

Oral Memoirs
of
Joshua “Josh” R. Dull

An Interview Conducted by

Rachel Williams

November 13, 2014

UCF Community Veterans History Project

University of Central Florida RICHES of Central Florida

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Interview Histories

Interviewer(s): Rachel Williams

Transcriber: Rachel Williams

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

The Community Veterans History Project, a RICHES of Central Florida Project at the University of Central Florida, includes interviews with Central Florida veterans from all branches of the United States military. Beginning in 2010, the UCF Community Veterans History Project is collecting, preserving, and making accessible to the public the experiences of Central Florida's veterans so that future generations will better understand the realities of conflict. It is a collaborative endeavor supported by multiple departments and offices at UCF. The histories, which are collected by students and faculty, are archived and made digitally available through the UCF library. The UCF Community Veterans History Project will also contribute selected veterans' histories to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

Rachel Williams is an undergraduate student studying history at the University of Central Florida.

Joshua "Josh" R. Dull served in the U.S. Air Force during the War on Terror and completed his service as a Senior Airman. He is currently a Creative Writing student at the University of Central Florida.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Joshua "Josh" R. Dull is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on November 13, 2014.

Abstract

An oral history of Joshua "Josh" R. Dull, a Creative Writing student at the University of Central Florida. Dull served in the U.S. Air Force during the Global War of Terror (2001-2009) and completed his service as a Senior Airman. Dull discusses his family's military background, his experience in basic training, tech school, the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, deployments in Qatar at Al Udeid Air Base and in Afghanistan, operating cryogenics, leisure time in a war zone, being attacked, maintaining a relationship while deployed, struggles in life after service,

University of Central Florida Community Veterans History Project
A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences and Stories of Central Florida

and working at the UCF Veterans Academic Resource Center (VARC) and helping veteran students.

Joshua “Josh” R. Dull

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Rachel Williams
November 13, 2014
Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Williams Today is November 13th, 2014. I am interviewing Mr. [Joshua] “Josh” [R.] Dull, who served in the United States Air Force. He served during the [Global] War on Terror and completed his service as a senior airman. My name is Rachel Williams and I am interviewing Mr. Dull as part of the UCF [University of Central Florida] Community Veterans History Project. We are recording this interview at UCF in Orlando, Florida.

Alright. So to start, I’m just going to ask you some basic questions about your early childhood. So can you tell me where you were born?

0:00:26

Early childhood

Dull Melbourne, Florida.

Williams And what was your child like – childhood like?

Dull Childhood?

Williams Yeah.

Dull It’s a very broad question. Um, lower middle class suburban. My dad was actually in the Air Force. I was what prompted him to join the Air Force. So my earliest memories are actually in Alaska. That’s where my youngest sister was born, Heather [Dull], and – yeah. We were stationed at Elmendorf [Air Force Base], at the time. Shortly after that, we moved to Washington. We had two houses there, but we lived in the Tacoma[, Washington] area. I think that could be McChord [Field], but I could be mistaken.

So my dad got out the Air Force and, um – that year. About 1992-’93, we moved back to Florida, so we could be around our grandparents, because our whole family is from the Brevard County area. So, um, yeah. My parents basically stayed broke trying to give us a good – at least, middle class – upbringing. We

had a strong support group with our aunts, uncles, grandparents, especially – few of our cousins. So we moved from there to Wyoming when I was in eighth grade – when I was 13. So that was kind of rough, ‘cause we left that whole support group around. Love my parents and they were good people, but they’re kind of hard-lined disciplinarians and kept us pretty sheltered too. At least me anyway, ‘cause I was the oldest. So...

Williams Alright. So you said your dad was in the Air Force. What did your mother do for a living?

Dull Good question. She kind of bounced around from job to job while we were in Florida. She kind of – her and my dad met at the airport in Melbourne.¹ That’s where they – yeah. They were working there at the time and got married from there, but – I don’t know if she worked while my dad was in the Air Force. and then I just remember her having an array of jobs when I was a kid. I think the last one was a – she was a secretary at a[sic] optometrist or an optometry clinic. So she’s working now for Empower Wyoming, which helps teach women self-defense skills, and I believe she has a – yeah. she does something with substance abuse prevention in Wyoming, so yeah.

