

Oral Memoirs

Of

Curt Sawyer

An Interview Conducted by

Robin Dunn

November 13, 2014

Community Veterans History Project

University of Central Florida RICHES of Central Florida

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Interview Histories

Interviewer: Robin Dunn

Transcriber: Robin Dunn

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.

Robin Dunn is doing her undergraduate at University of Central Florida in History.

Curt Sawyer was in the Army for eight years and served in the 1st Ranger battalion, 75th Ranger regiment. He currently is Assistant Vice President of Administrative Affairs at University of Central Florida.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Curt Sawyer is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on November 13, 2014.

Abstract

Oral history interview of Curt Sawyer, who served in the U.S. Army from 1986 to 1994. Sawyer was born in San Francisco, California, on May 1, 1965, but grew up in Tennessee. While living in Fort Myers, Florida, in 1986, Sawyer joined the Army. During his service, he participated in training exercises with the French Foreign Legion in Corsica and served at Guard Post Ouellette in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North Korea and South Korea. Sawyer achieved the rank of First Lieutenant and received the Expert Infantryman Badge. He was also a graduate of the Army Ranger School, Army Airborne School, Army Air Assault School, and Army Rappelling School.

University of Central Florida Community Veterans History Project

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

This interview was conducted by Robin Dunn at the University of Central Florida on November 13, 2014. Interview topics include attending the United States Military Academy at West Point, Airborne School and Air Assault School, serving in South Korea, the 1st Ranger Regiment, meeting his wife, and his post-Army life.

Curt Sawyer

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Robin Dunn
November 13, 2014
Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Dunn Today is November 13th, 2014. I am interviewing Mr. Curtis Sawyer, Associate Vice President of Administrative Affairs at the University of Central Florida, who served in the United States Army for eight years, achieving 1st Lieutenant as his highest rank. My name is Robin Dunn. We are interviewing Mr. Sawyer as a part of the UCF [University of Central Florida] Community Veterans History Project. We are recording this interview in Orlando, Florida. Good morning, Mr. Sawyer. How are you?

Sawyer Good morning, Robin.

Dunn [laughs].

Sawyer I'm doing fine. Thank you.

Dunn Alright. We're going to start with some easy questions. Um, when were you born?

Sawyer [May 1st,] 1965.

Dunn Okay, and where were you born?

Sawyer San Francisco, California.

0:00:40

Background

Dunn [laughs] And what did your parents do for a living?

Sawyer Hm, my father originally was a college English professor, and then he switched careers about midcareer and went into real estate, and that's what — so those were his two primary careers. My mother was homemaker.

Dunn And did you have any siblings?

Sawyer I have one older sister.

Dunn Mmhmm.

Sawyer She's three years older. Her name is Dojuan [Sawyer].

Dunn Dojuan?

Sawyer Yes.

Dunn And, um, what is — did she have any military history, as well? Did she enlist in...

Sawyer No, her husband did. He was enlisted man in the 82nd Airborne [Division] and he used to jump out of airplanes for a living. So he and I had quite, uh — a little bit of a common background.

0:01:28 Enlistment

Dunn And when did you enlist in the service?

Sawyer Hm. I went in in [June 30,] 1986.

Dunn And what made you enlist into the Army?

Sawyer Well, um, I actually went in as an officer, and so, um, it really wasn't something that I had thought about, when I was a kid growing up in the country in Tennessee. Um, I always really liked playing war games, and, um — so my little toy soldiers, and, um, tanks, and — and I was just set up these elaborate massive battles, and that's what they [inaudible], and then I'd go outside and whittled out swords and — And, um, play Army, but that was really the extent of what I thought I would do with that desire to do military stuff.

When I was living in Fort Myers[, Florida] in 1986, our [U.S.] senator,¹ who, at the time, senator was Senator² Connie Mack,³ sent out a new letter to us and my dad saw it and it was a little blurb that said, "Hey. Anybody interested in applying to a service aca — academy, um, here's what you do." And so, um, my dad said, "Hey, Curt. You should try to do this. You will never get accepted, because you don't know anybody political, but you can just go ahead and do it for the experience." and so I did. I went through the process, I interviewed with the co — committee, I did all the PT [physical training] tests, I did the medical exams, I finished my grades, I showed all the stuff that I had done, and then I forgot about it, and, um, I had gone to community college, as well, like what you did. Edison Community College. Now it's [Florida] SouthWest[ern] State College. and I was going to graduate from there and then I was either going to go to the University of Florida or Florida State [University], whichever school had the higher ratio of females to males.

Dunn [laughs].

¹ Correction: Representative.

² Correction: Representative.

³ Legally named Cornelius Alexander McGillicuddy III.

