

Borne the Battle

Episode # 249

Denise Jelinski-Hall, 3rd Senior Enlisted Advisor, National Guard Bureau

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/90860/borne-battle-249-denise-jelinski-hall-3rd-senior-enlisted-advisor-national-guard-bureau/>

(Text Transcript Follows)

[00:00:00] PSA

Narrator:

There are nearly two million women Veterans who served and deserve the best care anywhere. VA is dedicated to meeting the unique needs of all women Veterans. VA offers comprehensive primary care, specialty care, mental health care, and women's health specialty care such as advanced breast and gynecological care, maternity care, and infertility treatments. At each VA medical center nationwide, a Women Veterans Program manager is available to advise, advocate, and coordinate care for women Veterans. Women Veterans who are interested in receiving care at VA should call the Women Veterans call center at 855-VA-Women, or 855-829-6636, or contact the nearest VA medical center and ask for the Women Veterans Program Manager. For more information about benefits and other services for women Veterans, visit www.va.gov/womenvet [Link: va.gov/womenvet].

[00:00:30] Music:

[00:00:32] Opening Monologue:

Tanner Iskra:

Oh, let's get it. Monday, July 5th, 2021. Borne the Battle, brought to you by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, the podcast that focuses on inspiring Veteran stories and puts a highlight on important resources, offices, and benefits for our Veterans. I'm your host Marine Corps Veteran Tanner Iskra. However you listen to this podcast, be it Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iTunes, iHeartRadio, the player inside the blog, hope you had a great 4th of July weekend celebrating the independence of our nation in 1776 and all of that. I did. At the time of this drop I am on vacation in Washington state in a place without cell phone service, pristine countryside. Probably just finished lighting off all the illegal fireworks I could get my hands on. I'll be back to the other Washington soon enough. Until then, I'm going to enjoy being back in my home state. One or two ratings this week. And a review came in for MFArnold8762. Love it. It says, "Five stars, Episode 247 Suicide Awareness Great talk about

Veteran suicide and how connecting with Vets on hikes can heal by restoring connections and camaraderie.” Absolutely, a hundred percent. Donny, Cindy, Nate, the team over there at Irreverent Warriors, they have built a pretty special Veteran sub community focused on that. Who would have thought silkie hikes would be the answer for some many. I actually went to one of the hikes back in 2019 here in DC. And I look forward to going on one again. If you haven’t yet, please consider writing a review for Borne the Battle on Apple Podcasts just like MFArnold did. Doing so helps us climb higher in the algorithms giving more Veterans a better opportunity to discover and learn about our episodes, our benefits breakdowns, our interviews, and what’s in the news releases. News release time. Got a few this week. First one is a statement from VA secretary Denis McDonough. Says, “As the nation emerges from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s estimated that millions of Americans remain in need of mortgage and rental assistance. To provide continued relief to the Veteran and service member community, the Department of Veterans Affairs is extending by an additional month the foreclosure and eviction moratorium through July 31. Extending the COVID-19 moratoriums on foreclosures and evictions will allow households that may have fallen behind on their mortgages more time to recover. Ultimately, the extension will help thousands of VA home loan borrowers stay in their homes, and provide those hard-hit by the pandemic, the time needed to get back on a regular monthly mortgage payment schedule. In addition to the multiple ways that VA already helps borrowers avoid foreclosure, the department is implementing a short-term mortgage repayment assistance program via the VA Partial Claim Payment program, to bring certain borrowers current on their mortgage a their resume regular mortgage payments [Link: benefits.va.gov/HOMELOANS/partial_claim.asp]. VAPCP will be available for COVID-19 impacted borrowers to help them remain in their home and continue to enjoy the benefits of homeownership. Once the moratoriums end, VA will take additional steps to prevent foreclosures on VA-backed mortgages until borrowers are reviewed for COVID-19 home retention options that are affordable. VA will announce additional steps in July to offer borrowers payment reduction options that will enable more homeowners to stay in their homes. Additionally, VA will continue to allow homeowners who have not taken advantage of forbearance to date to enter into COVID-related forbearance though September 30 of this year.” That’s huge. “The VHA Homeless Programs Office offers a wide range of resources and services for Veterans facing housing crises,

having helped more than 850,000 Veterans and their families exit homelessness or remain in stable housing since 2010. The VHA Homeless Programs Office Supportive Services for Veteran Families program—” and we’ve done a benefits breakdown on that—” gives homeless prevention assistance and has taken a proactive approach to reach Veterans at risk of homelessness during the pandemic. The SSVF program’s Shallow Subsidy intervention initiative will also assist by providing a modest subsidy for two years to extremely low-income Veterans who are at risk of homelessness. Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless can call or visit their local VA Medical Center or contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-4AID VET. That’s 1-877-424-3838. The White House, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the Departments of Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development also have resources for homeowners and renters needing help.” Now there were a lot of links to resources in that statement, and I’ll make sure to link the statement to the bottom of this episode’s blog on blogs.va.gov. Just search Borne the Battle, find the blog for episode 249, and the link to this statement will be in the additional links. Next one says, “For immediate release: The winners of the Department of Veterans Affairs 2020-2021 Artificial Intelligence Tech Sprint are six tech companies that created programs aimed at preventing Veteran suicide and improving their health care using the latest AI technology. VA’s National Artificial Intelligence Institute competition encourages innovators to develop ways to improve services for Veterans. Participating teams gave presentations and demonstrations that were judged by panels of Veterans and other experts. In all, 44 teams for industry and universities participated, addressing a range of health care challenges such as chronic conditions management, cancer screening, rehabilitation, patient experiences and more. The National AI Tech Sprint award recipients include first place and \$50,000 to Behavidence for a smartphone application that monitors Veteran activity, categorizes users by similar behavior and flags for follow-up those at increased risk for suicide. Second place and \$25,000 went to SoKat Consulting, LLC, for creating a chatbot that can integrate with VA’s Blue Button medical records access. The chatbot can help Veterans get answers to questions and better understand their health care between visits. Third place and \$10,000 went to General Dynamics IT for an algorithm that can classify skin lesions and help medical staff determine if the quality of an image is good

