

## Transcription: Jason Doran

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*Today is Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010. My name is James Crabtree and I am interviewing retired gunnery Sergeant Jason Doran. This interview is being done in person in Austin, Texas, and is being conducted in support of the Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us today and I guess usually the first question everyone wants to know is just tell us a little bit about your life and your background, that sort of thing before you went in the service.*

**Jason Doran:** I was born in Dallas, Texas. Just a normal kid life. I was on the high school rodeo team, rode bulls. Then when I was 17 years old, I dropped out of high school and joined the Marine Corps.

*Tell us what was it that made you want to sign up.*

**Jason Doran:** Just to serve. I kind of wanted a place to start my life over. I didn't do too well in high school. I obviously dropped out. So I just needed a place to kind of start from scratch and show everybody that I could be something or do something. So that's why I joined I guess.

*You mentioned you were 17. Did you have to get a parent to sign for you?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, I had to get my dad to sign for me.

*What was that like? Was he pretty supportive of signing?*

**Jason Doran:** No, it was like pulling teeth from a chicken. I mean we went round and round about it for a while. Finally my recruiter, you know, my dad said his plans for me were to go to college, and the recruiter, Master Sergeant Lee was just real honest with him and told him your son is about ready to drop out of high school. His chances to go to college are kind of slim. So I think that was like my eye opener for my dad.

*So this was in 1983, and I guess Grenada and Beirut and things like that were going on in the world. Did that draw you to the Marine Corps, the idea that it was more a fighting force, or was it just kind of happenstance?*

**Jason Doran:** No, my dad had a good friend named Butch Mathews and Butch was a lieutenant in the Marine Corps, and I remembered as a kid he would always tell me stories, and my dad was really big on the Marine Corps' history because he grew up during World War II and he had all these stories, so it's a fine group of men there and all that, so I guess he was all gung ho for the Marine Corps until I wanted to join and then it kind of changed him a little bit.

*So tell us then what it was like. You get signed up, how long did you spend in the delayed entry program before you go to boot camp?*

**Jason Doran:** I was in maybe two months, and they were going to ship me out in December, but they needed someone to go in October, which means I would've missed Christmas, but I didn't care. At that age and boot camp in front of you, you just want to go and get it over with. It's like you know it's going to be a punishment, just do it.

*So you went to San Diego then for basic training?*

**Jason Doran:** Went to San Diego.

*What were your first thoughts when you got there and got on the yellow footprints?*

**Jason Doran:** Self? What have you gotten yourself into? No, I remember before we even got on base and got on the bus, they had us stand facing the bus and had to look at the guy, you were so close to the guy in front of you that you couldn't see anything else, and I was too scared to look around. I could hear these girls in their high heels walking by, and one of the girls said you boys shouldn't be doing that in public, or something like that, and one of the guys go don't worry, she's ugly, or something. I didn't have the bravery to turn around or say anything. I was just -

*So you went through boot camp in San Diego. Did you already have your MOS at that point?*

**Jason Doran:** No. Open contract.

*So you go through I guess it was 13 weeks or thereabouts?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, 13 weeks.

*You go through and you graduate. When did you find out what your MOS would be?*

**Jason Doran:** Right before I graduated. Didn't have a problem.

*So you got infantry then?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah.

*Then I guess from there you went to Edson Range I guess and eventually –*

**Jason Doran:** No, not right there and then. I checked in and I ended up going on guard duty for a while, for quite a while, and then I got orders to one-five, I got orders to Fatima, Okinawa, as a rifle coach, and then I got orders to Camp LeJeune and went to SOI then, and at SOI I got orders to the Philippines, and then back to Camp LeJeune one-six for Desert Shield and Storm, and then I went to second recon and recruiting, and back, then the one-two, and then the School of Infantry as an instructor in a platoon sergeant's course, advanced order leader's course, and then back to the fleet to one-eight, to one-two, and got out.

*When was it in your time in the Marine Corps you decided you were going to make a career out of it? Was there a certain place you remember thinking this is it, this is where I want to stay for my career?*

**Jason Doran:** When I first joined up, I was like yeah, I want to do this 20, you know. In fact my staff sergeant, I was a sergeant on recruiting duty, and he was the same way. When he walked into the recruiter's office and they asked him how many years he wanted to sign up, and he told them 20 and they all laughed. But I signed up for 3 when I first, that's the only way my dad would sign because he wouldn't do the 4. I did 3 and then I guess the first year I was all for it, and after my first year I listened to everybody else complaining and I was like I want to get

out, too, I've had enough. But my last year of my first tour, I started thinking for myself. I was like 19, 20. I was thinking I don't care what these guys say, the nay-sayers. I like this. I could do it. And they always had a saying if you re-enlist once, you might as well just stay the full 20. That's what I did.