Sawyer That was my criteria for de—deciding. and so one day, in the mail, came this official looking binder, and, um—and I opened it up, and I looked at it, and it said, um, “The United States Military Academy is pleased to offer you a letter of—of ac—of, uh—of acceptance to the class of 1986” —the class of ‘90 —“at West Point.” So that’s how I started my military career.

Dunn Mmhmm, and so you went to West Point?

Sawyer I did.

0:03:33 United States Military Academy at West Point

Dunn Okay. So how was West Point? What was your experience at West Point?

Sawyer Hm, you know, um, it was something that I—I did not really prepare for. When I got there, um, a lot of my classmates had already prepared they knew what they were up—so There’s a lot of reading, a lot of memory work you have to do. It’s called “bugle notes.” it’s that thick. You memorize it all: insignia, rank, history, sayings, important figures that graduated—all that stuff. Um, they knew all that stuff, they knew how to shine their shoes and their boots, and they knew how to do a proper salute, and they knew—and I knew nothing about that. So it took me a while to figure that all out, and, um—but once I did it went well enough. Um, yeah.

Dunn Is there anything, um, memorable about West Point? Do you have any, like, experiences that you enjoyed there?

Sawyer Yeah, I think every single minute of my four years there is seared into my memory. Um, so it—I’m very proud, um, of my West point experience. I’m glad I went. At the time, it was a little bit—I’ve always been a little bit of, um—of an independent type. Um, kinda a little bit of a free thinker. Not in a really kind of a weird or aggressive way, but just always been independent-minded, and that’s not what West point is about. So, um, it’s been around since [March 16,] 1802, and so there’s a history, and there’s a structure, and there’s a way of doing things, and you either comply with it and you do well, or if you don’t, then you really kind of—you just don’t make it. So, um—so once I kinda came to grips with that, um, I did well.

I, you know—the experiences were very rich. The classmates, which[sic] I still keep in contact with, um, the things I did, the training that I did. During the summers, we really wouldn’t have summers off in military training for vacation. We would go on military training. So I went to Air Assault School⁴ and I got my Air Assault wings [Badge], went to Airborne School and did that, went to Germany for six weeks, and so just a lot of kind of—life at a hundred miles an hours.

⁴ Officially the Sabalauski Air Assault School (TSAAS).

0:05:53

Army assignments

Dunn And what did you do after West Point?

Sawyer Well, um, with West Point comes, um, a commitment—a military commitment in the Army, and so, um, I went into the Army and did that for four and a half years. I was stationed at—at different places and did different things. Do—do you want me to share that with you?

Dunn Yeah, yeah. Where—where were you stationed?

Sawyer Okay. So once I graduated from West Point, um, my parents bought me a trip to, um, Cancún[, Quintana Roo, Mexico] with a buddy, and, um, so we did that to kind of celebrate the four years of hard work, which is where I met my wife, Uh, by—By the way. She was my travel agent. I'll tell that story a little bit later.

Dunn Okay [*laughs*].

Sawyer And, um—and so then after that, I went to the Officer Basic Corps in Fort Benning, Georgia, and then I went to Ranger School, um, and then, um—and then my first duty assignment was in [South] Korea, and, um, did Korea for a while, had a regular line. It's called a "line platoon," which is a platoon of—in infantrymen, at the time, and then, um, there I took over—it's called a "scout platoon," which is a smaller unit—but basically we would go out and were kinda the eyes and ears of the overall battalion, and, um, once I left Korea, then I came back to the United States and went to Savannah, Georgia, and I served with the 75th Ranger [Regiment] battalion. So the first—first Ranger battalion in Savannah, Georgia, and did that for a while, and then I wrapped up my service.

0:07:22

South Korea

Dunn Now, you said you went to Korea. Um, what—what was it like going to Korea? What were your first experiences and thoughts, while you were in Korea?

Sawyer Yeah, um, you know, it was kind of a surprise that I even went to Korea. The way West point does it is that everything you do, um, counts against your rank, and so there is roughly 1,000 of us that entered, um, our plebe year, and so roughly 900 graduated. and so what they do—so every PT, every—every test that you take, every PT test you take, every academic grade you get, every sport that you play, every demerit that you get, everything goes into this basically a formula, and you're rank-ordered from number one all the way down to the bottom. So you always know where you stand, in terms of the rest of your classmates, and so, what you do then, is you pick the branch that you want to go, and generally most folks get that they want. I always wanted to go infantry, and then what happens is, at some point in time, several couple month before we graduated, they take you into an auditorium, and we're all in there, and your names are all—all 900—and then all of the available slots that are available

worldwide, in terms of duty stations, right? And they're all there. They're all on the board. So the number one person...

Dunn Mmhmm.

