Bay is the bay, and our mailing address was Kailua, Hawaii. Our house was on base, and it was Kailua, Hawaii, but Marine Corps Base Hawaii, it's kinda a redundant name I guess. That's what they gave it. Doesn't have a cool name, it's not Camp Lejeune or you know, Camp Pendleton, they just call it Marine Corps Base Hawaii. And I was based out of there. I went from this big, huge platoon of-- I think at one point we were up to eighty Marines when I was in Camp Lejeune, and I went to a platoon of--I just got promoted to sergeant before I left--and I went to a platoon of like, six. And they were all sergeants. So I was used to being like, in charge, and having a squad, having people to tell what to do, to--we had one lance corporal, that's right--so it was like six of us and one lance corporal. And we were all sergeants, so there was--we all had to chip in and do our work just like it was anybody else, so it was kind of a shock to be--it's not what I was expecting. You could walk across the base in Hawaii in twenty minutes and Camp Lejeune it would take 45 minutes to drive across. So it was just a *big* difference in terms of the make-up of the platoon and the company that was in. We went to--the way they worked is we were attached to the motor T section, or the motor T platoon, so I went from being the--the platoon revolved around heavy equipment to we were just a small piece in a motor transportation platoon. Which it was good and bad, they didn't--the motor T guys didn't know anything about us, and they kinda left us alone, 'cause we weren't even in the same building as them, we were three blocks away. So that was good. It was good and bad, you know I met some--Navarro was there already, a guy from school, and he was already out there. He was a character. About that time I guess would've been--let's see where were we? 2008. Yeah so I would have been about ready to deploy again. We got our deployment order real short, we only got about thirty days' notice for deployment, so it was--for, like, the families--I think most of the Marines in--they just didn't really care. Not that we didn't care, but we just figured that's part of the job, and so we did a six-month training work up in thirty days. We did--and it was, bam, we were in Afghanistan. The warning order came out, and then we were gone, there was no time to--all that training, we didn't do the Mojave Viper, we didn't do any of that. We just did some range time, some quick mock convoys, and that was it. And then we were in Afghanistan. That time we flew into--where'd we fly? Went to--its kinda weird how you fly from Hawaii over there with the airspace and the way things work we had to fly over the United States instead of going the other way, which--the airspace and the way the jet streams work, is what they told us, is why we have to do it like that. But we flew in there and flew to Camp Leatherneck [Marine Corps base in Helmand Province, Washir District, Afghanistan]--no it wasn't Leatherneck yet, I was in Dwyer [Camp Dwyer in

Helmand River Valley in Garmsir District, Afghanistan] for my second deployment. It was a British base. Oh what the heck is the name of that base?

Walter: We can come back to it if you think of it.

Doll: Yeah. Oh what the heck. It's the base that turned into Leatherneck. It was the British base that they let the Americans stay on. And that base had been there since the beginning of the war, they established it in about 2001, so it was a pretty established base, it was the main hub of everything. So we came into just a disaster of a--the Marine Corps side was bad because-- I want to say it was the 11th MEU or--one of the MEUs was in there and another grunt battalion was there, and their only job was just go rape, kill, and blow stuff up. I mean that's what they were there to do, and--but their logistics side was just a mess. There was no organization to anything, so we had to go in and basically start--it was even worse than starting from scratch, was what we fell in on. It was just a monstrosity of gear, and nothing was accounted for. I mean, this was when--I guess to give a little context to it--this was the first time we were part of the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force. It was the largest group of Marines, the first--basically concerted effort to do something in Afghanistan since 2001. I mean, we had the initial group in 2001 going in there, overthrew the Taliban, but we had a small presence. They sent the MEU and the 2-7. The grunts went in there and their whole mission before us, they went in and then they just killed stuff, they blew stuff up. But when we went in there it was the first concerted effort to build and expand and lead the way for when President Obama brought in the, like the 30,000 more troops that he put in there, this was the first step to actually doing that. I mean we were doing this before anybody even knew that it was going on. We were in there, we were building and fixing and getting the logistics side set up so that you could bring in more troops. The--Bastion. That's the name of it, Camp Bastion [British military base in southwest Afghanistan].

Walter: All right [Doll laughs].

Doll: Knew I'd think of it. Yeah it was--Camp Bastion was the British side and then Camp Leatherneck was built in the last two months of my deployment there, the Navy Seabees [United States Navy's Construction Battalion (CB). The word "Seabee" comes from initials "CB"] and they came in, and now it's a monstrosity of a giant base. That was when I left in 2010, but--our whole mission there, we were basically logistics. We went and did some more of the base-building type stuff too, but it wasn't the same. It was--I mean, they're two completely different countries, when you go from Iraq to Afghanistan. Afghanistan is like going back five hundred years. Literally like--the movie Star Wars where they show Luke