*I know one of the things I was impressed by, and this is kind of jumping ahead a lot, but you wrote a book about your time in the Marine Corps, and in particular your experiences in Iraq, and I think that's what most people listening to this interview want to know about is that book that you wrote and some of the things that you share in there. Can you just tell us a little bit about it, I guess that was the first time you'd been in combat, right?*

**Jason Doran:** No, in '86 to '89 I was in the Philippines and we were doing security patrols around the base out in the jungle there. I say jungle, but it's a hop, skip, and a jump from Vietnam, almost the same type of jungle, but we were doing patrols with live ammo out there and then when I was in one-six, after that I went to Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and then after that we were doing counter-drug operations in second recon battalion, and then after that when I went back to the fleet, I went to one-two the first time and we did two operations in Africa – Operation Guardian Retrieval and Operation Noble Obelisk. Then I came back from that and I think that was about it until Iraq. So I had done, it wasn't the shooting match that Iraq was, but I had carried a load of weapon a couple of other times before, so it wasn't totally new to me.

*I guess going into Iraq, you were in a position of leadership, because you were a gunnery sergeant by then, right?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, by then I was a gunnery sergeant.

*Tell us for those listening what that's like when you are a lance corporal or PFC by being the gunnery sergeant in charge of leading Marines, especially going into war. What was that like?*

**Jason Doran:** Well, it was different. I got a couple of thoughts on that. Sometimes you've got to be the person that you have to be, not the person you are. And you can't have authority over people without being responsible for them. So I mean I guess I always took different ranks in the Marine Corps, whatever they might have been, as the rank, how can I put this? I had to be what the rank represented. The rank didn't change to represent who I was. So if I was a corporal or sergeant or a staff sergeant, assaulting lance corporal, whatever that rank and responsibility is what are the leadership style of that rank, what I had to fit it. So it wasn't like well, I don't feel like going to work as a gunnery sergeant, so a gunnery sergeant doesn't have to. I kind of look at it well, a real gunnery sergeant will be up there at zero five standing outside the barracks and seeing who at 5:25, which one of his NCO's are getting up and waking up his Marines. That's what a gunnery sergeant would do. I would prefer to stay in the bed, get some sleep, but that's not what I had to do. And it's easy to tell people what to do all day, but if you're going to have that kind of authority, you've got to be responsible that you're looking out for them and taking care of them. You might be a gunnery sergeant holding a billet in a certain unit, and as you know, that rank is across the board for the Marine Corps or any service. So while you might have authority at that level all across the board, you still have responsibility even though they're not in your unit. So I kind of looked at it, that's kind of the way I viewed it and I guess I kind of took it.

*After 911 hit, were you at Camp LeJeune?*

**Jason Doran:** Yep, I was at the mortar range. I was a senior instructor for advanced mortar leader's course and we were out there doing different types of shoots with the mortars, and the senior CO came out with the first sergeant and said hey, two planes just flew into the World Trade Center. I was like you're joking. He was like nope. So what we did is we called the range cold that day, just stopped firing, and pulled everybody together and said look, what I'm gonna do is all of ya'll from New York, we have a bus coming over here and we're going to get you back now. Everybody else will pack everything up because I didn't want to continue training and have somebody miss it, and obviously this was going to be an all day thing, and if someone was worrying about their mom and dad back home, they can't be on the mortar range doing something else. You got to have your mind on what's going on. So I wanted to get everybody back and make sure they knew what was going on, and we went back out the next day and continued training.

*When that happened, once you found out it was terrorism, did you think at some point down the road that you were going to be going somewhere to deal with that?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, in fact I got a phone call a couple of months later because I had a reconnaissance background and they wanted me to go back to recon, and I guess they thought at the time that was how this war was going to be fought, so they were trying to get all these recon Marines back. I'll be honest with you, once you, being a reconnaissance Marine is not like riding a bike. It's different, there's so much new equipment coming through which changes your tactics. You either start from scratch which they weren't going to do with me, or you just don't leave it. So I ended up going back to one-two a year later. I went to one-eight for a little while and then I went to one-two.

*So with one-two, the taskforce tour, for people who are listening to this, they might not have any idea how planning stuff goes, when did you first find out that you guys were all going to take part in the invasion of Iraq?*

**Jason Doran:** We were about ready to go on a regular six-month float. We were scheduled to do that, and I was the Javelin's platoon commander, and then it turns out, so they ended up stopping the float, or the MU, they ended up stopping the MU but we still went on a float, and then we were told that we may not actually go on land. We might just set off the coast. And so it wasn't until we got on a ship that they told us that we were actually going to go on land.

*Did that change anything for the preparation, at least in your mind, of what you'd been gearing up for at that point?*

**Jason Doran:** No, not really, because we were stuck on, even if we just stayed on the boat, there was no use putting Marines on a boat unless one, you're just trying to scare somebody, or you're actually going to go do it, and either way you got to be ready to go on land. So it didn't change anything.

*So you were on the MU and you went all the way from the coast of North Carolina over there into the Persian Gulf then?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, it was kind of cool. Everyone sees these aircraft carriers and such and they thing nothing, no storm really does anything to them, but there was a storm and we had to head south to Florida and then we cut over around the storm. Then we went through the canal or the ditch, and all the Arabs set flipped the people off with their finger or giving them the fist. What

they do is they hit the bottom of their feet and they show you their heel, like the dust of my heel, which is kind of neat because it's kind of biblical in a sense just as the Old Testament about the snake, but that's kind of like flipping somebody off. And so we were going through the canal and everyone was giving us their heel, which was, I remember, Major Rore goes, he was a captain at the time, Captain Rore goes you know, if you're going to insult somebody, at least do it in their culture so they can understand what you're doing, because no one really understood what the heel meant, but all right.