Sawyer Who, in my class, was a guy by the name of Ed Hoyt, was just this — photographic memory — he is the first choice. So the — the best slots always go first. Vicenza[, Veneto], Italy, always goes first, Hawaii goes, Fort Ord, California, always go first. All the cool place go, and then they work down the list.

So I was about mid-pack. I was like around 450 or so, and I had planned — I was dating this girl, and we was all serious, and it was love and all that sort of thing, and so we had agreed that we were going to — that I was going to go to Fort Lewis, Washington. I was going to stay stateside, and, um, we were going to continue the relationship. and so when it can time, when they called my name, Cadet Curt Sawyer, I stood up and fully expected to say, "Fort Lewis, Washington," but what came out of my mouth was "the Republic of Korea." and honest to goodness, [inaudible] I'm like — and my friends all looked at me, and I looked at them, and I'm like, "What have I done?" And, um — and that's where I went, and so, um, the relationship ended pretty quickly thereafter, and, um, I went to Korea.

So Korea was cool, just because, um, back then, it was fairly tense still. There's still no formal treaty ending the [Korean] War between North Korea and South Korea. So it — it — it could be tense on the Demilitarized Zone — the DMZ, and, um, so I spent quite a bit of time on the DMZ, with — with the, eh — there — there's a couple of guard posts that are right there. One of them is Guard Post Ouellette, and it's actually surrounded on three sides by North Korea. So it kinda jets out and, um, it's pretty tense, and we would do patrols, and — and look for the North Koreans, and they would look for us, and that sorta of thing.

So I wasn't married. I didn't have, um, commitments, and so it was a time that I really dove into my craft of learning to be an Army officer, and doing as well as I could. Um, there were several of my classmates that[sic] I went to West Point with, and I went to Airborne School, and I went to Ranger School — they were over there, and so we were pretty close, and we were just we really, really trained hard, and — And, um — yeah.

0:10:52 Airborne School and Air Assault School

Dunn Okay, and you said you went to Airborne and...

Sawyer Air Assault.

Dunn Air Assault School. Do you want to talk about those? And how those experiences helped you?

Sawyer Yeah, um, those are kinda expected. Those are schools that are kinda expected, um, as an Army infantry officer, um, especially someone that wants to go to, um, Ranger School, and then serve in a Ranger battalion. you—you really—it's hard to be in a Ranger battalion and not have—be airborne qualified, because of a lot of what Rangers do is you parachute in and do your mission, and so it's just one of those things, and Airborne School is pretty straightforward. I went to it my junior year. They call it a "cow" at West Point. Your junior year, you're—you're a cow. Yeah. It goes: plebe, and then yearly, and then cow, and then firstie, right? And so, um, straightforward. You do five jumps, and then you get your Airborne wings, and you put it on, you wear them, you walk around like somebody special, because you—you jumped out an airplane five times.

So it was cool. It was hot, and then Air Assault School is where you—you—basically, you repel out of helicopters, and, um, it's—it's pretty straightforward. It actually was a hard course—not the physical part. It's just you had to learn how to—to rig items, Jeeps, equipment, and that sorta thing, in order to be able to transport them, and so it's pretty technical, and that was kinda hard. But, um, and that as in Fort Kentu—um, that was in, um—I forget the name—and in Kentucky. That was really hot. Everything I did, all the classes, or courses, were in the middle of the summer, it felt like. So they were good. It was good training. It helped me in my craft as an Army officer.

0:12:38

Rest and recuperation in South Korea

Dunn Okay. Um, now, while you're in Korea—we're gonna go back to Korea—um, what did you do when you weren't working? What was your, like, R&R [rest and recuperation], while in Korea?

Sawyer Um, yeah, you know, there wasn't that much time that we were off, um, because we were, um, either at the home base, um, getting ready to go back to the DMZ or, um—or we were recovering from our last mission to the DMZ, or, um, we were actually at the DMZ—the Demilitarized Zone, and what that is: it's basically a line that—the 45th Parallel [North] that divides North and South Korea.

Dunn Mmhmm.

Sawyer And, um, the few times that we—the times that we had off, we would go into the city of Seoul[, South Korea]. So we learned how to take the train and—and the sub—and, uh, the subway—and go into Seoul, and there's a little place called Itaewon, which is where a lot of us would go. Um, I can't tell you too much about it, because it was one of—it was kind of a younger, wilder, um, time that was a little bit of a blur.

Dunn That's okay [laughs].

Sawyer [laughs] I will tell you this: they have this stuff "soju," right? Which is—it's kinda like our white lightning. It's—it's, um—really, really, powerful, clear alcohol.