Skywalker's home and it's those little, like, mud huts and--that's what Afghanistan's like. They're mud--at least in the--I was in the southern Helmand Province. They are living five hundred years ago. They dig irrigation ditches, they ride camels, they use pack mules, and it's a--pretty crazy to see how different it is from--you can come from America, and then go over there and see-- I mean, they ride--their base technology is motorcycles. They have motorcycles and they have little--they have cars, but it's just not--it's a whole different world. It's hard to explain how different it is. We went through--we were still doing kind of the same thing, we were a logistics unit, so we were doing logistics supply routes. Going to places like Nawzad [Helmand Province]. I spent--Nawzad was one of the worst places at the time. I spent the last two months of the deployment at Nawzad as the only--I was the only heavy equipment operator to be there, and I was attached to-- I was attached to one of the grunt units that was out there. They had no support. They originally built the base in the middle of the town, and they didn't really put much thought into the security of it. So I had to go in there and re-fortify all the Hescos and I got to go out and do some demolition with them. They'd take me out on their convoys. They'd be on their foot patrols, but I'd bring my 'dozer with me. I'd drive my 'dozer. So it was pretty cool, I got to do like, got to wear my blackout night vision in my 'dozer, so that was my first like high-speed type, you know, mission that I got to do. Go out there and knock buildings over because for their guard towers, and since we were right in town, they looked out over the town and there were some dead areas where they couldn't see, where they needed buildings knocked down and so I got to go out there and knock stuff down in the middle of the night. So that was fun to get to work with them. They took me on a few patrols. I did--just have me go do site surveys of the areas that they wanted fixed. So that was fun, it was the first time I actually got to go out and just do like patrols, it was kinda fun. But all those guys were real nice. They had a group of combat engineers. The way they worked was they had a metal detector and a group of--they'd take one squad of grunts with 'em and they'd be out there out front with their metal detector sweepin', and that was the only way to find IEDs. So out of the--just when I was there they lost two guys. One guy lost both his legs, and one guy, he died. That there was just no good way to find IEDs. They were walking through cities, just walking through the city that was full of garbage and they were taking a lot of casualties that way. So Nawzad ended up, even with how I saw the progress in Iraq, and I went back and saw the progress that was in Nawzad, that they were starting to bring people back into the city, and so that was kinda cool to be able to see that progress was actually being made. Trying to think--what else did we do on that deployment?

Walter: Not quite as much road repair versus Afghanistan?

Doll: No there was--yeah I guess that's a good point, but there was no roads. Well there's one road they have, and they call it Route One, it's the only road. Literally it goes around the whole country, it loops kinda. There's one road, so you'd take that, and we'd only barely drive on it. We did all cross-country driving. It was cool, because--if there weren't bombs and a war going on, it's a really beautiful country actually, when you get in the countryside and by the mountains. It's really a really cool area to see, and there's some spots where there's actually underground rivers, and you can look down and see this river on the side of the road, but it's underground. So there's a lot of cool things that--but then there's nothing there, there's no houses, there's nothing built up. There's mud huts, there's tents, there's camels, and so--this time, that deployment I didn't get a whole lot of interaction with the people. Well, we did a lot of more builds. We were building up-- I guess one of our big projects we did was one of the main smuggling routes coming from the north to the south, they needed patrol bases set up there, so we went out and we built three patrol bases and we would literally pull up and this was the first time they let us convoy. We drove our own heavy equipment, which was unarmored and at that time everything was armored, up armored [the process of putting armor on a previously unarmored vehicle] and--but we had to drive our own equipment, because they couldn't get the other trucks out there. So we had to kinda, not sign off, but they were like, "Are you okay driving your gear out there?" And we're like, "Yeah let's do it!" It wasn't the safest thing in the world [laughs], but it was kinda fun. So we'd do these convoys. We drove out there, and overnight there'd be this--people would wake up and they'd walk out their mud hut and there'd be a base right next to 'em. So they'd get mad when we'd drive over their poppy seed. So we'd build bases, you know, if I had my 'dozer I'd be building berms and it'd be--they'd get mad when you run their poppy over, but [laughing] wasn't a whole lot I could do about it.

Walter: How did you know they were getting mad, like--.

Doll: Well they'd come out, well they come out and shake their fist, and start yelling. I mean, just kind of the body language and they'd bring the interpreter over to try to talk to 'em [laughs]. They just weren't too happy. I think they'd end up paying 'em, you know they'd give 'em--they bring Civil Affairs guys and pay 'em whatever it was worth to 'em, but they'd pay 'em off for it. So that was another thing that was kinda cool to see, you know, we got to build up some of the spots. They might not have liked it at the time, but a couple of the bases we built like that, the people were really thankful because we'd bring the corpsmen in, the Navy Corpsmen, and they'd look at the kids, and help 'em out and give 'em medicine. Sometimes the Taliban would come through and terrorize the little village, and they were just glad we were there to do that. We took in some