enough to make a skin cancer diagnosis. The intent of the sprint is to match their private sector with Veterans, VA clinicians and other experts who mentor the companies to brainstorm solutions and new ideas over a three-month period. VA will further evaluate the best ideas and products to potentially adopt at pilot sites and then roll out nationwide. The next round of competition will open by the end of 2021. More information can be found at the challenge.gov [Link: <https://www.challenge.gov/challenge/ai-tech-sprint-for-veterans-not-served-by-va/>]. And for more information from the National Artificial Intelligence Institute, go to www.research.va.gov/naii/join.cfm [Link: research.va.gov/naii/join.cfm].” All right. And the last one says, “For immediate release: Established in 2016, PRIDE is a 10-week health education program focused on reducing health care disparities among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Veterans. It is the first program developed to care for LGBTQ+ individuals, both within the VA and in the community. The Program is replicable and includes a manual to help guide new participating VA Medical Centers. There are currently more than 80 Veterans attending a PRIDE group at one of the new sites and more than 500 Veterans have been impacted by PRIDE since tracking began in 2018. The demand for the program continues to grow and VA has set the goal of implementing it in 50 VA Medical Centers by fiscal year 2023. And now every VA hospital has an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care coordinator onsite to assist LGBTQ+ Veterans accessing VA services. To find an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator or learn about health care services for LGBTQ+ Veterans, go to www.patientcare.va [Link: <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/lgbt/>].” All right. So, going into this video, I didn't think about the National Guard, them having a four-star at the Pentagon commanding over both the Air and National Guards. I didn't know that the National Guard Bureau was a thing. Well, it is. And they also have a Senior Enlisted Advisor, much like the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps or Sergeant Major of the Army. Well, this week's interview features the 3rd Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. She's also the first ever female to fill a branch Senior Enlisted. She is Air Force Veteran Denise Jelinski-Hall. Enjoy.

[00:09:52] Music

[00:09:57] Interview:

Tanner Iskra (TI): Now, you've traveled all over the country in your career. Why did you choose Colorado as your post-military home base?

Denise Jelinski-Hall (DJH): We spent almost 20 years in Hawaii and that would be where I—that's where I wanted to go back to. I mean, sand, surfing, clear blue, 82 every day. I mean, it was just, oh, I loved it. And I love the people. After 20 years, I mean, that's family. That's ohana. I miss so many people deeply. But, Gary, you know, all of our family and friends, we're here on the mainland. And my husband, Gary, he has three children in San Diego area and the grandkids are there. At the time, our parents were still living. It was just too far from family. So, he didn't want to go back there and live in Hawaii forever. So, I said, "Okay, maybe not north, not south, not east or west." And it just kept going like this. And then it came down to sports teams. "Well, I don't like that team." "I don't like that team."

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): And I knew all along. It was going to be Colorado. Right? I did. I knew all along.

(TI): Is he a big Denver fan about the sports?

(DJH): Oh no, He is orange and blue all the way. Fighting a lion, Bears, Bulls, Cubs. All Chicago sports, but nobody wants to live in the Chicago area, right? So, you know, four seasons, mild winter, no bugs, no humidity. I mean, strong military community resources as far as exchange and, you know, access to military care at the hospital and golf courses, things like that. But mainly it was just the climate here and people say, "Oh, the winter is so cold. We want to get out of here." I'm like, "Oh, this is so nanny, panny, these winters, are you kidding me? I grew up in Minnesota. He grew up in Chicago area." So, we do love it.

(TI): That's awesome. You know, I did notice you had spent a lot of time in Hawaii. So, I was wondering like, well, why didn't, you know, you talk about wanting to go back to Hawaii. My wife was born in Hawaii. She was born in Schofield Barracks. So, I always wondered, you know, you'd been, you know, 20 years there. I was like, well, you know, and that's such a good reason to like live in Hawaii to have your kid, "Hey, kids come spend your vacation at grandma's."

(DJH): Exactly. But you know, what I found is once family came for that one time, that was the last time. It's a one and done type of thing, trip to Hawaii, right? There's other places to go and see and things like that. So that's what I found is that once family came the one time, then the travel was all on us after that.

(TI): Gotcha. Very good. So, from what I can tell, and I've just perused the Borne the Battle previous 135 episodes that my predecessor did before I became the host, but I, and I could be wrong, but from what I could tell, you were the first senior enlisted advisor to come on Borne the Battle, so congrats. So congrats. Another first for you.

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): Yay! I'm not telling my husband that. He would add it to a list or something. Thank you for having me. This is fantastic. And I'm proud to represent all senior enlisted advisors.

(TI): Absolutely. Absolutely. So, you know, you advise the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. You know, you hear of the Army National Guard, you hear, you know that seal with the Minute Man, the seal for the Air National Guard, you know, it makes sense that there's a centralized headquarters that brings the two together to advise the chairman of joint chiefs. You just never hear it about it.

(DJH): I know, right? So, it's so disappointing that still in 2021, we're still having to fight to make our mark and you hear National Guard all the time because we are present in states now across the country with all this unrest, let alone all the deployed locations across the world, right? But you don't necessarily hear about the Chief of the National Guard Bureau as often as you do like the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the other services. It's just—we're still finding our way, I guess, on some levels. But it's kind of sad to say that we have our four-star, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau that sits at the table with the joint chiefs of staff has full voting rights like all the others that sit on that on, on the chairman staff there. And you don't hear as much about the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, but we're always ready. We're always there whenever needed.

(TI): And it's so iconic that seal of the Minute Man. So iconic, the seal of the National Guard. So, you just don't normally see the bureau seal. It's just interesting. When I was doing my research that I was like, "Okay, well that makes sense." It makes logical sense that these two come together at a headquarters level.

(DJH): And that's our symbol. I love—I'm looking at my Minute Man right now. That's our symbol of the National Guard where, you know, back in those days that businessmen and women put down their tools of commerce and they picked up their musket to defend the Homeland and we're still doing it.

(TI): Yep. Yep. Now the reserves aren't part of this bureau, right? Is that due to the base differences as the Guard being more of the state entities and the reserve is still like the federal with the Federal Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve. Sorry Army, sorry about that. You guys are not included.

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): We love them all.

(TI): Absolutely. Absolutely. Interesting. Well, we'll get that rolling into a bit, but, you know, one of the first questions we'll always ask here on Borne the Battle is where and when did you know that military service was going to be the next step in your life?

(DJH): Well, I had gone through some changes in my young adult life, right? I had been married and divorced, and I was working at a bank. And I just saw no future outside of my hometown. I felt like I'm just going to be stuck here. I didn't have a higher-level education. Go ahead.