And so you can't drink it straight, 'cause it'll kill ya, I mean, it's like drinkin' gasoline. So [laughs] whatcha do though is you mix it with, um, different kinds of Kool-Aids [laughs], and honest to goodness—and so, um, you know—cherry Kool-Aid, or grape Kool-Aid, or whatev—and so it tastes like Kool-Aid. You can't taste the—the booze in it. So you drink a couple of those, and you just really kind of, you know, be all you can be as a young, American soldier in a foreign country.

Dunn [laughs].

Sawyer [laughs].

Dunn And how long were you in Korea for?

Sawyer A year.

0:14:40 Savannah, Georgia, and the 1st Ranger Regiment

Dunn Okay, and when you came back, you said you went to Savannah, Georgia?

Sawyer Yes.

Dunn Okay.

Sawyer That, um—so I was in Korea And, um—and so the scout platoon became available, so I got selected to do that, which is—which is kinda of an honor, because, um—it just is. Um, 'cause there is just one scout platoon in a battalion, and, um, and the thing about scouts is, um, you—you have to go out, and you have to be very tactical, you have to be very—you cannot be seen, Right? So you kind of—you integrate.

Well, we had a colonel that was, um—came from the old guard in Washington, D.C, and those are the ones—the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers. So they walk, and all the pomp and the ceremony, and all that sorta thing. Well, that stuff is great, but it doesn't really work when you're out in the field, you know? There it's more about performance, more—it—more about getting the bad guy before the bad guy get you, and so I didn't wear full uniform that—that he wanted. He thought I should.

For example, I would take my helmet off. When you're out in the woods, you know, it's really kinda hard to hear, and—and, um, be stealthy and crafty when you have this big ol' thing on your head that's covering your ears. So I'd take that off, and I would have the boys put—called "watch caps" or "balaclavas." Well, he caught wind of that, and really, really, um, really, kinda hit the roof, and was determined that he was just going to kinda ruin my military career off of that, and, uh, the thing about him though: he was West Point, so he knew I was a West Point, and he said, "Well, let me give this," you know—'cause a lot of folks were really kinda rooting for me saying, "No. this guy is little bit kinda on the

wild side maybe, but he's really, really good at what he does, and so give him a chance."

So what he did is like, "Okay, Lieutenant Sawyer. I'm gonna go on a mission with you, alright? And I'm gonna see if you're as good as what people are sayin'." And so, um, so he showed up and – and, of course, we have all our equipment, you know? For example, I would carry two radios, in order to communicate with higher headquarters, plus also my – my soldiers that[sic] were all spread out all over kind of Korea.

Dunn Mmhmm.

Sawyer And, um, so between all that equipment, it's maybe 70-80 pounds of weight, and so he showed up with just his little – this kind of thing, with his water and his radio, and said, "Okay, Lieutenant Sawyer. Let's go," and I'm like "Sir, where's – where's all your equipment?" And he's like, "I got my Jeep tailing me, so, um, don't worry about me. You just show me what ya got." So, um – so I'm like, "Okay."

So I – told my platoon sergeant "Alright. Sergeant Iver[sp]. Get ready. Um, we're gonna climb the tallest mountain I can find," and, um – and so we did, and, um, a lot – a lot of it was climbing on our hands and knees, and it took most of the day to climb the mountain, and we got to the top, and then we set up camp, and, um – and then I deployed all my different scouts, and – and, um – and basically, we did such a good job that the colonel changed his mind, and, um – and so therefore, um – but then the next continuation of that is that the Rangers came recruiting to Korea, and, um, all my friends were like, "Rangers. That's – that's the pinnacle. We wanna go. Um, we wanna be a Ranger." so, like, "Let's go, Curt." and I'm like, "No. I have only about a month left in Korea and I already have orders." I'm gonna go to Fort Smith, Arkansas, with a – it's called a "Joint Readiness Training Center" – the JRTC. I'm fine with that. I've come to grips with that. I'm kinda looking forward to it. I'm not really much interested in this Rangering stuff, and so they're like, "Well, at least come along with us." And, um, so I went with them, and I interviewed with the Rangers, and then, um, eh, strangely enough, I was the only one that – that was accepted, and was offered, um, an invitation to join the Rangers, and so once that happened, I thought, *Okay. Well, I guess this is too good an offer to refuse, and so I ended up going to Savannah with the 1st Ranger battalion.*

Dunn Okay, and what was your job in the 1st Ranger battalion. What was – what did you do exactly?

Sawyer Yeah, um, yeah. Uh, Rangers are – are part of [United States Army] Special Operations [Command], and so my job was a platoon leader to lead, and – and their big platoons, so it's roughly 55, um – 55 men, and, um, our job was different things: to raids, to do ambushes. We would – we would parachute in most of the time and – and do our – do our mission, and then get extracted. um, sometimes,

it would be fast strobing—it's called "fast strobing," where you have a helicopter that comes in, and then basically, you jump out, grab the rope, and—and you slide down, and jump out of the way, and the helicopter keeps moving like this, so you go, and you kinda just go, and you assemble and move off.