animals, we had a little pet dog for a while at one of our places. Yeah that was, I mean we worked a lot. It was long--that was in the winter, so these--both my times in Afghanistan was in the winter, so I went from Iraq being hot and miserable to being cold and miserable [laughs]. But it was good. We had--not a whole lot--there was still the IED threats and all that on our convoys when we'd drive around, but I don't think--it didn't seem as bad as Iraq was, just because--maybe it was 'cause we were driving--we never took the same way twice just because we would be like "Drive north." That was, "Drive north 'til you find a base." So it was a lot harder for them to pinpoint where we were going to be, but it also made it hard because we were driving through sand and you didn't really know what the terrain was going to be. We had to--a lot of trucks got stuck and we'd have to get out and pull 'em, so it was good and bad. We had both ways, they were *long*. We used to do fourteen, sixteen hour convoys just one way. Just getting there. It always worked pretty good for us being the heavy equipment guys, they normally dropped us off and then we did our work. Where as like, the motor T guy, the actual drivers, they had to drive back. They might get a few hours sleep, but then they had to get back and drive back to the base, but we'd get to stay out there, and do our work, and then go home. It was pretty good. It was a good deployment, just 'cause it was new, I think is why I liked it. I didn't want to go back to Iraq again. It was new, it was--we were kind of on our own, the way my platoon was set up. Before they put us in a different section, we were with the motor T guys, and then they decided, "Oh, you should be with the Utilities, more the engineering side." So we were kinda like the bastard kids of the battalion, because there was only six of us. So basically six of us, six heavy equipment operators for the entire southern Helmand Province to do all of their heavy equipment work, which they just-- I mean, we worked all the time. Our motto was "We were open seven days a week, 24 hours a day," was our--we put a little sign out for our hours of operation. But I mean it was, we always had a radio on, there was always somebody on call, I mean we didn't stop for seven months. You know, we were all sergeants, and then the only lance corporal we had, he had a DUI, so he was a lance corporal. He should have been a corporal. So we were all NCOs. We were all, you know, seasoned. We'd all been in, we'd all deployed, which was good because we didn't have to babysit. There was no young--for us, for our little heavy equipment section there was no young Marines. We were all a little bit older and had been there, so that made it a lot smoother to get through. You know, I didn't plan on--I didn't think I'd be doing that much operating as a sergeant in the Marine Corps, but it was fun. We got out there, and sometimes the younger guys get taken advantage of when they're new heavy equipment operators, they can get, you know, taken advantage of, they can only do stuff they're not supposed to do, and being a little older knowing the game, I was able

to--we were all able to, you know, run our own show and we had no staff NCO, we had no staff sergeant above us, it was sergeants that ran whole thing for us, and it was a good time. I don't know what other big projects we did that time. They were starting to build a new air base in Bastion. That was one of the big things, they were building up the air base so they could--before the surge, that surge in Afghanistan, the 30,000 troops that came in--they had to get all the air bases, all the flight lines set up. We didn't actually build the flight lines, we helped offload. They were bringing in all this matting, that's how they made the flight lines, with the LM2 matting, it's like a jigsaw puzzle, it's how they put together the flight line. And they brought in a million square feet of it, and so luckily we didn't have to do the manual labor to put it together, but we had to offload it all off the planes, so we were all over the place with that. With that deployment we did everything. We did flight line stuff, we did--built FOB, COP buildings, we did just general support for the base, we did--we went to other bases, like when I was at Nawazad they just sent us--we were just kinda everywhere. We didn't have one--there was no clear defined mission, that's the point. And that kinda goes for the entire Special Purpose MAG-TF [Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force] we were with. There was no--we were like a filler. There was no clear defined mission for us. Our job wasn't to-- basically our job was to not lose any ground, was what it pretty much came down to. Even for the infantry that was part of the MAG-TF, was--which I think they were kinda mad about, they weren't allowed to expand. You know, they were at Nawzad, and they were getting attacked, you know, they'd get mortared and attacked, and so they could repel attacks, but they couldn't gain ground. So they were kind of in a holding pattern, and that--I know that made them mad, the time I spent with them. The one cool thing they did when I was there in Nawzad, they did the biggest bombing raid in the whole war. They dropped as much ordinance in three hours as they had in eight years on the town. And it was--we all sat up in the towers, like, the watch towers, and just watched 'em just destroy the city [laughs]. So that was pretty fun. They had all the JDAM [Joint Direct Attack Munition, a guidance kit that converts unguided, "dumb" ordinance into guided, "smart" ordinance] 500-pound bombs, and the--HIMAR [M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) is a U.S. light multiple rocket launcher mounted on a standard Army Medium Tactical Vehicle (MTV) truck frame] missiles, the truck-fired missiles, mortars, and so they just--it was like watching a movie.

Walter: Was this at night?

Doll: No they did it like, early in the morning.

Walter: Okay.

Doll: So it was kinda--you know, we could just see--it was *nuts*. But the only problem with it was that the insurgents knew it was coming, because they had at the time, it's called ICOM [??] chatter where we could pick up their radios. They didn't have any kind of crypto or anything on their radios, so we had our radio guys and a couple of interpreters, they just listened to their radios all day. And so they would know exactly where they were going, exactly what they were talking about. And on the radio that morning they said, they picked up, "Hey are they still bombing us at 8:30 this morning?" So there was a lot of leaks. I mean, that's just conjecture on my part, but there was a lot of leaks coming from the top-down in the Iraqi government--or the Afghan government, I mean. That they knew we were doing this big bombing raid, so I don't know how effective it actually was besides it was entertaining for us. Yeah we were just kind of the jack-of-all-trades for that deployment. There was no mission, but there was always a ton to do, so--.

Walter: What was the living--what were the living conditions like in the--compared to, say, your time in Iraq?