Williams So your dad served in the Air Force. Did any other family members serve?

Dull My granddad was in the Navy, on my mom’s side. He was – he served during World War II. I had a couple cousins who were – or great cousins, I guess – who were – I’m not sure – Army or Marines or whatever. They served during Vietnam [War]. Great-grandfather served in World War I. I mean, I currently have one cousin who’s in the Marines. another who’s honorably discharged from the Marines.

Williams So how much education did you have before going into the military?

Dull High school and like one semester of college.

Williams How long were you in the service?

Dull Five years.

0:03:45 **Basic training**

Williams And when did you start basic training?

Dull I began basic training on May 20th of 2008.

¹ Melbourne International Airport.

Williams And what did you think of basic training?

Dull Sucked.

Williams Why do you say that?

Dull Well, let's see. We were herded onto a bus at about 3 in the morning, and as soon as we stepped off, people are yelling and screaming and cussing at you. Well, actually not necessarily cussing. That wasn't allowed by this time. back in the day it was. They cuss at you in private, but whatever. But yeah.

You know, basic training—it's not designed to be fun. It's not designed to be easy. Yeah. my first memories were doing my best to not get yelled at. Kind of following in the group think almost. And I remember we're standing in our bay outside our beds and there's this guy named Master Sargent Romero just screaming at us. And he kinda looked like Danny Trejo from *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*. Scary guy, you know? [laughs]

Williams Alright. Describe a typical day during basic training.

Dull During basic training? Well, at 4:45 in the morning, *Reveille* plays. Sleep is fleeing from your eyes as your TI [Training Instructor] and others are screaming at you. "Get up! Get up! You make me sick! Get your ass outta bed!" Whatever. You line up in the hallways and wait for the element leaders or whoever to lead us down—down to the pad, which is outside the squadrons. All the squadrons or all the flights in the squadrons had to sound off—the TIs leading them. You start the day with PT—physical training. So running, push-ups. All the while, people are yelling at you. It got better throughout the course of basic training, but at the beginning, definitely not.

Then you had chow. That lasted about five minutes, if you were lucky. You learned to basically just put all your breakfast items between two thick pieces of French toast and that was your breakfast, 'cause that's the only way you could eat everything. Then you had to fall out. Then it was just a lot of marching and folding laundry and cleaning up the bay and doing military in-processing stuff. Regular appointments. And also prepping for the graduation ceremony.

So nighttime, the TI would have a—at about 5 o'clock, TI would wind down with us. He'd tell us what went on that day, what we need to accomplish the next day. He gradually got nicer as the course of basic training went on. That was also when you got your letters and stuff, so yeah.

0:06:15

Tech school

Williams Did you have any special training?

Dull Special training? Like, uh...

Williams Anything other than basic training to get you ready for some special...

Dull Yeah. Everybody goes to—in the Air Force—well, in the Army, it's called "A-School," but in the Air Force it's called "Tech School." That's immediately following basic training. My original job was supposed to be Explosive Ordnance Disposal. So that's what I began doing. Learning about various explosive devices, bombs, missiles, other projectiles; how to disarm them; which is mainly blow them up in place. We actually got to do that. That was pretty cool. One of the highlights of my service. But unfortunately, I didn't make it through EOD training. Well, actually I say "fortunately" now in retrospect, but yeah.

So after that, I went to fuels tech school in Wichita Falls, Texas. And that was completed in six weeks, and then I was ready for active duty.

0:07:09 **Active duty/Davis-Monthan Air Force Base**

Williams So, where did you go once you were ready for active duty?

Dull My first and only duty station was Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona.

Williams And what did you do there?

Dull I refueled planes and also worked with the lab out there—the fuels lab. And operated the hydro system as well.

Williams And how long were you there?

Dull Well, that was my entire enlistment. However, I deployed out of there twice, so, give or take two deployments, five years. Well, actually, that's a lie, 'cause I forgot training and all that. I got there February 2009. So from February 2009 to end of May 2013.