Dunn Mmhmm.

Sawyer Um, so ambushes, raids. Um, a big part of it was, um, airfield seizures—airfield—airfield takes downs, which is actually pretty cool, 'cause we had a special vehicles, that, um—special vehicles Land Rovers, that were made just for the Rangers, that would fit into the airplanes. So the [Lockheed] C-130s [Hercules] and the [Lockheed] C-141s [Starlifter] [*sniffs*]. Um it—it's called "Jeeps" and "bikes."

So, uh, [*laughs*] it's pretty cool. So you'd drop the ramp of the—of the aircraft, and then you'd drive your Jeeps up there, and we also had dirt bikes, and, um, our job was, um, once other members of the platoon would go in—jump in, and secure the airfield, make sure there was no debris on the runway—We would come in, drop the ramps, disembark, drive off, and then establish blocking positions, so that the enemy could not retake the—the airfield. So different things. Yeah.

0:20:33 Breakout of the Persian Gulf War

Dunn And, um, uh, did you see any combat at all?

Sawyer No.

Dunn No?

Sawyer No, I did not. When I was in Korea—Korea—since Korea has just kind of a—kind of a special mission—because we're at peace, but we're not really—um, I did not go to the First, um, Iraq War.⁵

When I was in Ranger School, um—I remember in January of '91, we were doing a patrol at Eglin Air Force Base, and so we had just jumped into our—our rubber boats, called "Zodiacs" or "RB-15s," and we were doing a mission. It was the last mission of that phase of Ranger School, and we were all just really tired and really weak, and, we just wanted to be kinda done with it—just done with it, and, um, course, it's night. All the—all the missions you do in the military are—are at night, um, and so we had just pushed off, and we were just about to start rowing, and then this big ol' colonel—this big ol' colonel that[sic] I have never seen before—he must have weighed 250 pounds—came running and jumped into our—our boat, and then, we—we could see just enough in the moonlight that he looked like he had some rank that kinda outranked us, or we were a little bit different, and he was listening to a radio, and that's when we had first started

⁵ Also known as the Persian Gulf War, First Gulf War, Gulf War I, Kuwait War, and Iraq War.

bombing. That's when we first went into Iraq, and he was listening to it and said, "Alright, Rangers. This is for real now. We're goin' to war. Every single one of you." you know, gave some colorful adjectives, um, "Will be over there, um, inside of two months. So you better that this seriously," which we already were, But, um—and so we were momentarily kinda pumped, you know, because when you're in the military and that sorta thing that we're doing, you kind of—you wanna go into combat, you want go where the danger is, but then after that, we were mostly worried about this big ol' colonel was just gonna make our jobs harder to row, and—and, so, um, that's what we're mostly worried about.

0:22:15

Wife

Dunn Um, did you stay in touch with your family, while you were over there?

Sawyer Well, um, that gets in the story of my wife. So do you wanna hear about this? [laughs].

Dunn Yeah.

Sawyer I won't tell you all the details.

Dunn [laughs].

Sawyer But, um—so when I graduated from West Point, my parents sent my best friend and I to a trip to Cancún, and so, um, we had to go to a travel agent. My mother, for some reason or another, got so upset with our normal travel agent. So we said, "We're just not gonna go to her anymore. We're gonna go find a different travel agent."

So back then you didn't really have the Internet. You couldn't pull up your—your PDA and see where the—we just went driving, and so we saw a "travel agent," and Mom said "That's it. That's the one." [sniffs] And so we walk in there, and there was this really, really pretty girl with really, deep green eyes, and I'm like, *Hello*. I didn't say that.

Dunn [laughs].

Sawyer I was thinking that, right? And, um, so we sat down, and she arranged it, and I'm looking at her, and I'm thinking *Wow*, you know? Um, I—I—I think, um—and you can kinda tell, she kinda was mildly intrigued with me—not overwhelmed—but mildly, and so, um—and so when I get back from Cancún, I'm gonna come back and I'm gonna ask this—this lady out, Right? And so then when I came back, um, I—I remembered her, and I had every intention, and then I end up meeting this other girl, who actually was a cop in Miami[, Florida], who was also a lawyer, but she put the law thing on the side, and she wanted to work a cop in one of the most dangerous areas of Fort Lauderdale[, Florida], and so I got kinda sidetracked with that nonsense for about five months, until was finally able to get outta that—get out of that. That was really not a good relationship.