*So how long did it take you to get over there? I guess you got off in Kuwait?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, it took about two weeks. So as soon as we got off the coast, we debarked.

*So was this January, December?*

**Jason Doran:** It would have been January because we left -

*January '03.*

**Jason Doran:** I'm thinkin' we left, we all were on Christmas leave, and then we got New Years', so we left early January, so it was about mid-January or a little later we got off the boat.

*So you got off, disembarked in Kuwait I guess, and then tell us what it was like at that point, where you go and what you guys do in Kuwait.*

**Jason Doran:** We were in Kuwait, we just landed on the beach, and I think it was near Kuwait City, because we got in the helicopters, and the last time I was in Kuwait or outside Kuwait City was last Gulf War, and it was kind of like maybe when you were a kid, you were in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and you left school and you went home and you had fun during the summer, and then you had to go back to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade. That's what it kind of felt like. We had just been on hiatus until this happened. It was like the same war but it had been put on pause for a couple of years, and they took us out in the middle of nowhere, Camp Shoe, and then it really felt like old times.

*Just out in the desert.*

**Jason Doran:** It was out in the middle of nowhere and we got there and we had our Company tents were already set up, and some of our troop tents where everybody would sleep. I remember the CO asking me, because by now I had been made the Company Gunnery Sergeant. I was a Javelin Platoon Commander, and they moved me to Cat Platoon Sergeant, heavy guns, but our First Sergeant couldn't go. He had eye surgery. So the Master Sergeant went to First Sergeant and I went to Company Gunnery. He goes well where you want to put everybody? I go well, I know the other companies, they are going to sleep inside the company tents because they got wood floors. But I think we needed to sleep in the sand like our Marines are, and he just kind of smiled. He knew that was the answer. I guess he just wanted to hear what I had to say.

*How long did you spend there in Kuwait before the invasion?*

**Jason Doran:** Well, from mid-January then up to March.

*At least six weeks or thereabouts.*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah.

*How did you keep Marines focused and disciplined while you were just in the desert, kind of hurry up and wait type of atmosphere?*

**Jason Doran:** You know, I hate to say this, but did you ever see that movie *Generation Kill*?

*Yeah.*

**Jason Doran:** And the Sergeant Major was like mustaches, hygiene or whatever?

*Yeah.*

**Jason Doran:** Well, while that was kind of funny, there was a lot of truth to it, and I don't mean that's what I did. I think it was just like back in garrison, when you got these young kids coming to you, 18, 19 years old, never been away from home, not like this, and they're on their own and they're having to make decisions do I go out drinking tonight? What do I do with the money? If you provide a structured environment for them, they'll make the right decisions, I mean if you're getting up at 5:30 tomorrow morning, and we're going to go run forever, I mean that kind of delays your drinking the night before, except for a few. But then so I had to take that garrison type routine and you had to apply it to us. OK, we're going to do PT, we're going to clean weapons, we're going to train like we did on the ship, continuously train, train, train. We're going to have classes on the radio. We're going to have more classes on the radio. We're going to learn some Arabic while we're here. So you got to keep people, something always going on. And then there's times that people don't want to do it, but that's all right, they're going to do it anyway. They can not want to do it, that's fine, but still -

*I know at that point there was a big fear that Saddam had the weapons of mass destruction and he was going to gas all the Marines and that sort of thing. What was that like training into all the mop gear and being in the desert? Did that add a sense of heightened anxiety?*

**Jason Doran:** It should've but it didn't. I think most of my Marines believed they could breath in nerve agent and use the blister agent as some kind of soap and still march, you know what I mean? Just that whacky attitude. But I do remember we always had training, they would always say gas, gas, gas, everybody needs to put their equipment on as quickly as possible, then we would sit around for a couple of hours and do nothing. But I do remember the first time they called gas, and it might've been for real, our Cat was like no, we're not, we're all going to an advance party because everybody was coming in to the moving positions, and he was like nah, we're not going to do that. I mean another unit did it, but he was like no, there's no explosions around here, nothing's really detecting it, so no, we're not going to play that game right now. So it wasn't that much of a big deal.

*So tell us what it was like then when you guys finally do get, after you've been sitting there six weeks training, when you finally do get to roll out? What is that day like?*

**Jason Doran:** We had moved into our battle position the night before, and I was part of the team that brings, what is it called, the advance party that goes in and people, the captain of the advance party, it wasn't Captain Moore, somebody else. The Alpha Company is going here, Bravo is here, Weapons here, everybody's gonna go this way, and the vehicles will be here, so when you move out it's really coordinated. So the whole night before we had been bringing

people in and because we didn't all just come in at one time. They would send them out by different units so if somebody did get hit, we didn't lose the whole battalion. So we were doing that, so we were up all night, and it was just kind of, I don't know, surreal I guess. Maybe the next morning like before we actually, when we left it was kind of like wow, we're really doing this, but I don't think, I don't know -

*Did you guys have any media embedded with your unit?*

**Jason Doran:** We had a couple of guys from Italy, and they were really jerks when it came to reporting the stories, but I mean one on one they were nice guys, you know. They let us use their cellphones to call our girlfriends or whatever, you know. But we killed this one guy, long story, but this guy in a truck's coming one way, and while he's coming one way, my unit was surrounded for like a week and we were getting attacked on the other end, so the Marines killed the guy in the truck because he won't stop, and they shoot him a couple of times and he falls out of the truck, and because we were getting attacked on the other end, all the Marines run over to the other side to repel the attack. Well, he stops, he doesn't pay any attention to that because the Italian guy in the corner, he goes, the Marines killed so and so. They didn't even check to see if he was OK – because we were about ready to get overrun. So he wasn't too popular for his storytelling.