0:07:47 **First Deployment - Qatar - Al Udeid Air Base**

Williams So you said you had two deployments. Where was your first deployment to?

Dull To [Doha,]Qatar. Al Udeid Air Base.

Williams And how long were you there?

Dull Six months, give or take a few days.

Williams And what did you do there?

Dull I refueled planes. Yeah.

Williams So describe a typical day when you were deployed there.

Dull In Qatar?

Williams Mmhmm.

Dull Qatar was an awesome deployment, in retrospect. Well, a typical day was—at least before the Iraq War ended, 'cause I was there right when that occurred, I think. It was very busy. You'd get there at work at about—well, you rode a bus to work at about—I—6:30 in the morning. Got there at 7. you'd have a morning briefing. Then you'd just take your backpack, you'd load it up—load it up with water, Gatorade—we used these energy drinks called "Rip Its." If you can find them over here, you, like, stock up on them, because that's what you had when you were deployed. But yeah, we had like this big stash of just free food that had been donated throughout. You just—that was basically it. You went to truck and you saw the—the shop again for lunch and the—again, when somebody was relieving you for the next shift to come on. After the Iraq—after the actions in Iraq started winding down, though the work load started to decrease, so you actually got to hang out in the building a little more throughout the day. So that was both good and bad. Got a lot of reading done.

0:09:20 **First impression of Qatar**

Williams So what was your first impression when you got to Qatar?

Dull Mmm. Kind of a culture shock really, 'cause, to be honest, I had never left the country before that so. And, I guess, the reality of actually being in a deployed zone, like, never in my—at that time, I think, 22-23 years of life—did I ever actually think I would be in that place. and—I don't know—it was kind of scary at first, 'cause I'm removed from everything. I don't have as much freedom, just because—it's not a distinctly oppressive environment. it's just long shifts and you're away from everything. Don't have a car. Stuff like that. And I got so used to my little world over here that—so it was a bit of an adjustment.

0:10:07 **Locals in Qatar**

Williams Did you encounter any locals there?

Dull Mmhmm.

Williams What did you think of them?

Dull Well, Qatar was – that was a very awesome experience, I thought. Very – very eye-opening, in a sense, too. We were actually – because it's a non-hostile country, we were actually allowed to occasionally go downtown with commander's approval. I got to do that about three times. I could have done it more, but I worked night shift and that basically meant going off base – meant being awake 24 hours straight [*laughs*]. But I met, um – I didn't meet a lot of the actual Qatari nationals, 'cause they're considered royalty over there. You see them, but it's not like you actually stop and converse with them. The few I did, they were seemingly pleasant. Um, there were a lot of Sri Lankan-Nepalese people there that – they worked most the areas and, you know, shops and whatnot.

I had my first experience with bargaining. It was an Indian man named Hakthor. I'll never forget the guy, 'cause I remember he's got this jewelry shop. And I just remember I was looking for presents to send home and he tells me a price and I'm like, "No. I'm not paying that." He's like – so he sits here, like trying to justify. He's like yelling, so I'm yelling back at him like, "No. No way. There's no way I'm paying for that." I'm finally walking out the door, I say – he's like, "Come on. Just tell me a price." I'm like, "Fine. I'll give you about 400 riyal for that and that's it. I'm leaving." He's like, "You know how much I sell these for? 800 riyal. I'll do it for you, but nobody else." So after I buy it, suddenly he's my best friend. He's like, "Thank you so much," and starts giving me all this free stuff, asking me if I want tea. Pours me up some tea, asks me if I want it with milk, and we just sat there and talked. I still remember where his shop is, so if I'm ever in the souqs in Doha, Qatar, I know all I got to do is walk down this little alleyway and turn right and I can find Hakthor's shop. So yep.

0:12:09 **Memorable day in Qatar/leaving**

Williams So tell me about your most memorable day there.

Dull My most memorable day in Qatar?

Williams Mmhmm.