Doll: We started--we lived in tents the whole time. In Iraq, we lived in SWA huts the wooden, combat engineer-built, Seabee-built SWA huts. Kinda like a hunting shack, I guess. Pretty much the same thing. Ten by twelve kinda construction. But in Afghanistan, it was all tents. They had us in--put up, they were called Laskan tents I think they ended up getting. There's like this-- tent technology I guess has come a long way since these wars. They used to just be the GP, general purpose tents, the big green monstrosities. And now they kinda went away from that to more of the streamlined living accommodations, but they're still tents. But they would have better heating and--they'd have a heater, and an air conditioner in the unit, but we were living on cots. Seven months of cots was pretty much standard. They were nice enough to give us a little mat to put on top of our cot [laughs], but that was our creature comfort. We got used to sleeping on the ground, we'd sleep in--you know when we were out doing a project, we'd just sleep wherever until the combat engineers could get out there and build--sometimes they would either put up tents--I guess there wasn't the biggest difference between Iraq and Afghanistan--was they didn't build SWA huts in Afghanistan, they just put up tents. --these Laskan tents and base X tents. So I don't know why they did that, or maybe it was just materials, or--it didn't seem like it was that much faster to put up these tents than build a more permanent building, but that's the way the way they went, so-- We went--basically in that deployment, we mostly went to Nawzad, Sangin [town near Nawzad] [coughs]--trying to think some of the other-- what was the name of that town? There's a few other towns that we went to that, I mean, this was just the beginning of what there is now. We were really the beginning of expanding in Afghanistan and actually putting a concerted effort into

doing anything, so everybody was living pretty rough. You know, we had our WAG [Waste Alleviation and Gelling; a portable toilet system used by Marines in the field] bags had to go to the bathroom in, there was no toilets, there was no running water, there was no--everything was berm pits, which I was so happy that was a sergeant because I didn't have burn poop. That was the biggest benefit of having a little bit of rank--didn't have much, but it was enough not to burn poop. So [laughing] that was probably my favorite thing.

Walter: So someone else would have to take these bags and burn 'em?

Doll: Yeah! I mean we would have--there'd be a like a pit, basically. They'd take the Hescos--we used Hescos for pretty much everything. I've seen a Hesco grill, I've seen a Hesco shower, we made Hesco bathrooms. So they'd cut 'em, so there'd be a open--you could open the door, and these WAG bags came with plastic stools, or else we'd make our own little toilet. Put the bag in, and do your business, and then you'd just throw it in the pit, and then you know some lance corporals and PFCs had to go out, and they'd dump you know, fuel on it, and have to burn 'em. There was different, many crude ways to dispose of it, so--.

Walter: Was that something that was going on all the time? Was there always [??] burning--

Doll: Oh yeah, just that smell of burning trash and feces. Yeah that's a very distinct smell of war, I guess would be--just, you get used to it, is the funny part, like after a while you don't even notice it. Some of 'em, yeah they'd just be half cut 55 gallon drums, and they would just go do it in there, and then burn it right in the drum, and slide it back under the makeshift toilet, and-- Yeah just that god-awful smell was--but you do get used to it. Like I can smell it right now. Like that fuel, and--yeah, you get used to it, it's just the way it is I guess. Yeah we found--I guess that's kinda one of the funny things about war is you find interesting ways for going to the bathroom, wherever it may be. If it's on the side of the road, or if it's you know, sitting on the side of our 'dozers, or--you gotta do it, you gotta do it [laughs]! I'm sure that's been--every time there's been a war for however long there's been war. Yeah I guess the big thing I remember about that deployment is: the food is a big thing, so we ate at the British chow hall. It's just culturally different, you know, they eat blood sausage, just the way they do things is just different. So we always thought it was kinda funny to go and kind of make fun of the British. We didn't get to work with a lot of them. Not that we really worked with them, but there's a lot of different countries there--just on Bastion, it was. We had the British, we had Australians, there was Swedish, Dutch, Canadians. There's just all kinds of--it was a lot more coalition than Iraq was, where you get just different--there was tons of countries that are all involved in it at a different

level. So you know, talking to them and comparing--you'd just be sitting outside, smoking, whatever and start talking to one of 'em about--you know, I had one guy explain to me what the difference--what actually Great Britain was, you know? You just start talking and tellin' 'em. They'd ask questions about America, and they'd tell us about Britain or wherever they were from. So I think that was kinda--it was interesting to meet all these different guys, compare what is your military like, why do you guys do that, why do you wear those funny hats, kinda thing [laughs]. I think some of them kinda resented us as Marines, because we're very professional, and you know, always wearing your cover if you're outside, always you know, your uniform always looks nice. And a lot of the other countries are a lot more lax with that, but then when we showed up, their leaders kinda--they didn't want to be shown up by us, so then they cracked down on them, and so I think they kinda resented us for that. Kinda not showing 'em up, but you know, we took away their nice relaxed atmosphere. I think it was probably good for everyone [laughs]. Bastion did also have the only Pizza Hut. The British had it, the British paid for it, that there was a little wagon. Kinda like a bus, I don't know what you'd call it. A lunch wagon type deal and yeah they had Afghan Pizza Hut, so--.

Walter: Did you get some?

Doll: Yeah we'd make trips over there, I mean it was on base, so we'd--it was kinda a thing with some of our Staff NCOs that when they'd want us to do something for 'em that was kinda under the table, or you know, help 'em out--you know, "Oh I forgot to ask for this can you do this real quick?" or you know, those kinda side deals. "I'll go get you pizza!" So [laughing] they'd drive over and--you know, they had the higher ranks, the staff NCOs and officers all had cars--well, they had the cars, the trucks, and everything. Not just Humvees or something, they actually had trucks. So they'd drive over there. It's too far to walk, you had to actually drive there, so it was kind of a treat for us. So they'd go get it for us, and that was always good.

Walter: Did it taste like Pizza Hut?