*I bet. So when you mentioned the combat, what was it like the first Iraqis you ran into? Were they putting up resistance, were they immediately surrendering?*

**Jason Doran:** The only way because we saw up until they started shooting at us were Bedouins out there in no man's, whatever, smoking their hashish with their 18 wives or whatever and 20 children, their goats and their camels. I mean not really concerned. They looked at us when we drove by, not really enthused or displeased, just kind of like yeah, whatever. After that, we didn't see any Iraqis until An Nazaria, and when we got there, they just, they seemed more concerned than the previous Iraqis that we were present, so then they started shooting at us and stuff.

*Tell us a little bit about An Nasiriyah. I think a lot of people don't realize what type of engagement that was in the invasion. Give us a little background and what you saw there.*

**Jason Doran:** We were supposed to go into a deliberate attack at An Nasiriyah, and God bless our Colonel or Battalion Commander. He was back in the rear, you know, he was always pushing logistics, logistics. I guess Company Gunner, that was part of my job, but his concern about logistics and how that was planned and the tactics of things really played out to our benefit when things went wrong, because we were setting up for the deliberate attack, tanks were going to get refueled, everybody was going to get more ammo if we needed it. I mean that was, you know, redistribute everything, so we had stopped and this Army convoy goes by us, and it was -

*Was that the Jessica Lynch convoy?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, Jessica Lynch convoy, 507, and there was a turn they could've made a left at, so I thought they were going up the road and making a left, but when they made contact and got hit, from where I was I didn't hear them get hit. They were that far down the road. But our forward elements did, and that's when we, well it's no longer a deliberate attack, it's a hasty attack. We lost surprise. So our tanks didn't get a chance to get more gas. It was immediate engagement and we started setting up our mortars and firing on targets. I mean it was game on

real quick. And I guess kind of to explain between a deliberate attack and a hasty attack, a deliberate attack is when you punch somebody with your fist. A hasty attack is kind of like punching somebody but with only one finger at a time. You can't really get the blow. So our Major First Platoon was getting the 507<sup>th</sup> out, and after we got them out, we kept on finding parts of them. As we would capture one part or retrieve one part or save some or get wounded or whatever, we would discover another part that we would have to go get. So it took us into the city, and by then Alpha Company, I ended up being with Alpha Company. I don't know how but I just did, and we were taking the first bridge. Alpha Company, had gone through Alpha Company and was going around the outside of the city, they got stuck in some mud off spools, they lost some tracks, and Charlie Company went through us to get the second bridge as was our plan, but Charlie Company started taking lots of casualties, and then when Alpha probably when Charlie came through, we lost our logistics train because Iraqis cut us off. So we were surrounded inside the city and then the three companies were separate of each other and we couldn't support each other. So you had three companies in three parts of the city fighting it out. I had a shotgun. I walked in An Nasiriyah, and I had the shotgun, and I figured as a gunner I go if I got to shoot something, there will be plenty of rifles to pick up. I mean it gets that bad. But no, I walked in with 40 something rounds and I walked out with 5 maybe. I was only shooting at stuff I could hit, or thought I could hit, or wanted to hit.

*At that point did you see a lot of the Fedayeen, the guys kind of like, I heard a lot of stories about the Iraqi soldiers being in the black pajamas, Fedayeen warriors, did you see those guys?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, what the Irish call the Black and Tan's? With that tan bottom and black shirts, that and I mean it was them, and I heard some other stories later on about how some of the women were helping them. They knew we wouldn't shoot the women, so what they would do is they would have women walk across the street or run across the street like they were running away from somebody, but what they would do is as they ran across the street, they would tell the Fedayeen on the other side, the Iraqis, OK, this is where they're at. So when you start seeing the same woman run across the street a second time, we would start shooting the women, and then you shoot a couple of women, you don't get anymore women volunteers wanting to do that, so that stopped that problem. Then they knew we wouldn't shoot children, so what they would do is pull children when they got really close in front of them, and this one Iraqi told this First Sergeant, a friend of mine, Parker, I don't think his wife will ever hear me talk so I can tell this story, so this Iraqi had this kid in front of him and he and Parker get in a pistol standoff in this small, little alley, and Parker doesn't have the kid or anything, but they were pointing these pistols at each other and Parker goes "put down the kid, put down the kid." He was yelling in English, with his pistol pointing at the kid like put him down, put the kid down. Well as soon as the Iraqi put the kid down, Parker shot and killed the Iraqi. So I mean I guess the guy thought they were just gonna walk away. But I guess also seeing that and just kind of saying that aloud, it was kind of, it shows that they were human, too, I guess. They didn't want to kill, but I mean, what are you gonna do?