Dull Leaving [laughs]. Um, I don't know, 'cause most of the days were just so similar. Even the days off—like, I had my own routine. Um—crap. Most memorable day—yeah...

Williams Well, why don't you tell me about leaving—that day.

Dull Okay. Well, it was a very elating experience, because you spent six months just daydreaming about all the stuff you were going to do once you got back. Because that's one thing you realize once you get there, is how much of being stateside you take for granted. Like being able to just drive somewhere and see people, just being able to go to your favorite sushi restaurant, or you know, just the various things you can do to unwind, like hiking out in the desert. That was something I liked to do out there.

There was a place called Picacho Peak [State Park] between Phoenix[, Arizona] and Tucson. I'd just—randomly, I'd drive there and hike the thing and come down, but you can't do that over there. You live in a very small compound and—similar area, so—it was—everybody actually cheered when my plane actually left the tarmac, 'cause we were finally going home. So...

0:13:45 Second deployment—Afghanistan

Williams So that was your first deployment.

Dull Mmhmm.

Williams Where was your second deployment?

Dull That was Afghanistan.

Williams And what was it like there?

Dull Not as cushy [laughs].

Williams How so?

Dull Well, because you don't get to go off base there, 'cause it's actually dangerous outside. V-22 rockets and mortars are launched at you about twice a week. A little bit more during Ramadan, 'cause I was deployed for those months. 9/11² was a particularly scary day. I'm sure those questions are coming up though.

² September 11th.

But no, there's the big burn pits. The air was always kind of smoky. The place was kind of just like—I was in Bagram Airfield[, Bagram, Parwan, Afghanistan], and it was basically like living on a big construction site with an airport. So a lot of left over buildings from the early days of the campaign, and also from the Russian occupation.³ Right where I was living, there was this big, old, disused—well, it's been renovated, but it used to be the air traffic control tower when the Russians⁴ owned it. So we—it was rumored to be haunted. Yeah.

Williams So how long were you in Afghanistan?

Dull That was six months and some change. We actually got held over for a couple weeks. We were supposed to be back around Thanksgiving. didn't get back until December 4th. Yeah.

Williams Why was that?

Dull Um, it's tough to catch a flight out of there, to be honest. They had to constantly change the itineraries. 'Cause every time somebody updates on social media, they see it, and then they got to change it, so someone outside isn't watching and knowing what planes to shoot at. At least that was what I was told. I don't know.

Williams Makes sense.

Dull Yeah.

0:15:42 First impression of Afghanistan

Williams What did you think of Afghanistan when you first got there?

Dull I was a little more prepared for it, but when I finally saw, like, the living quarters and just the base itself, I thought, *Man, I miss Qatar*. I used to complain about that place and—yeah. yeah. At least I had a swimming pool there [*laughs*].

Williams So in what way was Afghanistan's living quarters different from Qatar's?

Dull Well, in Qatar—in Qatar, I lived in these things called—well, I don't remember what the name for them was. I think it was "trailers" probably. It was two to a room—I mean, it was supposed to be four to a room, but they didn't do that to you. They just put you in with two people. You had like a mini fridge and all that. Bathrooms were located outside though. that kind of sucked. It was basically just this long hallway with rooms off each side, and it was a single-story

³ The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December of 1979.

⁴ Correction: Soviets.

building. Guys and girls in both buildings – in – in the building. So you weren't allowed to go in each other's rooms but, you know.

Afghanistan – there were more dorm-like buildings. They were about three or four stories. Had bathrooms located inside, so that was cool. But it was like three and four to a room and a lot smaller. Yeah.

0:17:04 Operating cryogenics elements

Williams So what were your duties in Afghanistan?

Dull Afghanistan – I ran the cryogenic element and the fuels department. So basically, my duties were to store liquid oxygen and issue it to the various agencies on base that needed it. mainly aerospace ground equipment. I was also in charge of shipping and receiving replacement cryogenic fluid from Al Udeid. So...

0:17:30 Memorable day in Afghanistan/movie night

Williams And what was your most memorable day in Afghanistan?