So then I got my orders to go to Korea, right? And, um—so I had to fly commercial, so I went back to the travel agent, and then when I walked in, I'm like *Hello*. I—I kinda, like, forgotten [laughs] all about her, but then when I saw those pretty green eyes, I[sic] like, *Whoa*, you know? And it was a mess. I was young, right? We were all young, and, um—and so then, I ask her out, and, um, so we dated for a week, and then I went to Korea, and the way Korea is, back then, you really don't come back, and there really wasn't a whole lot of e-mail back then. Um, so, we wrote. We hand wrote letters, back and forth, and she saved every single of them. She still has them. We've been married 22 years. She saved every single one of 'em, and I was—and I was faithful to her, um, until about eight months through, and then—and I know this sounds funny—I mean, [inaudible—I met the colonel's daughter. Literally, I met the colonel's daughter, and, um, [laughs] and so, um, started dating her, and so I wrote Lisa [Sawyer]—my Lisa—a “Dear Lisa” letter, you—you know? And bought a 12-pack, and got liquored up, and wrote it, and she saved that doggone letter

Dunn [laughs].

Sawyer [laughs] And she still has that doggone letter. So alright—and anyways, so I'm like, “Sorry. Met the colonel's daughter. It's been nice knowing ya.” we only dated for a week. What's the big deal, right? And, um [sniffs]—and that was that. So the colonel's daughter came back—she was in Texas. I came back, and, um, thought everything was good, right? Unbeknownst to me, while I was I Korea, my parents took Lisa up under their wings, and really—they really like her, and so they stated to take her to church with them, and—and really kind of mentored her, and developed this close relationship.

So when I got back I said, um, “Dad and Mom,” uh, you know, “Lisa and I are no longer together.” “Well, what happened?” So I explained it all, and they're like, “Well, that's no good.” um, “That's not the way to do it. We're not happy with—with that, but that's your decision, but you do not do that via a letter.” I'm like, “Alright. I'll call her.” and they're— “Nope. You gotta go see her and tell her face to face that you're sorry.” And, um, and but you're formally—I'm formally ending the relationship. They're pretty old school. Um, I respect that now. At the time I was like, *Ugh*.

So I call Lisa up, and said “Lisa, this is Curt. Um, I—I wanna come see you.” She hung up on me. So I went back to my parents, and said, “Hey, I'm off the hook. She doesn't wanna talk to me.” They're like, “No, no, no.” [laughs]. “You're a Ranger. It doesn't work that well. Figure out a way.” So I called her back, said “Lisa,” you know, “The way my parents are. They won't get off my back, until I come see you. Can I come see you? Just, eh, five minutes. Don't even have to walk in the door. Just need to see you, check the block, then my parents are off my back. Help me out.” She was like, “Okay. Come over.”

So I went over to see her. She opened out, uh—the door, and I'm like, *Hello*, you know? The—I know, and, um, she ended up inviting me in. so, um—and so the

long story short of it is: um, I broke it off with the colonel's daughter, and then Lisa and I started dating again, and we got married six months later, and, um, so even with all that nonsense of how that started out, um, eh, she's just been a blessing, and I've been absolutely faithful to her for 22 years, and she's just more than I deserve. So that was kinda that.

Then the colonel's daughter, right? So she was flying into Orlando, but flying out of Fort Myers. So I still had to go pick her up, and she was pissed at me. She was pissed. So I went to pick her up, didn't speak a word for like three-quarters of the trip, and then the floodgate's going, "How could you do this?" I mean, and, uh, I'm like, "What can I say? I'm sorry. I know I—it's on me," you know? So then, I put her on the plane and—and that was it. No more drama.

Dunn [laughs].

0:28:07 **Post-military life**

Dunn Okay. Um, what did you do when you—after, with your wife and—meeting her—what did you do after coming home from Korea and after you got out of the service? Like, what did you do afterwards?

Sawyer Yeah, um, when I came back—so I did the Rangering thing for a while in Savannah, and, um, deployed quite a bit. Did a lot of, um—did a lot of trainings—did a lot of training. Really enjoyed it, really enjoyed the Rangers, and really enjoyed the Army. Um, When I was at West Point—even though I really appreciated my West Point experience and I'm very proud of it, very proud of the mission it has, and what—the impact it continues to have—but I said, *You know, if the Army is anything like West Point, then I want nothing to do with it. I'm just gonna do my time, and I'm going to get out*, and, um, the Army was completely different from the West Point, for the most part, and, uh, then I got out, um, from West Point into the Army, I—I tried all the stuff that I was taught. You know, it's gotta be formal and—and all this sorta thing, and they laughed at me. Like, "Get over yourself, Lieutenant. That's just not the way it works." Well, I'm like, "Okay. How does it work?" "Just be yourself, just lead the men, just lead, alright?" I'm like, "Oh, okay. Well, that's great." so I scrapped all this stuff. It—it really wasn't scrapping all the stuff, but it was truly being a leader and taking charge, and, um—so yeah, um, therefore, I really, really, um, really enjoyed the military. Um, really enjoyed what the Rangers did and what they stood for.