*Did you have many Iraqis end up surrendering to you, because I know there's a lot of stories about Iraqis just quitting and throwing up their hands?*

**Jason Doran:** Not right then we didn't. They seemed pretty happy where they were at with us surrounding the scene. This mortar platoon, one had this machine gun open up on them, and they killed the machine gunner instantly, returned fire, and his A-gunner surrendered, and I took that guy as a prisoner. You would have to yell to talk to someone three feet away because it was so loud, with rounds shooting over your head and the whistling and the snapping and the

popping. I mean you had to yell. So I had this guy. The stress level was kind of picking up. I mean you could tell people were fighting, but you could feel that edge, and so I had this Iraqi prisoner, and by accident I walked by him and I tripped over his leg, but it looked like I kicked him. I kind of got the feeling that when I did that, I went to go check on some Marines, and when I came back I think I kind of gave everybody the intention that let's just go ahead and kill this guy because we're going to get overrun here in a little while. So it was that bad. So I took the guy and I told everybody this is my pet, no one screws with my pet, and everyone kind of laughed and I gave him to Doc Sabia and said Doc, take care of him. And I took off, no, they had properly tagged him and tied him up and all that, but they had covered his eyes and I took that off. He didn't have any boots so he wasn't going to run anywhere, well he might have, but, so we put him under armed guard under Doc, but that was the only one. The other one seemed pretty happy where they were at and didn't feel the need to surrender. But we got word later on, we started getting casualties in Charlie Company, and that was about the same time the tank showed up, and when the tank showed up, I remember I was laying in this field and this guy, he was working the mortar and he got wounded and I run out in the field to get him, and they were shooting us up pretty good, so I kicked the mortar over so they would think that the mortar is out of commission, which it pretty much was. So I kicked it and it kind of loosened a little bit of the shooting, but I kicked it over and a short while later I was working on the guy who was hurt and making sure he was OK. We were going to dismantle the mortar and run out of there, but the tank showed up. This tank showed up and I swear it wasn't more than maybe 20 or 30 meters away, maybe a little further, and all these RPG's starting hitting it, and I don't mean just a few. I could not see the tank. I swear I could not see the tank because of all the rounds that was hitting and exploding from it. We were surrounded, so they were shooting at this thing from all sides. It wasn't like, and RPG to me whispers when it shoots, like that noise, and it hit the tank. It kept moving, but I was laying on the ground and I was bouncing off the ground from all the vibrations and the shock. We had an RPG when we first got into the city and when I first realized we were surrounded earlier, an RPG actually had hit the back of my tarp of my HumVee and slid off of it, and exploded on the pole, and I remember the heat coming from it, but yeah, it was pretty heavy. Then I remember we were shooting some mortars. I know I'm jumping around.

*No yeah, sure.*

**Jason Doran:** One mortar that was shooting out in this field, the one that the guy got hurt on, it was a machine gun bunker, he was a press, but the bunker was real close to this corner, and the corner had two Marines at it, so I ran up to that corner to get the two Marines to pull back because we were gonna drop mortars in the area. So I ran up there and I guess the barrel of my shotgun had gone around the corner when I was moving him, because I was standing there at the corner and the whole corner just lit up with machine gun fire. And that was too close for comfort. One of the rocks that hit me, and a guy named Cantu, Sergeant Cantu who I had known from before, he kind of looked at me and laughed like what the hell, dude! And I was like woah! The signal that fired on me, the machine gun bunker made a shotgun round. Well I don't what I was thinking, but they shot at me, and I kind of like, woah!, Cantu laughed, and I walked back around the corner and put a couple of rounds toward the machine gun bunker, and that was a signal for the mortars to fire. When I turned around back around the corner, the mortar started firing so we had to DD out of there and get out of there.

*I know from some guys I've talked to that were there, they mentioned, too, some A10 hogs coming in and maybe some friendly fire and stuff. Did you see any of that or hear any of that when you were there?*

**Jason Doran:** No, from my understanding what happened, our air officer, our AO, really good guy, captain, and I mean knew his stuff, I heard that he released the companies to call in air support on their own without authorization or clearance, because no one really knew where everyone was at, so if you saw enemy, just go with it. When it happened up in Charlie Company with the second bridge, the A10's came in and were gonna strafe them because the Amtrak's were headed towards the city. Charlie Company I guess was Medivac-ing wounded, when they were pulling back because they realized, they actually had artillery pieces leveled at them, parallel to the ground shooting at them. So they were getting the brunt of this fight. The A10's came in and they took the Amtrak's as being enemy and lit 'em up, and they popped a red star cluster which means cease, stop it. Well that was across the board, every service knew that. And the A10's came in a second time and a third time, and they wouldn't stop. So anyway -

*I heard about that, it happens in combat but it just breaks your heart when you hear that.*

**Jason Doran:** Well, you know apparently, the film and the radio reportings, the Air Force A10's mysteriously was erased, and then the Air Force did an investigation and came up with a conclusion that it was the captain's fault, and that didn't sit well, even though he was cleared later on, the fact that he was even accused of that, I'm sure ruined his career.