(TI): Married and divorced before your service? Wow. Okay.

(DJH): Tough, tough, tough.

(TI): So you had that experience going in?

(DJH): I did. And a decision not made lightly at all and being a very, very strong devout Catholic family. And thank God I had the support of my family and especially my father, otherwise things could have looked completely different. So, yeah, I had been married and divorced probably before I went into the Air Force about four years already. So, it was a chance meeting, really. Back in the day, if you remember, you're probably too young for this, but back in the day, people actually brought their checks into the bank to deposit them on Friday afternoon right after they got off work, physical hard check. And I was, you know, on the teller line. And, I had befriended lots of people, a small town, you know, 6,500—I knew everybody that came to that bank and I friended this soldier from the Minnesota Army National Guard. And she and I would chat, you know, every, you know, every week when she would come in or every other week and just chit chat. And one day she walked in and she said to me, "Denise, I see so much more potential in you than this. Why don't you join the Air Force and get out of this town." It was kind of like that V8 moment, right? My dad is a Korean War Veteran. He served in the Minnesota Army National Guard for a couple of decades, but he had talked to his kids about service to

our country, about what it meant to put on a uniform. He didn't talk about, you know, the benefits and education and learning a job skill or any of those types of things. So, when my good friend Staff Sergeant Joyce Madsen, then at the time, she said that she literally drove me to the next town. I took a sick day, right? She drove me to the neighborhood town to meet with the recruiter. Let me tell you, he was on his game in a good way though because I bought everything, hook, line, and sinker. He talked about serving our country and what that meant about what the uniform stood for, about what our flag—I mean, he talked about all that patriotic first. And then he talked about learning a job skill and education benefits, which was really something that I wanted. But in our family, there wasn't money for higher education, and you didn't do loans. You pay as you go, or you don't go. So, I was like, I'm all in. I went back, resigned my position, sold my car, sold my furniture, put my stuff at mom dad's attic. And six weeks later I was gone.

(TI): Six weeks.

(DJH): Six weeks.

(TI): Okay. Now, you entered in '85 and, and I understand, you know—so you start as a bank teller. Hey, I was still cashing checks in 2001 at McDonald's. Absolutely. No, I totally get you.

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): You mean actually in November of '84?

(TI): Okay, gotcha.

(DJH): Yeah. It was late '84.

(TI): Well, it was a couple months before I was born. You know, but still.

(DJH): Oh, thanks.

Both: [Laughter]

(TI): Not dating you at all.

(DJH): I'm feeling old today.

(TI): No, you definitely shouldn't. Experienced, it matters, right? So, you entered in '84, started off in Offutt—how do you say that?

(DJH): Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska? That was my first duty assignment after I completed my basic military training and my tech school.

(TI): So, did you start off your career as active duty?

(DJH): I did.

(TI): Gotcha. Gotcha. So when did you transit transition to the Air National Guard, and why did you decide to leave active duty?

(DJH): Well, you know, I met a Marine and yeah, that's a long story that I won't go into, but after five dates and knowing each other three weeks, we got engaged.

(TI): Oh man, you were that story.

(DJH): Yeah. But 34 years later, we're still here. Okay. It should have never worked. But here we had an active duty Marine and an active duty Airman and never the twain shall meet, right? So, he already had 10 years in the Marine Corps. So it made sense for me. I did not want to get out. I loved the Air Force. It was my calling. It was my niche. But I was able to palace chase, which is a fancy couple words for transfer into the Air National Guard. I had about a year and a half left on my contract. The requirement was that you give the guard double the time back that you had on your active duty contract. So, I had to give at least a three-year commitment to the National Guard, which I was fine with that. I didn't plan on getting out anyway. So that way it allowed me to transfer with my husband.

(TI): So family.

(DJH): Yep. So, my first National Guard state was California, and I served three years in the California Guard and then he got orders to Hawaii. And so, then I, you know, picked up too and I transferred to the Hawaii National Guard. And you have 20 years later.

(TI): That's great. No, you defy the statistics as me and my wife did as well. We got married seven—or we got engaged seven months after my deployment. So, I'm right there with you.

(DJH): Good, congratulations. That's a rarity.

(TI): Yeah, it is. It is coming up on 13 years now of 13 and 14 years being together. So, no, definitely. It's great to know you were married to a Marine, love that. Love that part of the story. During your time in service, give me either a best friend or your greatest mentor.

(DJH): I have a mentor story for you. So here I am a command chief at this point, right? And I'm serving in a combat comm headquarters for my full time job. And then my military job, which is confusing to so

many if they don't understand that Guard. On a drill weekend, I'd walk across the street. And I was a command chief for the 154th Wing, at that time the largest, most complex wing in our Air Force. So, we had this leadership day. And so, I'm with the folks that I work with Monday through Friday, and the Colonel is leading this particular part of this leadership block. And it was all about mentoring. And then he's decided to go around the room and ask who our mentor was. That's not the era that I grew up into the military. In the late eighties and nineties, there wasn't mentorship for me. That was my experience. Okay. I didn't have a supervisor or a colleague or a leader in my path that mentored me. So, he's going around the room and on my hands, I'm literally ringing them under the table cause I thought, "Gosh, what am I going to say? What am I going to say?" You know, all the officers are coming up with these grand names of who their mentor is, which is fabulous for them, but that wasn't my case. So, he gets to me and he says, "Chief, who is your mentor?" And I just kind of put my head down and I said, kind of what I just mentioned to you. And then I said, "I don't have a mentor. However, there is someone that I admired for, you know, growing up and my whole life." "Well, who is that, Chief?" "Mary Tyler Moore." And the room just kind of broke out in laughter and I get that. I totally get it. And so I said, "But let me explain." Mary Tyler Moore, you know, in the sixties, she was the only woman in this very male dominant all male newsroom. And she stood firm on her own two feet, and she made decisions and she bucked the system and she asked questions and she tried to make things better. And I admired her for that because she had grit. She had perseverance. And I thought if Mary Tyler Moore can do it, so can I. And that was my answer. Now that said, when I got in that kind of that Master Sergeant, Tech Sergeant, Master Sergeant level, I recognize that I needed to grow. And I really started watching people. I kind of created my own mentorship path, right? And I watched. We had a female governor at the time. Phenomenal, Linda Lingle, phenomenal governor. And our tech was amazing. And I would watch these senior leaders and I would watch how she was so poised at the podium and listen to the words that she used and how she walked through a room. And just, you know, a couple of words here and spend a couple of minutes there. And I would listen to our senior leaders and it was almost like I was stalking them, but in a good way. But I learned from them, and I paid attention because I was a huge introvert. I could be in the back of a room in a corner and I'd be just fine. But I recognize if you want to be a senior leader, you got to get out and have those extrovert

tendencies. So, I really took that to heart and I learned. I forced myself to do things that were very uncomfortable.