Doll: It--sort of [laughing]. I mean, better than nothing. But yeah it had--it was close. Close enough. Yeah I think that's about--for that deployment. I mean, I had--you know I met some good friends there, I guess Navarro was there, Hernandez, Sergeant Hernandez. That was the deployment he actually--Sergeant Hernandez got--he got real sick and he had diabetes they found out, so he got sent home. That was big. And we were a pretty close group of guys just because there was so few of us. That was kind of a big deal for us to lose him. Not to a war injury, but you know he got sick and had to go home. But it was fun. Looking back I guess--

haven't thought a whole lot about that deployment because it went so--kinda like the middle child of my deployments, I don't know. Haven't thought about it a whole lot. It was good, there were a lot of good Marines there, a lot of good experiences, had a good time. But that was when I started to get burnt out. Really to be like--I was still thinking I would stay in the Marine Corps at that time, but I was kind of on the downhill slide of really wanting to get out and go to school, and just kinda go my separate way from the Marine Corps, but I still had two years left. So yeah I got back after that deployment in, that would have been 2009-- Yeah, 2008, yeah I went 2008-2009.

Walter: You went back to Hawaii?

Doll: Yeah, went back to Hawaii, and same thing, went to the beach. You know, we had fun. That's when I really started enjoying it. Not that I didn't before, but after being gone for so long, we did a lot of--you know, go to Hanama Bay [as in Hanamā'ulu] snorkeling, go to the North Shore. I tried surfing, didn't go so good. I wish--you know, I kinda regret that I didn't try more to learn how to surf, but it was always one of those things that was kind of like, "Oh yeah, we'll do it. We're going to be here for four years, you know, I'll learn next weekend." And it just kinda never happened. We did a lot of--I liked to snorkel a lot more. It's a little more relaxed and-- We did that, and a lot of time on the beach. Bellows Beach [Bellows Air Force Station in Waimānalo, Hawaii] was the air force base, and they had-- It was half and half. Like half of it, general population would go to, then the other half was private, it was like a private military beach. So that was the best, it was always empty. I mean, on a busy Saturday it would be kinda crowded, but like not like the big beaches. So you could go there and relax, and you didn't have all the locals there, and you know, you didn't have to worry about anything it was nice. I think it was the best beach in Hawaii. Sandy bottom and perfect waves. Yeah that's where they did all of our family events for the Marine Corps, they'd always go there. Yeah, so went back, that was about the time--2009--not a whole lot happened that next, like, year. It was pretty--that was when I had pretty much decided I really wanted to get out. I was really thinking about going to school. I was just kinda becoming--demotivated I guess, you know, I just kind of lost that after the deployments, being gone, just started to lose that. I wasn't buying into it, the speeches, the-- you know, just kinda lost something for me. I didn't really like the Marine Corps was going. I thought it was kinda getting--it was kinda getting a little soft, I mean, I guess. People were getting--personal accountability just felt wasn't really there any more for people, and so it just really lost its appeal to me at that time, but I still ended up having-- So that last two years were kind of a struggle for me. I just felt like I was trudging along, you know, I was just waiting. I started, you know, just punching the clock. Which that

was one thing I didn't really like, is feeling like that. I didn't want to feel like I was collecting a paycheck, and that's what a lot of people kept telling me. You know, the gunnys, and the staff NCOs, "Oh you know, you're already a sergeant. Reenlist, you'll be--nobody really likes it, just reenlist, collect your paycheck!" You know, I couldn't do that, so that's when I was, you know, I'm gonna go to school, I'm gonna--I kept getting, "The economy's so bad, you're never gonna make any money," this and that. But at that time, that 2009-2010 timeframe, kinda made up my mind that I was gonna get out. But it was still like--it was so hard to imagine actually getting out, I'd been in it for so long, you know, six years at that time. That I would *actually* do it. Part of me didn't think I would actually get out. I can understand why I thought like that, but what helped was at that time my wife had graduated from the University of Hawaii with--she got her bachelor's in economics, so she was set. You know, a lot of guys, their wife didn't go to school, they didn't set themselves up to really get out, so I felt like we worked that out with me and her, if that was my decision to get out, we were set up that I would be able to go to school, and she would kinda support us in that way. Yeah we did the next deployment that came up in 2010, we had a lot more notice, we knew before we even came home from the first time that we were going back. So we were more prepared for it. And my son was also born in April of 2010. So that was a big change that definitely influenced my getting out of the Marine Corps, that. That year leading up to the deployment, he was born in April, and we went to the big island for training--he was born in April--yeah it was June--April, May, June, and then July we went to the big island for a month. Did our training there and then straight from there we did another month in Twentynine Palms to do our Mojave Viper, so after he'd been alive for five months, I'd seen him for three, and so that was a big influence on me. And right after that we got home, and then we deployed right after that in October of 2010, so you know, I felt I missed a lot of his first year, so that was hard. You know, doing that deployment--I think that was definitely the hardest deployment, 'cause at that time most of the people, my friends weren't there. I had, there's just the platoon that I was with had changed so much. I deployed with a bunch of different people, and it just wasn't the same. And you know when I compare that last deployment I did to that first one, with a big, tight knit group of people, to the last one, it was just kinda like "eh." It was just a brutal--it was kinda long, you know, we didn't have--nobody was real close. Everyone just kinda did their own thing, so that was-- We still had a good time, it was still a good group of guys, we were all friends, but it just wasn't the same. So--I guess our main--we went to Camp Dwyer--was our main operating base. I was still with CLB Three. I was still in the heavy equipment platoon, still a sergeant, so it was kinda the same things, but we had a different mission, sort of. They put us out there as--they never really knew what we were gonna be when we got