*Yeah, that's horrible. So you were in An Nasiriyah and I know we should mention that you earned a Silver Star which is quite an honor to get that, tell us a little bit about how you earned that. Was it for one specific incident, or an entire time?*

**Jason Doran:** It was for a specific instance. I got that one guy out and I pulled those two guys back, but then when we started getting wounded from Charlie Company to Medivac them out, and we started bringing, tanks came and we could bring Medivac helicopters in, Alpha Company Commander decided to reinforce Charlie, so we ran up to Charlie Company up through ambush alley, and there was a small group of Marines in this building next to this Amtrak in the middle of the distance between the two bridges, Alpha and Charlie there, and I thought they were doing like a blocking position as everybody came through. Long story short, I stopped, everything OK? Yeah, we got our wounded taken care of, and da-da-da-da. If anything, we need batteries, game batteries. Kept moving, and then when I got to Charlie Company, across the bridge up to Charlie Company, Alpha and Charlie were there. Bravo was still outside on the other side of the river fighting. I didn't know at the time. But things were pretty screwy. I mean things were going bad, so I saw this guy named Pompos, he was in Charlie Company, neat guy, and it looked like he was lost. I said what's wrong? He said I can't find my platoon. I go I know where they are, dude. I'll be back, I'll get 'em. So I asked for some volunteers and I said I need some people who are ready to die, and no one volunteered right off the bat with that kind of opening line. One the two guys started walking, like I would go. Those two guys came and then they got some other guys. They said if you are married or have kids, you couldn't go with them. And so I got four more vehicles plus my vehicle. I got rid of my prisoner, all my gear, and I started burning all our documents because we were about ready to get overrun again. I mean people were just grabbing people. Wounded were fighting. We had run out of bandages so they started taking bandages off of dead people and putting them on wounded, and then the people that were dying but there was no chance they were gonna live, they started taking bandages off of them. So I mean this wasn't training. And we still didn't have our supply and people giving up everything. So anyway, there was four vehicles, my vehicle we had two machine gunners, heavy machine guns, two tows, about 20 of us I guess. So we shot down ambush alley and went across this open area. First we had to fight our way through. We were surrounded. Go down this road, and it was really quiet for some reason, and right before we hit the bridge, these two anti-tank

guns opened up on us. The machine guns were turned, fired. We silenced them. Moved into the town and as we were driving through the town, it's kind of hard to explain without drawing, but we were driving down the road, well all the Iraqis for some reason were moving east, and what it was is they were fighting Bravo because Bravo Company was moving to the city, and they were running away. So as they were running away, they'd run across us and we were a smaller unit, so they decided to pick a fight on us. So we got to where those Marines by the Amtrak was, and they were surrounded. So we came in, set up a perimeter around them, and I remember I bummed a cigarette off somebody, and I asked somebody for a light, and I went out and took the cigarette and I walked out in the middle of the street and I just started smoking. You could kind of feel everybody chill out when I did that. I mean I wasn't trying to be stupid or anything, but we needed to keep it together. Have you ever notice when you did a platoon run or a company run, as soon as you get one person to drop out of the run, you get a bunch of other people to drop. Once one person gives up, everybody gives up. Everyone that's thinking about it falls into it. Fear is the same way. As soon as somebody lets their fear get the best of them, it spreads. So I just kind of wanted to show everybody there's nothing to be scared of. I mean so I took a couple of hits of my cigarette and I walked back. We walked inside the Alamo they called it, and I said let's get the hell out of here. And I didn't have to repeat that order twice. So I went through the building and made sure everybody was out. We loaded 20 something guys into the vehicles. Well I remember I was looking, there was this one dead Marine, he was missing his head in the back of the Amtrak, and so I was trying to get him out, and then I noticed that the vehicles were leaving. I hadn't given the order to go. So I think someone decided to go and that's all it took was for everybody else, we're leaving. So the last HumVee out, I jumped on the hood and with my shotgun, and we were shooting everything up as we went down, and I remember I felt this burning sensation on my neck, and I thought I had been shot in the head and I didn't want to touch my head because I knew if I, I was afraid if I touched the back of my head and felt the damage, I'd go into shock. But then I said to myself, I often talk to myself, I said self, if you're really shot in the head we're probably not having this conversation. So I reached up and it was brass from the machine gun that was firing on top of the HumVee had fallen and hit me. So I was pretty glad about that. And then we drove out and we got back to where we were surrounded and got the guys safe. It turns out we left somebody again for the rescue party, and I thought hell, there's no way we're going to make it out of there a second time. So I took me and my vehicle, Doc, with Corporal Day, and I took two vehicles and I stripped them down to just a couple of guys and ammo, and we went back in for the second time, and got that guy out of there.

*Where was he when you found him?*

**Jason Doran:** He was in that Amtrak that got hit by an RPG when I first saw there. He was huddled up behind with a pistol. That's all he had.

*How long had he been there before you were able to get back to him?*

**Jason Doran:** As soon as we stopped, we got back and unloaded, and all the vehicles went to their position because we were still fighting. So they went back into the fight and then it wasn't just but a few minutes later that someone realized that he was missing. So we went back and got him.