(TI): You served from the mid-eighties all the way to 2013. And you've talked about women in the military. How has women in the military changed in that 28 years?

(DJH): Gosh, so much. There are so many opportunities for women today. And so, I didn't see, when you look at that proverbial, you know, leadership, you know, the pictures on the wall right there weren't women on that wall. In the pictures today, there are today. There's all, all many, many officer enlisted women leaders that have competed equally, you know, toe to toe with their male counterparts. So, that has changed opportunities in different MOSs, and AFCs job career wise. So many women are able to compete at different things, and this was always my mantra. The standard is the same. It doesn't matter if it's a male standard or a female standard, it should be one standard. And if a woman or man meets that standard and exceeds it, they ought to be able to compete for any job that is open to them. And I get that women, you know, there's some differences in body structure and there are some things, not every woman can carry a hundred pound pack and, you know, all the equipment that goes with that, I get that. Okay. But if women can meet the standards, whatever that standard is, they ought to be able to compete. So, I did see—I saw women being selected for leadership positions. I saw lots of women stepping up into those roles as, as first sergeants, as fight commanders, squadron commanders, you name it. So, the world has just been opened up for our world.

(TI): And they actually said, as long as the standard doesn't change and everybody can meet that standard, keep the military as lethal as we need it.

(DJH): Absolutely.

(TI): Then let's rock.

(DJH): There was a lot, you know, there was a lot of blow back, you know, from when we changed to having women on ships and things like that. Women, you know, going forward deploying and whatnot. Oh my goodness. There was a lot of blow back on.

(TI): Fun fact, the first female captain of a ship in the Navy, her name is Darlene Iskra, and I didn't know that, not related. We don't think we're related. I had to interview her. So, she's in our archives. She

was one of the last ones that I interviewed in person before Covid. I got to meet her. We were—yeah, we took a photo to see, you know, are we related. Come to find out, she lives in Washington State where I grew up now. So is there a relation? We don't know. No, but there's not many Iskras out there.

(DJH): You gotta get on that. What is it? DNA, ancestry.

(TI): We should.

(DJH): How fun would that be?

(TI): Oh my gosh, it was wild, but it was a wild conversation. So, if you're listening to this and you like where we're going with this episode, check out that one episode as well. 28 years of service. Denise, I do see that the GWOT Expeditionary Service Medal as part of your bio, which tells me you were in Iraq or Afghanistan during OIF 1 or 2 because they stopped giving that one out around that time. Being the Senior Enlisted Advisor, advising the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, you know, as well, you've had to have had active time, how much of those 28 years were of active time?

(DJH): So he had Title 10 active duty, and then I became what we call a Drill Status Guardsman, you know, part-time, right? M-Day. The soldiers are familiar with M-Day, and then I became a full-time technician. And then I went into an AGR program, Active Guard Reserve. And then, you know, in the final tour, back on Title 10. So when you add up the Title 10, that bookend, the career and the age year time in the middle, I had about 12 years of active service.

(TI): Wow. Okay. So, I know because the reason I asked that is because I know the VA in order to recognize, to be a Veteran, you have to have a certain number of hours or years.

(DJH): Correct. And I'm not sure you mean, if you served, you know, and have an honorable discharge, you're a Veteran. Now some other benefits are tied to years like VA home loans, right? A National Guardsman that has never deployed has to have served for like six years in order to utilize the VA home loan program. So, like for me, I—well, I'm a disabled Vet, so I was able to have benefits right off the bat. So, when a guardsman retires, they're not able to collect their military retirement until age 60, or if they have deployed time, it's backed up a little bit, right? So there's a difference there.

(TI): Yeah, I just didn't—I knew that there was some time that was tied to some benefits within the VA for, and that's different for what they call gray area Veterans or something like that. I know some of my

listeners have asked about that. And so I figured you were the, you know, chief of that, you were the senior—I was like, I don't know really know myself. I probably should do a benefits breakdown episode on like gray area Veterans or whatever they call it.

(DJH):

Yeah, it is. So when my father turned 65, he was still paying for Blue Cross Blue Shield. I'm like, "Dad, why? You have Tri-Care for life now. You are a retired Guardsman." He didn't retire with an active duty retirement. He retired with some active duty service combined with his National Guard time. So, he retired as what we would call a M-Day or a Drill Status Guardsman, a part-time person. So, he wasn't able to utilize those military benefits until 65. So, when he turned 65, he kind of stopped paying for this, but he just didn't trust, right? Okay. You just need to go and make an appointment and sit down and talk about it because you're paying all this money for insurance and you've earned benefits. So, he may have retired, say for example, when he was 58, but didn't start being able to use his military of the healthcare part until 65. And I'll tell you what a blessing that was. My mom ended up on dialysis for nearly 11 years, and between the Tri-Care and the Medicare, they didn't, you know, for all of her care, which was just amazing. I mean—

(TI):

Yeah, I need to do an episode on that to figure out what, you know. Part of this podcast is I want to inform Veterans, you know, a lot of the benefits that they deserve. And I think a lot of the gray areas with National Guard Veterans, it is definitely.

(DJH):

And I do want to just give a big plug for the VA home loan benefit out there. I do because our Guard and Reservists, and I want to say my experience, more so Guardsmen than women. They don't get that briefing their whole career. Because on a drove weekend, it's bam, bam, bam training, training, training on a drill weekend. You don't get those nice to know briefings all the time. Right? And, of course, you have to be ready to receive it if you do happen to get one. He might not be in that place to buy a home. But our National Guard warriors, all of our Veterans, all of our Veterans can utilize the VA home loan benefit where they can purchase a home with zero money down. That's huge today.

(TI):

It's extremely low interest rate, especially right now.

(DJH):

Exactly. Yes. So, check it out warriors.