there. We were base support, we did a lot of base stuff. But at that time I was--the way they had split us up, was, I was one heavy equipment operator for one platoon of motor T section, so we were supposed to be self-sufficient, as in we could go out and do anything. You know, they could send us out there, we have the heavy equipment assets, they have the motor T stuff, they send a few mechanics, a little bit of everything to support themselves. We did our own security, and had a great lieutenant, Lieutenant Richardson was the platoon commander, and he kinda you know-- He was the first lieutenant that I had that was--we were kinda on the same level, he was--we were the same age, the other sergeants in the platoon were on the same page as leadership styles. And I--for the convoys, I was the lead vehicle. I was the navigator for the convoys. So that was fun to actually get out. I was outside of my MOS, I was out--all I had to do was lead the whole convoy, pretty much. He [Richardson] would--we'd be on the radio together, me and Lieutenant Richardson, and I was--Magellan was my call sign for the GPS. So I picked Magellan, and Lieutenant Richardson was Iceman. That's kind of a cliché call sign, but he kinda did look like him, I'll give him that. Like Val Kilmer [an American film actor].

Walter: The old Val Kilmer, or the young Val Kilmer [laughs]?

Doll: The young Val Kilmer [laughing], yeah. So he went with that, but--and it was fun we would go up to--from Camp Dwyer we'd go out and do runs up to--back up to Leatherneck where I was before, and it was a good experience, we had the Blue Force Tracker [a United States military term for a GPS-enabled system that provides military commanders and forces with location information about friendly (and despite its name, also hostile) military forces. In NATO military symbology, blue typically denotes friendly forces. The system provides a common picture of the location of friendly forces and therefore is referred to as the "Blue Force" tracker] with the computer in the--the mounted computer in the trucks, you know, I'd plot out our course, I'd plot-- He was real good as a platoon commander to just give me as much latitude as I needed to get us where we were going. And he'd give me little corrections now and then, but you know, he just let me do my thing, and got us there. That's when--so we did that for about four months, we would just keep running back [coughs]. That's when I hit an IED in November 27th at 1630 [4:30 pm local time] on 2010. We were driving from Camp Dwyer going up to Leatherneck to do a run, taking on supplies, you know, so they could keep doing their thing up there. Come through a valley, come through a wadi [the Arabic term traditionally referring to a valley. In some cases, it may refer to a dry (ephemeral) riverbed that contains water only during times of heavy rain or simply an intermittent stream]--basically in the--they fill up with water during the rainy season, but this was a big one. Probably about a couple hundred yards wide-

-and came down through there, and it was pretty--not treacherous, but you know--each way, we would kinda find a different way to go. And come up through, there were a lot of mountains around--and we came through and I saw the same white car that we had seen the last time, so I was kinda like, "Oh I didn't mean to go this way," but sometimes you just get canalized into the way you're going. We were looking out, me and my driver, and the gunner, we were trying to find a good spot and that's when we hit the IED. Everyone was--our gunner got knocked out, driver was pretty good, I got a concussion, a grade two concussion [most grading systems of head trauma include grade one through three, with three being the most severe]. We called out, we got--it actually went pretty smoothly, and we had practiced. I'd been practicing eight years it felt like for that one time, but you know. We got out, we got the truck out, we moved it. We had the mine mower on it, a big--it sticks out about eight feet with wheels on it, sticks out in front of a truck for just that purpose. For--I think that's what saved us. I think they estimated it was about sixty or seventy pounds of HME, homemade explosives. So you know it was a pretty good sized boom, but--.

Walter: And this roller that's on the front of the truck is what set it off?

Doll: Yeah. It was a pressure plate IED that--they didn't offset it, sometimes they'd been--one of their tactics was to, you know, you put the pressure plate and then move the explosives back, you know, ten feet so that way when you hit it, it's actually underneath the truck if you have the mine roller. But they didn't do that, which we were fortunate for that. And so we got--it did a pretty good number on it. I got some video of it I can give to the archives just so they can see some of that. But yeah, so--it wasn't my last convoy, but you know if they took us, we all had to stay at the concussion clinic, and they've come a long way since my first deployment of you know, treating people. Like if that would have been in 2005, they would have just been like, "All right, you're fine." No one would have thought anything of it, so they did have very good treatment of us. So we were lucky. The gunner was the only one that got knocked out, but no serious injuries, so--and the truck we were in, all the armor on it was--just mostly the blast is what got us inside. So after that I ended up kinda, got put on a desk job. They--well, it took me about month to get over the concussion, and then I started going back out on convoys again, which was fun. They kept--you know I didn't have so much--it was kinda boring at the same time, because I got to get off base, I got so bored sitting there. Just kind of a vehicle commander, I might be like the 12th, 15th truck in the convoy, but you didn't have so much responsibility, you just got to kinda hang out. That was pretty much the main thing that deployment. I got to do a little more interaction with the locals when we'd stop at places, and on the side of the road, we'd stop and I bought some stuff from like these--little kids would

try to sell you stuff on the side of the road, I'd buy it. It was kinda cool, but it's kinda--that country has a long way to go before it's gonna be worth going back to, I guess.

Walter: You'd mentioned that there was a white car that kinda helped you recognize that you're going through a similar route from the other direction. Was it like, an abandoned car, or?