Um, Lisa and I got married while I was still in the military, and then um, we wanted to start a family and that sorta thing. So, um, decided to get out, and then after that, went into the, um—the private sector. Worked for three Fortune 500 companies for 14 years, before I came to UCF.

0:30:04 **Training with the French Foreign Legion**

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Dunn Now, you really seemed to enjoy the Army. What was your most memorable experience? Or something you really enjoyed in it? Like, what was — like maybe a good story, or hanging out with your friends? What was something you really, really enjoyed?

Sawyer Hm, hm.

Dunn It can be multiple. It doesn't just have to be one.

Sawyer Yeah, you know, I — I really, um — when I was with the Rangers, um, we de — we went and, um, trained with the French Foreign Legion, um, in Corsica, France. So, um, three companies of the, um — of the batta — um, three platoons of the company went to Belgium, and they did their training, and my platoon was selected to go and train with the Legionnaires, and, um, that was really cool, because not many military — not many American units are able to do that — to lay claim to training with the French Foreign Legion, which, when you're in military circle, that's — they're well-known. They're pretty hardcore. Um, Rangers — we considered ourselves hardcore, so it's, — it was kinda cool for two hardcore entities to get together and train together.

They trained differently from us. Um, by that, I'll give an example. We were running a live fire, and, um — in France — and kinda showing them American tactics, and right in the middle of that — American tactics — the — the military officers are very much involved in that — coordinating, that sorta thing. My counterpart — my French counterpart pulled me off the side and said, "Hey, Curt," you know? He didn't call me Curt. It was Lieutenant Sawyer. "We gotta go over here and do lunch." I'm like, "What is that?" [*laughs*]. "What do you have in the basket?" And he pulled out a loaf of bread, and he pulled out some cheese, and he pulled out a bottle out a bottle of wine/ and he was kinda just wanting to sit up on that p — hillside and just kinda watch it all, and I'm like, "Thank you for the offer, but I can't do that. I got live bullets flying down range, and it's a very dangerous situation, and I need to be..." so he — he was — was just different tactics, and the other thing I would say that's kinda interesting is that we — we actually parachuted with them, you know? They had these old planes, and we looked at the plane — My Rangers all looked at the plane, and were, "We're gonna jump out of that thing?" It's called a [Transall] "C-160." It looked old. It was old, and, um — and they were like, "Yup, and we were like, "Okay," you know? And so we waited, and we sat there on the tarmac out on the airfield, and we waited and we waited, and we're like, "Where are the pilots?" and they're like, "They're still, um, having lunch." and so they were inside having lunch, and drinking wine, and kinda getting half crocked. So when they came out, they were kinda a staggering a little bit, and, um, I'm like, "We're not gonna jump with these guys. It's — it's a little bit..."

Plus, there's a thunderstorm coming, the wind was picking up. When you — when you jump out of airplanes, the one thing you don't want to do it jump out when the wind is blowing too hard, because you can't control where you land,

and, um – and basically they said, “Well, I thought Americans were tough,” you know? “You gonna let a – a little wind, a little wine kinda...” so, of course, we had to, and so we went up and – and we jumped, and, um, it was really, really windy. What they do is they throw a – it’s called a “dummy.” Um, it’s – it’s kind of, you know – it’s a stuffed – supposed to simulate a – a man – a grown man, and they throw it out, and then, wherever it goes, they adjust where the jumpers go out, and generally, you – the best case scenario: you throw the dummy out and the dummy just goes straight down. This time, he threw the dummy and the dummy went *wick* with the wind, and we’re like, “Whoa.” And so we jumped, and, um – and – and the wind is just taking us haywire, and, um, outside the compound – the compound was rimmed with – with [inaudible] or wire, and all that sorta thing, and, um – and as we’re going down and – and thinking, *Well, this is gonna really kinda be painful*, I saw my platoon sergeant just go *fwoomp*. He just was dropping like a rock, and I’m like, *Whoa. What’s going on with that?* And so I looked at him, and he figured out a way to really kinda make his parachute drop a lot faster. Basically, pulled his risers down, put his feet in ‘em, pushed them down, and it made him just go down. So I’m like, *Let me try that*. So I did it. So he and I were the only ones to land kinda where we were supposed to, and all the rest of the boys landed in the wire, or on the roofs, and on trees, and all that, and it took us the rest of the day to clean us all up, but nobody got hurt, and, um – so yeah. Things like that. Just kind of hardcore training, and, um, strong relationships, and, um, just standing ready to kinda serve our country, whenever we were called.