Dull Hmm. Once again, a lot of similar days. I'll say one of my favorite memories from that was the first time we had a movie night, just – yeah. It's simple, but it was fun. I mean, it was towards the end, and I guess we were kind of like finally growing closer as a unit, just the few of us that were on day shift.

So one night, we decided to make this like, uh – it was somebody's day off, so that's how we do it. it was a tradition. We'd run to the chow hall and load up on like whatever free food we could get. It was all free, but, you know. Then we just rolled back to – we had this tent that was basically designated for recreation and stuff, like there was stuff to work out with. It was a big open space and you could just go in there and chill. And one of our supervisors – this guy, Sargent Little, had a projector. And so we just put a big sheet up, and just picked a movie off of somebody's external, and just sat there and hung out. I mean, if there had been a 12-pack right there, it would have felt like home. So...

Williams Do you remember what movie you watched?

Dull Well, I remember we watched *Spider-Man* and [*The*] *Cabin in the Woods* – a couple others. So I don't know. It was just one of those – it was where it almost felt like I was back home, so that was kind of cool.

0:19:11

9/11 in Afghanistan

Williams So you said that 9/11 was particularly kind of scary. Why was that?

Dull That's 'cause rockets were falling out of the sky all night around base. Every time – and every time something explodes, like usually they landed on the opposite side of where I was – the east side of base. so you'd hear a boom somewhere. It sounded like somebody was setting a dumpster down, you know? But then, all of a sudden, you'd hear the alarms going off and "Incoming! Incoming!" if they saw it on time. If they didn't see it, then it's "IDF⁵ impact! Take shelter! Don IBA!"⁶ You hear every emergency vehicle on the base and that just kept going on all night.

They were trying to have – they had a commemorative, like five – not 5K [kilometer] – but like "fun run" or something for, you know – to commemorate 9/11,⁷ which, I think – I thought was a stupid idea, but that's just me. Gathering a bunch of people in one spot in a war zone. Sure enough, at – this is the first time a rocket landed during the day. It's like 8 in the morning, the sun's up, and I just – I was in the bathroom, I heard "BOOM!" And I thought, *They have a signal gun or something? They never shoot at us during the day.* Sure enough, I hear the alarm. "IDF impact! Take shelter!" So that was when they actually started attacking us, you know, during the day, at more sporadic, less predictable times, so...

0:20:52

Rocket attack response

Williams So in that event, what did you do? Like when they were attacking during the day?

Dull Well, you stay in your dorm basically. You weren't allowed to leave. If they – if you were like, you know – if you had to take shelter, there's[sic] bunkers that you can dive into if you're caught outside. If there's nothing around, you've got to basically hit the ground, open your mouth, cover your ears.

But that definitely wasn't the worst one, as far as my experience though. Worst one came a couple weeks later. I was, thankfully, still in the dorms, but, the PAX [passengers] terminal right across the street got hit, and that was a loud rocking explosion. Like, it was wasn't just the sound of, you know, a dumpster being set down. It was real. like I jumped out of my seat. I was sitting there reading, and

⁵ Indirect fire.

⁶ Interceptor body armor.

⁷ Terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001.

one of my roommates was outside, and he came running upstairs white as a ghost saying, "I heard it whistle right over my head." And suddenly you just start to hear stuff just exploding all over the base. I was actually kind of scared at that one—at that point. So we were—yeah, I think I was about an hour—two hours late to work. One of our fuel trucks got hit. One of the contractors was driving it. If he had been parked about three feet back, he'd be dead. Our expeditor pick-up actually took shrapnel too. Busted out the back windows, holes up and down sides. So that was the closest to home it came. Actually, I think I kept a piece of shrapnel. So yeah.

0:22:32

Funny story - sabotaging supervisor

Williams So do you have any, like—a funny story that sticks out in your mind while being either in Qatar or in Afghanistan?

Dull Um, yeah. Can I say it on a camera?

Williams Go for it.

Dull Okay. We had a supervisor that pissed us off. He was this guy named Sargent Myer and—just no one liked him but supervision. He threw people under the bus. He was in charge of another shop and he just dealt out these draconian punishments for rules that didn't even exist. Like doing a walk around. Walking around your truck to inspect it after you parked it. It's not necessary, but somebody didn't do that, so he took away all their reading materials—whatever. This guy was a douche.