(TI):

Yeah. We just did—we have a full benefits breakdown on episode 150 of the VA home loan. And then there's also, we just did a

recent benefits breakdown on the interest rate reduction, refinance loan, through the loan guarantee service. We got a couple of the subject matter experts. We sat them down, and we shook them. We said, "Oh, wait. From the time that you're thinking about buying a home to the time that you're in your home, and you're getting spam mail for your refinance loan, everything in between, let's break it down." So, if you get a chance, check out those episodes if you listen to this. First Senior Enlisted Advisor to a member of the Joint Chief of Staff, as a female, again, we never hear about the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, unique gig. What is the selection process like for one of those positions? Do they tell you, "Hey, you're in the running to be the Senior Enlisted Advisor?" Does the selection of the chief weigh into that factor? How does that selection process go?

(DJH):

So, for me, and I think it might be a little bit different today. So, for me, in Hawaii I was serving as the Hawaii National Guard, Senior Enlisted Leader. So, I had oversight of the enlisted corps. It was—so oversight of both our Army Guard and Air Guard enlisted corps. So, I had the joint experience. So, National Guard, Army, Air, right? So, when my predecessor was getting ready to retire, he'd actually reached out to the state senior enlisted leaders that were serving in that joint bill because they wanted someone that had that joint at the guard bureau level. So, when he called me, I was like, "I'm good." You know, I'm in Hawaii, clear blue and 82 today. You know what, we're taking care of soldiers and airman here. There's a lot of work to be done. I assured our general that I was with him till the end. And I just, you know, I'm in Hawaii. You want me to come to DC? You know what, I wasn't interested.

(TI):

Totally different style of life.

(DJH):

You know, that job announcement. And it was a job announcement that went out nationwide opened and closed. Well, lo and behold, it opened for a second time. "Hey, Chief, what do you think?" "I'm still good. I'm in Hawaii." We had a lot of work that needed to be done yet at that point. And I just felt like I was supposed to be there, but here this job announcement is open a second time and there weren't a lot of senior enlisted leaders throughout our state's at work dual hatted with joint Army. Okay. So I was taking a college class at that time. And so, that job opened and closed. Right? And I—this class I was taking, I was supposed to write a resume for any job that I was interested in. I thought, "Well, I'm going to write it to something. I know." I took that job announcement. I did my resume.

And when I hit send, I said, “Dang, I could have done that job.” Well, lo and behold, some time passes and it opens up for a third time. Now there's a reason for all that that I won't get into, but it opens up for a third time. And now the hair on the back of my neck is starting to stand up a little bit. And my husband and daughter all along said, “You need to apply mom. You need to put your hat in the ring. You need to do it. You need to.” “No, no, no. I'm good.” Oh, come on. I only saw myself retiring with the men and women that I had spent, you know, nearly two decades at that point in my life. Right. I mean, this was my family. We went through the ranks together. And so, the day—and I went down to the Philippines, in Jolo. We had soldiers that were deployed down there. And so, I'm sitting on a plane on the way back and this job announcement is still open. Right? And so, I'm sitting on the plane, you know, very, very spiritual. And now I'm just praying. And I'm asking the good Lord that if this is His path for me, you have to show me a sign because I don't feel it. I don't feel called to it. Other leadership positions I felt a calling to do, you know, put my name in the hat. And so I, for, for a long time, I just sat in prayer and then I just closed my eyes, sat back and tried to just listen. And I'll tell you, you know, back when I was in uniform, I couldn't tell the story because you couldn't talk about God. Right. So, I just said, “Oh, it was my intuition.” But I will tell you today, as I'm sitting here, the power of the Holy Spirit washed over me in a fierce way. I mean, it was strong and powerful, and I just felt this presence come over. I opened my eyes and it was a little scary. I kind of looked around like, you know, we're still in the air, right? I mean, it was scary. So, I got home and I took a day of leave, and I just sat by myself in prayer and thought about what this would be like. What this would be like for a family? What it would, you know, what it would mean to leave Hawaii and all the people that I'd served with for all this time. And the answer just kept coming back that I am supposed to do. And so I, you know, I put my package together. I submitted it and I thought to myself, “There's not a snowball's chance in heck.” Here I am all the way in Hawaii and all the way to DC. I know no one in DC. I don't know the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the senior leaders. They don't know me. It's not like I'm, you know, traveling and spending a lot of time in the DC area. So, I didn't think I would have a chance. Sure enough, I got a call that I made the top five. And so, I did a phone interview, which was, which was horrible because it got disconnected and the time was off and, oh my gosh, it's a whole other story. And so I—

(TI): So, you're probably thinking, like they probably don't think I know logistics.

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): It was awful. Back in the Blackberry days, you had to stand by the window to get a self cell service. Right. In that hotel, it was crazy. So, I was doing this event called Over the Edge Waikiki. And it was repelling off the Sheraton Waikiki, 33 stories down for Special Olympics, which I was not going to do. And I had said my calendar is too full. I'm not going to do this event. And I got an email from one of my soldiers that said, "Hey, Chief. You know, we set five command staff slots aside... unless you're chicken." Oh, are you calling me out? So, clear the deck. I'm going to be there. So, of course we're told nothing in your pockets, leave your phones in the car because nothing can drop on the people down below. Right? So I left my everything in the car except my keys. So, I repelled down and it was a great experience. And, you know, it was pretty cool to tell you the truth. Just here's Diamond Head, and you're looking out over the ocean, rappelling down the Sheraton Waikiki. So, I get back to my car and, you know, as the kids say, the phone blew up and it was the Chief of the National Guard Bureau's Office, the tag, the Hawaii Guard Commander. I'm like, "Oh!" And then my husband. Right? Cause they called him looking for me because I wasn't answering my phone. Right. And I wasn't in the office. and he tells, you know, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau's secretary, "Oh, she's rappelling down 33 stories of the Sheraton Waikiki."

Both: [Laughter]

(TI): We're a little different out here in Hawaii.

(DJH): We may reconsider her application.

(TI): That's probably exactly what they were looking for. Someone that was probably going like, "Oh, she's totally the face of, we want the face of nature."

(DJH): I got ahold of general McKinley and he offered me the position, told me to talk to my family and think about it. And I said, "No, sir. You don't put your, you know, a package, and then if offered the position decide to think about it." And I said, "I accept. I accept." And it's just logistics, and, you know, so that was it. And it happened very fast after that. Very fast.