0:34:44

Staying in touch with friends from the military

Dunn

And you said you made a lot of friends at West Point. Um, do you stay in contact with people from West Point? Or any people from the Rangers, as well?

Sawyer

Yeah, I do still. Some, you know – over – over the course of 20 years, you know, things drift, people change. That’s one things we really noticed is that we’ve changed. My wife and I really changed, and so, um, what used to interest us, just in terms of likes and – and [inaudible] and that sort of thing, they really – not so much anymore, so – inevitably too, but, yes, we have kept in touch with some of my classmates. Some of them are still in. some of them are now getting to the point they’re – they’re, um, becoming generals, brigadier generals – which is kinda cool, ‘cause, you know, we remember each other from just doing spirit missions at West Point, and getting hazed, and just doing silly things, and getting trouble over it, and that’s[sic] the memories a lot of us have, and now they’re – they’re national leaders, you know? A lot of my classmates have gone on and are part of the NSA [National Security Agency], and CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], and – and, um, into politics, and – and really had done well for themselves. So, yeah. It’s kinda cool to keep up with them. Um, Facebook, obviously, we see a lot. A lot of my classmates have children that are now at West Point, so, um – so, yeah. It’s kinda cool.

0:36:03

Impact of Army on life

Dunn Um, has[sic] your experiences in the Army impacted your life?

Sawyer Sure. Um, inevitably. One: it was just, uh—I think with anybody that that's in, it's just a special time. It's just a really special time, because you're so focused. One: you—I don't think you will find anybody—you will—it will—rarely, that you will find someone that doesn't really, really strongly believe in the mission of what we did, and so a lot of times, what we do—we go into the business world, we go in the corporate world, we—we get jobs in that sorta thing, and say, "Well, what's your mission? What is your purpose?" and well, if you're in the corporate world, it is to make somebody else money. It's to make money. So you—you put that and you stack that against serving and honoring and protecting my country. Well, it's kinda hard to compare with that. So when you put that—people strongly believe in that—then everything has a greater sense of urgency, just in terms of training, and—and awareness, and wanting to—to hone your craft, In order to be able to stand ready, when you're called

So, yeah. It's just kind of a special time, and, um—and certainly, some of the characters—the—the discipline—discipline, and the focus, and, you know—and the—the mentality that you'll never give up, 'til you accomplished the mission, you know? The mission manifests itself in many different ways, depending on what you do, but still, at the end of the day, still an objective or a mission, and the military just teaches you how to be creative in how you're going to figure out how to do it.

Dunn Okay.

Sawyer So that makes sense?

Dunn Yes, yes [laughs].

Sawyer Okay.

0:37:38

Closing remarks

Dunn Um, well, um, we are getting to the end. So, um, would you advise anyone else, um, today to enlist? Since you enlisted, would you advise anybody else who would like to enlist that it's a good thing, a bad thing?

Sawyer Yeah, I think it's a great thing. You know, there's[sic] two different ways about going about it. One is through the officer, um—through the officer channel. The other is through enlisted, you know? And so each have its attractiveness for—depending on what people's goals are.

Dunn Mmhmm.

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Sawyer You know? So I always wanted to do the officer thing, just because I wanted—I wanna be a leader, you know? You—you're either a leader, or you're kinda not. So, if you're a leader, you kinda wanna be right in the middle of things, and—and you have more impact as an officer, generally. Um, um, I—I know as an NCO—a non-commissioned officer—you can still have that, but it takes longer to get that so, but certainly, as enlisted, I think that's a very noble profession. Um, and it certainly helps with the GI Bill, and benefits, [U.S. Department of] VA [Veterans Affairs] care. A lot of folks don't think about that from an early age.

Dunn Mmhmm.

Sawyer But once you serve in the military, you have access to VA—Veterans Administration care the rest of your life, and, um, that's kinda a bid deal, and a lot of the other benefits that come along with it. So that's not the primary reason why you should join, but certainty, I think it's part of the consideration, and, um, the other is: there's not a whole lot of pensions around anymore. If you do your 20 years in the military, then you get a pension, and, um—so, yeah. I would strongly encourage folks that[sic]—that[sic] are really, truly want to serve their country to—to consider it, and—regardless whether it's Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard—all that. I've never been one to say, "Well, it's gotta be Army only." Yeah. We all serve.

Dunn Uh, is there anything else you want to talk about? Any stories you wanna tell us? Anything that comes to mind?

Sawyer Hm, no. I don't think so.

Dunn No? Okay. Well, I would like to thank you for sharing your story with us, and myself, and the UCF community, and we will be in touch with you once the copy of the interview is done.

Sawyer Okay. Well, thank you.

Dunn Thank you.

End of Interview