So I found out about a site called stickerjunkie.com, where you can pay like 25 dollars for a hundred stickers. So I was bored one day sitting at my computer, and I decided to mess around with it and wrote, "Sergeant Myer licks balls and jerks off donkeys with his mouth." [laughs] My supervisor read it. He's like, "That's hilarious. You're not buying that, are you?" And I'm like, "We get hazardous duty pay. sure, why not?" I bought a hundred of those stickers and distributed them to everybody in the—in the flight that was in on it. And those are to this day still decorating various places in Bagram Airfield, Kyrgyzstan Air Base,⁸ um, a jet engine somewhere in Al Udeid. Yeah [laughs].

Williams How did your supervisor feel about that? [laughs].

Dull Well, he didn't find out until like the last day we left. He saw one of them sitting on the USO [United Service Organizations]. So he's like, "Oh, no." He tried to

⁸ Correction: Manas Air Base.

laugh it off, you know, like, “It’s cool. I’m not mad,” but he was. He had no idea who did it to him either.

Williams So did you serve anywhere else overseas other than Qatar and Afghanistan?

Dull No.

0:24:40 **Feelings leaving Afghanistan**

Williams What did – or how did you feel once you were leaving Afghanistan? Describe your last day there.

Dull Um, a lot of kind of mixed emotions. I was definitely glad, but – I don’t know. There was just a lot – um, my plan was – well, this is what ended up happening. My deed of discharge was coming up about four months after I got back from Afghanistan. So there was a lot of that on my mind. Knowing that once I landed, I was pretty much gonna have to start getting ready to, um, basically end my entire military career and move back to Florida. Most of that was already in the works. It was just applying to UCF and getting my affairs in order, so there was a bitter sweetness.

Plus, I was in a relationship that was kind of just on its downward spiral. Like, I’d actually – we’d actually broken up once like a week before I got back, but then got back together and – I don’t know. it was just different. I was definitely glad to be back, of course, but it wasn’t – it wasn’t the elating experience that it was leaving Qatar. I guess, just because – I don’t know. I was in a different place then. So...

0:25:58 **Being in relationship while in Afghanistan**

Williams So you said that you were in a relationship while you were overseas in Afghanistan?

Dull Yeah.

Williams What was that like?

Dull Hmm. Well, definitely strained. Part of it was – I don’t know. Um, it was cool at first, but that was because we had like just met up before I left, so we were still in that stage of the relationship. We were talking everyday, messaging each other on Facebook, talking about the future when I get back. I’d always – I’d post YouTube songs on her Facebook, you know. Cute stuff like that.

But, after a while, it just sort of – I don't know – tapered off. I said something insensitive at some point, I guess. I don't know. I'd probably be – I undoubtedly became insensitive, because, after a while, the stress of the place just gets to you. Pretty soon you can't, you know – you're not in a good mood. When you've seen enough fallen warrior ceremonies – I helped out with a couple casket missions. I had to see casualties, um, you know – you see stuff like that, suddenly you don't really want to sit here and type out, "Oh, I love you," and "Hugs and kisses," and "Butterflies," and, you know. So she sees that change and can't really appreciate it, I guess. So pretty soon, every conversation we were having was just – had this undercurrent of like – what's the word I'm looking for – I actually wrote a non-fiction piece about it that described it perfectly, but I'll be damned if I can think of it now. But yeah. Needless to say, there was a lot of strain on that. I'm surprised it lasted as long as it did.

0:27:49

Life after service

Williams

So what has life been like after leaving the service?

Dull

It was a stressful transition for me, but part of that was 'cause, as soon as I landed from Afghanistan, I was trying to deconstruct that life and try and start a new one so. I didn't really have the time to come down from it, I guess. Um, yeah. I dealt with a lot of just anxiety and depression. I had some – I'd say alcohol abuse. I wasn't an alcoholic, but it was enough to where it was causing certain people – the VA [Veterans Administration] and others concern. Yeah.