(TI): Wow. So, did your husband at that point get orders to come to Virginia as well?

(DJH): He had retired. So, Gary, my husband, retired in 1996, and that's when I looked at him in his big baby brown eyes and said, "Baby, it's my turn." And he knew exactly what I meant by that. And that was a turning point for me to be able to say, "I'll go. Pick me. I'll take that deployment. I'll go to that class. I'll go to that leadership training. I'll go. I'll go." Because he was the stability then at home. And really, he was the one that enabled me to do the things that I was able to do because when he was on active duty, I kept the home fires burning right in Hawaii. He kept the air conditioning on. But so it was really great. And I want to share with you real quick. So, when the Chief, when Sergeant Major of the Army or the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force are leaving their positions, the National Guard is able to nominate a soldier and an airman for those respective positions to compete for the Sergeant Major of the Army or the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. So, I happen to be that particular year when Chief Jim Roy was retiring from that position, I happened to be the nominee for that position. And again, I thought, "Are you kidding me?" All these active duty chiefs that are out there serving, you know. If we enforced our abilities across our Air Force, there's no way. And when the Air Force, you know, did their picks, you know, I was nowhere in that top five pick, and lo and behold, I did. I did make the top five, and I did interview for the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, which was one of those most highest honors of my entire career to be able to do that. And I'm telling you this, because I want our National Guard soldiers and airmen to know that that opportunity exists and why not them? I believe some day we will have a National Guard soldier or airman serve in one of those positions. And that particular year, Chief Staff of the Air Force said, "Chief, it was between you and another chief, and I selected, you know, the other chief," which was fine. That wasn't my path. It was his path. And that airman that he chose, that chief, was in my air traffic control class, 25 years earlier, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, James Cody. He and I are good friends. His wife and I were good friends. And here we are twenty-five years later competing for the same position. It was crazy.

(TI): Definitely. Definitely a small world. So was that your time, was that after the Chief of the National Guard Bureau after your Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief or is that—

(DJH): Yeah, it was right toward the end. Gosh, I want to—I would probably been in the seat for about three years at that point.

(TI): So you were looking at that as the next—gotcha. But still, to be considered that close to it, that's amazing. So, during your time, as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, what would you say would be the greatest achievement for the Guard during that time that you could say you can help put a stamp on back and say, "Yeah, I'm so glad we were able to do that."

(DJH): So, during my time, Don't Ask Don't Tell was overturned, and there was a lot of meetings and discussion and input given. I would have members of that committee that were working on that come to my office and have discussions with me about it. The training had to be different for the National Guard than it was for, you know, the rest. Oh, I should say the Reserve as well because we're not there every day. You can't say, "Okay, Air Force, you've got 30 days to complete this training," and say the same thing to the Guard Reserve because you're only there for two days out of that 30 days, right? That's just one example. So, you know, we had to talk about that. So, there were some things that, you know, I was able to give input that made a difference. Biggest, most significant thing during my time I had—I was serving for the four-star, you know, was the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. He got a second star before—excuse me—his fourth star, I apologize, before I came into that position, But he wasn't a full voting member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was invited to the table. He was able to express, you know, his opinion and give counsel to the chairman, etc., but he didn't have a full vote.

(TI): So, it was kind of like the Coast Guard.

(DJH): Exactly. Exactly. So, then in 2012 he became a full voting member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And that was huge for the National Guard. It was huge. And I get that the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force cover down for their components, the Reserve and the Guard. They're the four-star for active Gardener Reserve, excuse me. But because of our unique state mission, the role of the National Guard on the border, you know, throughout the cities right now that are in upward, etc. That is the National Guard Title 32. That state piece belongs to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. So, I think that that had a huge impact on him getting that, you know, the full voting rights and NOGUS, our National Guard Association of the United States, and EANGUS,

the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, those two Veteran service organizations, if you will, they were on the hill all the time pushing this forward, pushing this forward, pushing this forward. So, organizations like that had a big hand in our Chief being a full voting member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Huge, huge.

(TI): Very good. Now, when you weren't active, what's your passion? Did you have another career? Where you, like you said, keeping the air conditioning at home? What did you do?

(DJH): So, during the periods of time that I was a traditional Guardsman, like in California, I was the office manager for a thrift and loan in Carlsbad, California. So, kind of back in the banking business, right?

(TI): So, banking's kind of been your theme throughout the entire—

(DJH): Yeah, it was. I mean, like kind of an easy niche to fall into knowing we're going to be there for three years. And again, still not having a college degree at that time, it was an easy thing to fall into and having the five years of banking experience that was pretty cool. And one unique thing that happened while I was at that thrift and loan. I took our deposit to the big bank to make the deposit. And I was like, you know, this pregnant, you know, like seven months pregnant and, you know, in the teller world, right? The customer's standing in front of you. So, I'm standing in front of the teller at this time. I'm the customer. I have all my money laid out. The checks laid out for our business, and this guy jumps up, leans up right next to me, points a gun in my face, and said, "It's a bank robbery." Oh my God. And let me tell you, I hit the floor hard, baby belly and all. It was crazy.

(TI): Oh my gosh!

(DJH): So that's our little girl. She went through earthquakes in California, rock slide, and a bank robbery. So that's my thrift and loan story from California.

(TI): Oh my gosh.

(DJH): When we moved to Hawaii, I took a year off because my husband had 18 months of training before his six months, you know, WestPac deployment. And I was working. I slept from like midnight to five. I had the baby. I had the step kids every other weekend. I had drill one weekend. Taking care of the yard, the house, the car, all that stuff, right? It was crazy. It was the worst six months of my

entire life. So, it was, I mean, you have to admire the minute women that stay behind it. Take care of the families that are working full time, getting the kids to school and daycare. Oh my gosh. I mean, I lived it. So, I kind of have a dual hat. I was a military person as well as, you know, the wife staying at home taking care of all that when the spouse is deployed. So, I get it.

(TI): Did they ever catch the guy at the bank robbery?

(DJH): I have no idea. I have no idea. But you know how it works. When there's a robbery at a bank, lock down. FBI is called in. Nobody goes in, nobody goes out. Well, you got this seven month pregnant looking woman, right? My Marine has been in his uniform, was there in minutes at that door. And he's like, "Either you're letting me in, or I'm taking you out. I'm going."