*I bet he was glad to see you.*

**Jason Doran:** He said that he knew I would come back to get him, which made me feel good that people, what was that poem F by Rudyard Kipling? They can count on you but none too much. I'm glad that wasn't too much.

*Yeah, you never leave a Marine behind either.*

**Jason Doran:** Easier said than done. That one dead Marine we couldn't, the guy who was missing his head, we couldn't get to him, and I mean to be honest with you I think sometimes I beat myself up too much more than I should. I'm afraid if we would've picked him up it would've just taken longer to get all his body parts, and then to return a body without the head, we couldn't find the head nowhere. Maybe it was still in his helmet, I don't know. But it cut him right off.

*So after An Nasiriyah you guys finally got that thing taken care of, how long did you end up spending there altogether?*

**Jason Doran:** We were there for about a month. We were surrounded for about another week. We started getting Medivac's in. We started getting some of the wounded off the line. I think we had over, I think we had close to 80 wounded from there, and we lost 18 killed. One of our wounded wouldn't be Medivac'ed because they didn't want to leave, so we were surrounded for about a week and towards the second day we started to get more, we got some resupplies in, the ammo, and they would just drop it and run, helo's would. They would pick up our wounded, dead, whatever.

*After An Nasiriyah, did you guys ever make the move towards Baghdad or anyplace like that?*

**Jason Doran:** After that, we need someone to go clean the head or just little, we were basically combat ineffective. So we did some other missions and secured a couple of bridges here and there, and provided security for an air wing unit. They were using our highways as a runway.

*I know I heard some stories about Marines that were on the invasion that talked about going up some of those highways and seeing Iraqi gear scattered everywhere and Iraqis dead here and there. Did you see any of that?*

**Jason Doran:** No, we saw it. I think after seeing An Nasiriyah -

*Nothing's going to compare to that.*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, I mean you were going down a street and it was just littered with dead bodies. I mean it was kind of like there's some gear over there.

*When did you kind of have a feeling, or when did you know that things were pretty much settled in Iraq?*

**Jason Doran:** I was there at a very unique time I think because we left if memory serves me right, we left in June, July, and came back home, and it wasn't until later in the year that they started coming out with IAD's and stuff like that.

*Did you have much interaction with any of the Iraqi civilians after things had kind of calmed down after you secured your area and that sort of thing?*

**Jason Doran:** I'll tell you one cool story, I really liked it. After An Nasiriyah, they made me a Platoon Commander. They had gotten rid of this lieutenant, I mean I'm not bashing any officers. But we had some, I think I could not have hit better officers in one-two than what the Marine Corps gave me. There was no way. But we did have one or two that you just kind of like, all right, and I'm sure we had a few people who enlisted that they were like really, you know? But they had this one officer, he wasn't performing to standard, so they relieved him and I took over his platoon, and I was with Bravo Company. We went in this one park, or not park, it was someone's house and it was off the Euphrates River. Which one, we went to the Tigris and Euphrates, farther westward? East one. Farthest east one. And we ended up pulling into this house and this guy, he had left his house. There was a tank in his yard that one of our Cobra's were killed. And my platoon got the guard, to set up perimeter on the garden, and it had all these olive trees and herbs out, and they had a small river, six feet maybe, and it went forever, it was really deep. And there were these fish in there, a foot and a half, two feet long, just swimming along the top of the schools, and we were under all this shade, and there was this big field in front of us with hay, and grains. But the family that worked the hay, you'd just watch 'em. They'd get up in the morning and just watching them. That's probably the closest we ever got to associate, besides that one guy we took prisoner. I named the prisoner, I'd share cigarettes with him. I mean you're not supposed to be sharing cigarettes and stuff like that, but I had him for a week plus.

*That's quite a while.*

**Jason Doran:** And I mean I'd probably go to jail, but if we would've gotten overrun, I probably would've killed him because he's enemy. They don't cover that in the Geneva Convention.

*Exactly.*

**Jason Doran:** What do you do with your prisoners when you're about ready to get overrun but you can still win the war? And I gave him some candy that my family had sent me. I guess he was a good guy. He didn't speak English.

*So when was it you were awarded the Silver Star? Was it when you got back home? Did you even know that was coming?*

**Jason Doran:** Well, they had originally told me and I say this with all honesty, but they originally told me they would put me in for the Medal of Honor, and I remember when I was told that I was like well, someone will wisen up before that happens. And so they put me in for the Navy Cross. That how it went in as Navy Cross, and of course everything gets downgraded, and I didn't tell anybody when it happened. But yeah, about a year later my dad tells me he gets a phone call and some guy about my award.

*And you were already retired at this point, right?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, I was out, I was busy sleeping late and drinking and fishing and chasing girls and just doing what -

*Did they have a ceremony for you?*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, well originally they asked me how I wanted the award. I said you can just bring it by my dad's house and leave it there in the living room or something. They said that's OK, but they said we would really, our younger Marines would be honored if they could see you get the award. So and that's what the medal's about. The medal is not about you, it's about others. That's what any medal is about, or even the plaque when you left a unit, it's not for you, it's like hey, remember us. So I was like yeah, so I got my uniform ready.