So I don't know, there was a long period when I first got back here where I was consistently pissed off 24/7. If I wasn't mad, pissed off, whatever, I was depressed. Um, it sucks, but I only remember like one or two days of that first summer here being actually, you know, kind of happy and at peace. Part of that is just – school's tough, and part of it was an end of another relationship in Arizona that was anterior to the military. But, also yeah. Just having to face that lack of structure for the first time in a while and kind of being in an alien place again. so...

Williams

So do you feel like you still kind of deal with that depression and anxiety today? Or have you kind of gotten over it a little bit?

Dull

I'm definitely a lot better off now than I was a year ago. So it's still there, but most of that is mostly early childhood stuff that, according to my psychotherapist, was reactivated by my experiences in the military. So, um, yeah. So still kind of a struggle, but not near as bad.

Williams When was your discharge date for the military?

Dull 19 May 2013.

0:29:45 **Awards/medals earned for service**

Williams And did you earn any awards or medals for your service?

Dull Mmhmm. There are several medals that they give you, like I have Outstanding Unit Award. That wasn't a personal achievement. That was—I won an achievement medal for my duties in Qatar, actually. and that was probably the only one I can think of that I earned on my own personal merit. And that was just for, um—for working hard, basically being proactive. I impressed enough people and also did some volunteering there too. I took some college courses while I was over there and helped process some blood units to send to other areas of the AOR [area of responsibility]. so...

0:31:18 **Today's activities**

Williams So what are you doing today?

Dull Today? As in—this. Okay. So today I'm doing an oral history project. Then I'm—I've got a class—Women in Hispanic Literature. then I'm going to be conducting my own interview on my friend, Lynette, for that same class. I'm supposed to go to my anthropology lecture hall today, and then community group at my church tonight. and that's about it. Revising a story.

Williams So what do you do in like your everyday life now-a-days?

Dull Day-to-day life. I work at the VARC [Veterans Academic Resource Center] about three hours a day there. just helping out other student veterans with whatever issues they have. Our big focus this semester, besides Military Appreciation Week, was just trying to get people off the academic probation list, touching base with them, seeing what we can do to them to help them out and try to direct them to whatever resources we have available for them.

Then I'm taking a full course load. I'm majoring in Creative Writing, so—taking Women in Hispanic Lit, 'cause you need literature courses and diversity. Advanced Fiction Writing. I'm an intern at *The Florida Review*, as well. So I've been doing a lot of work with them. And then just a gen[eral]-ed[ucation] class. so...

0:32:11 Working at the UCF VARC and helping veteran students

Williams Do you feel that working at the VARC and helping other veteran students – do you feel like that helps you as well?

Dull Mmhmm. Yeah.

Williams In what ways?

Dull Well, it's fulfilling to know that you can – that you've helped somebody out. And I also enjoy interacting with the other veterans on campus too. I've grown pretty close with the work study staff there, as well. Like, we all hang out together and everything. And I've made a lot of friends just from people coming in and out of the – out of the VARC. So...

0:32:42 How service has affected life

Williams So how did your time in the Air Force affect your life today?

Dull Well, mostly positive. I mean, before I was living in an apartment in Cocoa Beach with a drug dealer, and a – yeah – psychopath. and I basically had a decision to make. It was either stay in this lifestyle and struggle. I'd undoubtedly end up in jail. No future there. I was always working minimum wage jobs.

Or I could join the military, have a shot at going to college. I'd always wanted to be an author, and I'd always wanted to go to college, but didn't really get that opportunity coming out of high school. So the military definitely served its purpose. The GI Bill [Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944] had been excellent. I'm done with most of the requirements for my degree next semester. So, yeah. I've basically attained a dream. Came at a price though, but...

Williams Is there anything else that we have not discussed that you would like to talk about?

Dull Hmm. Not that I can think of.

Williams Alright.

Dull I'm better with questions, so...

Williams Alright. Well, that will conclude the interview. Thank you so much for your service and for talking with us today.

Dull Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you.

End of Interview