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): I think that bank was probably a little bit nervous, you know, of liability with this pregnant woman and all that. So, but why don't we go to Hawaii? I took a year off to be with our daughter. She was at that point, you know, about two and a half. And I hadn't spent a ton of time with her, daycare raised her to that point, and that I just felt it was important to be a mom and just, you know, get her grounded and, you know. And then I went to work as an office manager for a financial advisor.

(TI): Yep. So, banking is a as a common thread to that entire?

(DJH): Numbers make sense to me, simple numbers. Simple numbers, not, you know, algebra and stuff like that, but simple numbers. And I learned so much from Kathy Skellington, First Command Adviser. I learned so much from her when I worked there. And then I became a full-time technician, and I never had a civilian career after that.

(TI): Got you. Very good. 28 years. Great career. First day of retirement, what did Denise do?

(DJH): Sleep.

(TI): [Laughter]

(DJH): I slept, I slept, I slept and slept and then I slept some more. And that's what I told people. "Hey, what are you doing? You're retired." Sleep. "Well, after you've been sleeping, what are you gonna do?" I want to sleep some more. I did a lot of sleeping. Let me tell you. But you know, we had a big move. We drove across country from

DC. We're on our way to Colorado. And we stopped along the way in the Chicago area, Wisconsin, and the Minnesota to visit family we hadn't seen for a bit. And then we got here and then, you know, the whole PCS move, right? We don't unpacked boxes that have been boxed up for 25 years. I said, now we're going through all these boxes. We're purging getting rid of stuff. Right.

(TI): When I got here to this house right here, I did that exact same thing. I checked every box, and I just dumped it in the basement. And I went through it for like a year.

(DJH): It takes a long time, but now I had time and I wasn't going to work. You know, I decided that I was going to go back to school because I was going to finish that bachelor's degree. I had a year left to finish. And so, I said I'm doing it. And so, I went to school for a year after I retired and finished it.

(TI): It was amazing that you reached the levels of that you did without a bachelor's degree, because now it's like the deemed thing that you need to have, but you're able to show relevant work.

(DJH): And I will tell all service members out there that is exactly right. You have got to get that education done. Get it done early. Get that bachelors. And so many of our enlisted now, when they retire, they have master's degrees. I mean, that's common today. But you're right. In my day, you could make it through grit, perseverance, your reputation, your record. You could make it, right? But it's different today. You've got to get that education piece done.

(TI): Yeah, whether it's a bachelor's, whether it's a certificate in the trade that you're doing to get certified something, you know? Cause you know, again, I mean a lot of other careers, you don't need a bachelor's you can, you know, engineers that sort of thing, that's certificates. But like you said, use that GI bill and get that education.

(DJH): Absolutely. And I did a four course strategic leadership master's course, and one of these days I am going to finish that master's I do believe. But you know, right now I'm full-time. My husband and I are full-time grandparents of our two year old twins, grandchildren. They live with us. And so ,our world is in constant state of chaos all the time.

(TI): How old are they?

(DJH): Two years, four months.

(TI): Oh man. Yeah, you got two of them.

(DJH): What one doesn't think of, the other one does. And it's just constant. So, we love it though. I mean, it kind of lets us have this do over because we didn't, you know, daycare raised our daughter the first two and a half years. So, I'm experiencing things that I never got to experience with my own daughter, right? Which is kind of a cool thing. But after I finished that bachelor's the next thing was, "Okay, what's next? What's next?" I still felt like I had something to offer. And you know—

(TI): I know that you wrote an autobiography.

(DJH): I did. So, there was this voice in my head from a couple of senior leaders that I have interacted with over the years and a big voice from my husband, "Write the book, write the book, write the book." So, I decided, "Okay, I'm going to start down this path." And it was one of the most difficult things that I ever did because when I was serving, it was like, "Okay, this happened, next. Put it back in your mind. Okay. This happened, next, little box in my head." Okay. This happened little box in the head and there's this chapter 33 in that book talks about threats of rape. That was one of the most difficult things that I went through. And all I did was put in this little box. I wrapped it up, put a hard bow on it, tucked it back here, and I never dealt with. So now I'm writing this book and some of these experiences now I'm putting it on paper and now I'm living it. I'm having to open up all these little boxes back here that I never dealt with because you're busy. Next thing, next thing. Right. You take care of soldiers and airmen. And so, I mean, I did a lot of crying through the writing of that book. It was really hard for me, and I'm not there. I think my brain got switched at birth. I was supposed to be a boy, so I don't have that touchy, feely soft side of me that comes out very often. Right. I'm not a crier and that type of thing. I'm pretty, pretty, pretty good. Grew up tough. You had to be tough when you grow up out of the farm with, you know, the way we did. And so, I've always been this tough person, but here I am. And I'm just crying through this thing and it was difficult for me to find the right words that would make someone like you want to turn the page and continue to read. So, I actually had to hire a writing coach to help me, like, "What are you thinking here? What are you feeling?" Feeling? Are you kidding? I got to come up with a feeling word?

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): So, it was hard. It was hard.

(TI): But it sounds like it was also a little cathartic to through some of that.

(DJH): It absolutely was. And oftentimes I asked, you know, why did the Lord put me on this path? And I believe it was to help others certainly that came after me have things little bit better. There are lessons in there. There's leadership lessons in there for those that maybe don't have that mentor or have a path laid out, right, to learn from it. I mean, there's just so much. And I was honest and I shared way too much, but that was the point of it all was to really, you know, have the reader understand that you can do this discipline, all these other things, right? So it was, and then, you know, it was like the book. The book published and launched, and my mom fell and broke her hip. I literally—I was going to this big conference. I was going to speak to like 1500 people, right. Big line for the book. And I literally am calling, you know, the Chief from the ambulance saying, "I can't. I have to cancel," because I was with my mom at the time. So, I can't be there because I had to go be with my mom because my dad, you know, just too hard of hearing, a little elderly. He wanted me to deal with the doctors and all that. So, I just couldn't understand sometimes the path that the Lord put me under. Write this book. And then the launch just went. I think really when it comes down to it, in addition to writing it to help others learn was to make me unwrap all those boxes and just live through that and kind of unloading get rid of it. And it did.

(TI): That's great. That's great. A lot of it sounds like it was just a lot of catharsis for you. Wow. It looks like another thing that you did was volunteer was what you started to do through United Through Reading and the Military Child Education Coalition. How did those opportunities come about and what was your role in those?