*So you went back to LeJeune then?*

**Jason Doran:** No, went to the Reserve unit, local air wing. My Colonel, Colonel Labowsky had found my award sitting on some Lance Corporal's desk in Second Marine Regiment. He had taken the time to go find it, and no one, it was just sitting there, and it apparently had been sitting there for a couple of months. They didn't care if I got this award, but he did. And he flew out on his own dime, the Colonel did, to the Marine air wing unit, and the NCO of the year there, no, it was the honor grad from their Corporal's course got to read off my citation which was a big deal, and Colonel Grabowsky, it was a Marine Corps ball, the Marine Corps ball. So it was kind of cool. So then he pinned the medal on me, and all my other medals are in line and this one is kind of off, and God bless her, some Marine's wife walks up to me and she points at the medal and she goes hey, your medal's crooked. You need to straighten your uniform out. Just some young girl, but even she knew.

*That's funny. So when you got out, I know now, tell us a little bit to bring us up to current day. You're here in Austin, tell us a little bit now about what you do and how you came to be where you are today and what you're doing.*

**Jason Doran:** I'll be honest. I was drinking and chasing girls, pretty much what I was doing, and then I saw the History Channel where they asked all these World War II vets what the best thing they ever got when they got out for their service, what was the best thing the government did? I thought they were going to say the VA home loan. They all said the GI Bill. So I said shoot, maybe I should go to school. And that was December after Christmas, and by January I was in the first class in January. I had a 4.0 average after a year and a half and I got awarded academic scholarship to SMU, Southern Methodist, and I graduated with a political science degree and my last semester, I was handing my resumes out and I gave it to a guy named Joe Barda, and Joe gave it to a guy named Chairman Tom Hawkett, wasn't chairman at the time, and I was told that, I met Mr. Hawkett and he had a stack of books, his 30-year war books, and the first time I met him I remember that stack meeting him because I got one of the books. The second time I saw him the stack had gone considerably down. I was told that I should probably put in for a job that was coming up but there would be competition, there would be other people, stuff like that. So I put in for the job and it was the Director of the Texas Veterans Leadership Program, and it's mirrored off of Chairman Hawkins' Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program, and basically it's to get Iraq and Afghan veterans as soon as they get home is to get them back involved in their community. I think we're all Americans and we all want to do great things. I think America is a great country and we're going to need great leaders in the future. While I have a lot of admiration and respect for these young kids going to college and stuff and wanting to do good things and have good intentions for their futures, we've got veterans who are graduating college or going into different skills that understand what sacrifice is, especially if they are joining now. My son went to Iraq in the Marines and he joined after the war had already started. So I mean for some kid to do that, I mean know that it's an unpopular war, my country needs me, I'm going to sign up. That says a lot. These are the kind of kids we need to be having run our government. We need to have more competence, work in the community, because they

understand. I don't know what's popular but I know what's right, and so the idea is to get these veterans when they come back in this program and kind of shoot them in the right direction.

*You said your son went in, is he still serving then?*

**Jason Doran:** No, he did four years. He went to Iraq for one term and after he got out he's with the Air National Guard and in Kansas and he's going to the University of Kansas.

*That's great.*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, I'm proud of him.

*That's a neat story. I didn't know that part. And then speaking of story, I know I've taken a lot of your time, tell us how the book came about. I know you wrote a book and it's on Amazon now and that sort of thing.*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah, I Am My Brother's Keeper, and after An Nasiriyah happened, some people wrote some books about it and I got interviewed because I was there, you know.

*Yeah, because you were in some other books as well besides the one you wrote.*

**Jason Doran:** Yeah. So anyway, I was asked by a publisher if I would write a book. As a gunnery sergeant, you couldn't be friends with everybody. You could be friends with some people, but for a gunnery sergeant just to go into the ranks and really miss home, you got to be the person that you need to be, not the person you want to be at all. So anything you had, you got to keep. So I wrote it all out. I couldn't go to officers and say hey, Lieutenant Clayton, sir, you know, I feel...that wasn't my place. So anyway I kept notes. It took me a while but I wrote it all out and I sent it to an editor who didn't like my graphic language or my lingo, so I had to unedit what she had edited, and then I got, I was dating this girl who is my wife now, and she edited it, and then it went to Caisson Press and they published it, and it's doing all right but I'm not going to retire off of it.

*I just think it's great that you wrote it down because there's so many people that never even think of taking the time to do that and now it's there for your son and your grandchildren or whomever down the road, and that's kind of what we're trying to do with this program is record these stories so that they're not forgotten and then people can listen to them or learn from them years from now. The way I think we see it is if it's not recorded somewhere or written down somewhere, years from now it's just going to be gone, lost to the time. So I think it's awesome you wrote that book. That's a really cool thing to do.*

**Jason Doran:** It felt kind of good, too. I just had to get it all out there. And then there are some parts of it I hope my family doesn't read, but there's other parts, it's OK, they can read it.

*That's awesome. Well I tell you, I really want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. We've got a lot of veterans at the General Land Office, myself, but Commissioner Patterson is a retired Marine. He's the one that started this program. Everybody there is really appreciative of your service and sacrifice and hopefully this program captures a little bit of that.*

**Jason Doran:** Oh, my honor.

*Thank you very much.*

**Jason Doran:** No, thank you for what you're doing with this. Appreciate it.

*[End of recording]*