Doll: Yeah it was like a--actually a blown up car, should have been my first clue not to go that way.

Walter: Do you think it was a signal to--.

Doll: No--well, it could've been just because, but I think it just happened to have been blown up there, and it was kinda pushed off to the side. 'Cause I mean there's no roads, is the thing. There's like, if you look at a map, you see all the fingers and the--so it just happened to be that's how we--I guess we took the easiest route. You know, it was hard to remember. We had been through that way, we had gone there once, came back and then we were going back through it again. So I guess it would have been the third time through that same general area. And we went through it twice, which was our mistake. 'Cause since there's no roads, it's hard to pinpoint where exactly you are on, in that map. But, yeah it probably was. I mean, there was a little small--not village, but--about five hundred yards--I guess it would have been east of us--in the same wadi there were four or five little huts, so I mean, as much as we could say, "Oh it was probably them," there's nothing you can do about it. You know, the ways the rules of engagement are, you can't do anything really, unless you see someone do something, that's just the way it was set up.

Walter: What about the--you had mentioned the kids would stop by and try to sell--.

Doll: Oh those little kids--.

Walter: What would they be trying to sell ya?

Doll: Well these little kids were just animals [laughs]. They would steal--if it wasn't bolted down, they would steal it. Like they--the one little girls, they were always trying to sell these little bracelets I remember. Some plastic stuff they'd dye with--I don't know what they used to--little bracelets, you know, they'd sell ya for a buck. You could buy their little hats, little Aladdin hats they'd have on. Could buy those from 'em. I mean, they'd sell you anything, and they would steal everything. If you--anything, our straps on the trucks, we'd be taking--anyway, we put a box of MREs in the back between the bed of the truck and the cab [coughs],

and these little kids, they could get up there in a flash and they'd have a whole box of MREs off that truck, and they'd steal chains, and *everything*. They stole our filter caps for our air filters, they were just--'cause we'd have to stop because if we'd go by base, troop commander would have to go in and do his lieutenant thing and talk to people, so we'd kinda--a lot of the base was real small, so we couldn't actually go inside. There was one place called Disneyland, they named it because there were so many kids, it was just notorious for the kids, I mean they'd throw rocks. They loved throwing rocks. I was gonna say that's where they need to get some baseball players from. Those kids could throw. I mean, they'd be so far away, "There's no way that little kid could throw a rock this far." Sure enough, *boom*, your window would--'cause that ballistics glass would shatter if it got hit by a rock. It wouldn't go through, but it would still shatter the glass. They cost the government a few dollars just replacing glass like that. I guess, I can't really blame 'em. I would probably do the same thing if I was a little ten year old kid running around Afghanistan, nothing else to do. Throw rocks at the Marines.

Walter: Yeah maybe those kids needed to join the Marines too, in Afghanistan [both laugh].

Doll: I did work with some of the Afghan National Police and Army. Didn't get a real good representation of them, I guess let's say. They weren't very well organized or very well trained. They couldn't even get out of the back of a truck. We'd have to go pick 'em up. We did a--down on the border from Pakistan, we did an operation down there where they would bring down the Afghans, because all our big missions had to be--joint with all of 'em. We'd bring them down. We'd have to pick 'em up, and they couldn't even get out of the back of a truck. I mean, they were just not very well trained or--disciplined, but-- One of 'em got a--he was a heat casualty, because he was in the back of a truck and he didn't take his sweatshirt off. He passed out [laughing]. He wasn't the smartest guy. I don't know what to say. So you know, after working with them, just the little bit that I did, it wasn't--it didn't really build a lot of confidence in the stability of the future in that country. So we were actually down on the base where--I think it's where they went out, the air base where they sent helicopters to get Osama Bin Laden out of. Which, I kinda wish we would have been in country when they'd get him, 'cause I had left a few months before that whole thing--before they went into Pakistan and killed him. So I always like to say I set it up, because I was around the area a few months before. It was me and my heavy equipment work. But no, I guess after we'd been there, and seeing what was left, and the time frame that I've heard, and what's happening. There's too much work left to do in the little time that we've committed to be there. That it just seems like it's kinda a waste of time right now. Just my opinion from being there and how much, how far away the infrastructure-

-there's no infrastructure, there's *nothing* there to be able to--just nothing. I guess that's the best way to say it, there's nothing. I mean, I never got--maybe up north, where's the actual city in Kandahar, but down south is Indian country. It's camels and tents and mud huts. There's no other way about it. And they got a lot of good--I'm going to give 'em some videos, I took a lot of videos when I was doing our convoys going through there, just what it looks like to live there is not for me [laughs]. But yeah it was--I guess that was the big thing. That deployment was my longest, and that sealed it. That sealed the deal for me, I was getting out. I was gonna go to school, and my wife during that time finished her master's degree in economics from University of Oklahoma. She was able to do that in Hawaii. But we were able to set ourselves up with the military in-- I loved that I was in, it was great, and we were able to use it to help put her through school and set ourselves up to be able to make the decision to get out, so you know it worked out pretty good.

Walter: What do you think--I mean, obviously military, you mentioned, that helped set up your wife for what she's doing now.

Doll: Yeah.

Walter: What do you think it did for you? How do you think it changed your life? How are you different because of it?

Doll: I was actually, you know, I was just talking to my wife about this the other day, like, I was, in the beginning of the interview, I was not--I was just--didn't have a care in the world when I was in high school, I didn't-- I guess I was a boy, I didn't take anything too seriously, and then joined the Marine Corps and it was like a 180. I guess I always knew I could be smart, go to school, but I never had the drive, I guess, to actually do it. To actually--but then when I got in the Marine Corps, it really turned me around to actually get--it was the best thing. If I hadn't done that, I would be--I have no idea where I'd be. I probably would have gone to community college, and I was working when I was in high school, I was a cook at the beach house in McFarlane, and I probably would have gone to culinary school at MATC, you know, be working in a restaurant somewhere. You know, not a bad job, but not where I wanna be, so it really gave me perspective on life, and you know I even see it today when I go to school now at Edgewood. I'm 27, these kids are eighteen, nineteen maybe, and just the--I listen to 'em talk sometimes and just chuckle to myself about, "Yeah, I was probably like that too, but I'm so glad I'm not."

Walter: Well there's also the--you've got the experience of being in the military, but then you've got these four deployments. You think there's anything that you could--

how have those deployments maybe affected you also differently--combat experience?

Doll: Definitely I've been different after every deployment. I think I'm a little more--I don't know what the right word for it is--a little harder, I don't know I don't give people--I've just always been--I don't give people the benefit of the doubt like I used to. Just--I guess I just look at the world a little bit differently. I don't--I tend, you know when I was younger I used to think the best of everyone. And I just kinda don't. I kinda lost that somewhere along the way. Maybe it just happens when everybody gets older, but it just feels like I've changed. I mean, there's--I haven't had any like big changes I guess after my deployments, but I think over time it's kind of changed the way I look at life, changed the way I perceive things.

Walter: Would you say that's a result of maybe seeing, when you go to combat, what the locals had done? Or folks that you had worked with, or a combination?

Doll: I would say a combination. I'd see kinda of the hardships that we had to go through as--and the hardships that other people have to go through. I mean I've seen--I've given water to little kids that, you know they're so dehydrated their eyes are bulging and they can't even hardly talk 'cause they're so thirsty. They can't--they have nothing in the world. They literally have nothing. And then if they come back to America and see the--see everything that we have here, which I love--that's why we're America, to have everything, to be able to do it. But I guess I get a little irritated when people don't appreciate it and expect more. They can't--you can't expect more than what we have, and to be given--how can you be given any more when you look at other people who have nothing? So I guess that's kind of shaped my opinion of things, that I think we are a little--as Americans--not greedy, but just kinda we don't *appreciate* what we have. Not many people stop and think--it's nice to be able to turn on a light switch and the lights come on, and go to the grocery store and just get food. You know there's a lot of people that just don't have that option. It's just, you can't do that. Just seeing that was--and I'm glad I did because I'd probably be the same way without having that perspective on life. Knowing what else is out there. It's not just going on vacation I don't think. I hear a lot of people say that "Oh, I've traveled." I mean, if you travel--most people don't travel to--unless you go on a missionary thing, or--just travelling I don't think it gives you the right perspective of the underbelly, the dirty part of life that there is out there.

Walter: Is there anything that--for someone that might be listening to this that, you know, the eighteen year old [Doll laughs] that you describe--that the person that doesn't know about combat-- I mean, I think you've given a pretty good description of

that, but is there anything that you want to tell someone who doesn't know anything about combat, or doesn't know anything about a deployment like that?

Doll: I mean I think, to me, it's something that everybody--not everybody should *do*, but--to me, especially like my military experience, I look at it, I mean that's one of--you can't get that experience in a classroom, you can't get it--you can't get that experience anywhere else than the military. Whether that's the Marine Corps, the Army, Navy, whatever it is--it's not--I guess I should say it's not right for everyone either. It's not--you have to want to be there. I've seen a lot of guys that thought they wanted to be there, that once they got there [laughing] didn't want to be there. I mean, they--I guess it's cliché, it builds character, it builds--you know, you learn about yourself, that's how you-- I was asked this the other day. "How do you learn about yourself?" or "How do you know who you are?" And I told 'em, "You only know about yourself through adversity. No one ever learned anything about themselves on the best day. You only figure out who you are when it's hard, when you gotta grind it out. Do things you don't want to do. But then you figure out, you learn who you are." And that's really what I've gained from my time in the Marine Corps. I have a pretty good understanding of who I am.

Walter: So what--why was it important to do this interview? Why did you agree to do this?

Doll: I really like the idea of--I don't know if she--it was an email or whoever told me it was--you lived a hundred years, or somebody looks back--so my great-great grandkids, or whoever it might be. You know, I don't have anything like this of my great-great grandfather to read about or to listen to. So I think it would be pretty exciting to know they're hearing this, or you know, just to get an idea of who I was a little bit. That I don't even think there's anybody alive now that could even tell me what my great-great grandfather--you know, my dad might be able to tell me a little bit, or my grandma, but it's not the same as hearing his voice and really knowing what he went through. So hopefully if you're listening, you enjoy it.

Walter: Is there anything else that you might want to have recorded? Is there anything that we've missed, or--.

Doll: I just hope to, I hope this is just the first chapter in my life, and hopefully there will be a lot more to add to it. Not on the military side, but you know, what comes next. I'm glad I did it, it was fun--.

Walter: Excellent.

Doll: --to be able to do this.

Walter: Well thank you very much for doing this.

Doll: All right.

Walter: All right I'll hit the pause button on that thing.

Doll: And she said they have—.

[End of Interview]