(DJH): So, I met those, you know, the CEOs during my time while I was serving and I was still in uniform when I got a call from United Through Reading, and I just respectfully asked, you know, I need to take the need to take six months just take a knee. Can you contact me six months from now? Let me just kind of settle down. And they gave me the grace to do that and they contacted me. And I was recommended by former Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, Rick West. He was a trustee, you know, at that time. And, you know, trustees are supposed to refer who they think would serve well on the board. And he recommended me and man, I just love the mission of United Through Reading, keeping families connected

through the read aloud program. So back in 1990, when my husband deployed, you know, I bought some little storybooks. Why I thought of this, I have no idea about storybooks. We hit record on the cassette player. And my husband read these storybooks and now he's gone. And I put my daughter on the lap, put his 8 by 10 picture on the nightstand, press play. Here's a storybook. And so, she could see daddy's face. That was his voice that we would go through the story books. So, in 1990, when he came back, all these kids are crying and screaming because they don't know their daddies at all. And she went right up to him because she recognized the face. She recognized the voice and all she did was this. She touched his face. Are you real? Cause she's been looking at a picture for six months right now, or now, you know, we went from, you know, a VHS tapes to CDs, to SD cards, and now we're in the cloud and it's all free to our Veterans and service members. We've got an app. They can read the stories. So, when mommy or daddy are deployed or separated because of a long school or a TDY, time zones don't match up, mom or dad at home can go to go to that class, to the app, pick whatever story was prerecorded, and that child can have a story every single night from whoever is, you know, they're separated from, and it's great for grandparents too. It's great. I use it for the grandkids. It's fabulous. So that was really—it's still my passion. So, I'm in my seventh year right now with United Through Reading and have served in different capacities on that board and Military Child Education Coalition. I served three years on that board. And again, it's all about the child. It's all about reading to the child, the education of the child, having kids involved in their schools, mentorship programs. It's much about leadership for middle school. Just think about a kid that PCSs to a brand new school. They're the ones sitting over there at that table eating lunch by themselves. They have a student to student or a peer to peer type program that they, you know, the shirts, right? The Military Child Education Coalition. That whoever is a volunteer will now be that mentor for that brand new student. They'll have lunch with them. They'll tour the school with them. They'll make sure they get to the right classes in time. They'll find out what their interests are and introduce them to the band members or the choir members or the drama club, or get them involved in the sports that they're interested in. So, they're not alone. And that just reduces all kinds of mental health issues. I hate to say it, but suicide issues, things like that, I mean, it just gives that student that PCS in a better experience within the school. So, it's all about the kids, kids, kids, kids.

(TI): It sounds like you had a, you know, that personal experience was really tied to that mission. That's, you know, my wife tells stories about that. She didn't know her dad when he came back, and he was always in the field when she was in Hawaii or Germany. And that's really great. And she talks about the times where she was in high school or middle school about not knowing, not having a feeling of belonging, because like, I think you came from a place like me, a small town, you went from kindergarten to high school with the same people.

(DJH): I didn't go to kindergarten.

Both: [Laughter]

(TI): But you know what I mean? You knew the kids from, you knew that community. And so, she doesn't have that feeling of community and for someone and it's foreign, but I understand it seeing being in the military now. That's great stuff. That's good stuff.

(DJH): So, I want to tell you, not only did I not go to kindergarten because it didn't exist for me. Okay. Do you know the program Little House on the Prairie.

(TI): Oh yeah. My dad watched it all the time. Yeah, it was always in the—it was always on TV and my three channels as I was catching the school bus.

(DJH): Exactly. So Laura Ingalls went to this one room country school right in the middle of nowhere. That's exactly the kind of country school that I went to for the first five years of my education. Outhouses for the boys and girls, you know, there was no indoor plumbing. Right. We had one teacher that taught all eight grades, every subject. So, can you imagine how much time we got for core, like reading and math and science and history and English? Nanoseconds. Gut that's the kind of, you know, foundation that I had. Right. So, I say this to your audience to say, gosh, if she can do this, anybody can do this. You just have to put the right things in place and grow yourself, develop yourself, pay attention, get your education, you know, do what's right. Serve with honor.

(TI): Wow. From first to eighth grade altogether as well. I mean, when I was growing up, their school house was still there. Just, we didn't go to it. My grandfather went to it. You know, it was closing when my dad went to school. It's just amazing to hear about stories like that and to see that where you can go from an education like that. And just as long as you persevere, that's great stuff. Yeah. You're

now a military advisor for Veterans United Home Loans. Again, sticking with the, with the financial aspect of your career. What's the role there? It seems like a lot of the senior enlisted advisors are advisors for this particular home loan. What is y'all's role?

(DJH):

We have eight military advisors that are part of the military relations team. And I'll tell you, it's just so much fun getting together with them because it's all that service rivalry. Right. And, you know, they're all poking at each other and things like that. And it's just awesome. Right. And of course, you know, I'm the female, the token female on the team. Someday we're going to have another one, but our role really is to—our role is to educate our Veterans who are currently serving service members and our Veterans on their VA home loan benefit. We're not the ones, you know, doing the loans. We can't get into details because we're not licensed, but we're there to educate the force that you have this benefit. I can remember asking my stepdaughter a few years ago, "Hey Nikki, when are you and Mike going to buy a home?" "We can't afford it." They're in California, can't afford it. You know, it's that money down. Right? I said, "Nikki, you're a Veteran." "Oh, that's right, forgot." Right. So, we will attend like all the major conferences and our boss, the Vice President of Military Relations, Pam Swan, who everyone knows, she pairs a respected military advisor with whatever conference that is. So, for example, AUSA.

(TI):

That's a big one.

(DJH):

Yep. So, we have two former sergeants majors of the Army that are on our team. They would work that conference. They would most likely have me work that conference. I had the last number of years because of the Army Guard presence there. So, we're in the booth with her and educating the forces are walking by and you would just be amazed at how many people come to that booth and have no idea about that benefit. So, that's the main thing that we do is we're educating the force and we will go and we will speak. We also go to our home office in Columbia, Missouri, and we help educate the loan officers and their teams on, you know, how they can better serve the military and Veteran community because many of them have never served or don't have any affiliation with military. So, they will ask us questions. You know, one question was very simply, "How do I talk to a Veteran that is suffering from PTSD?" So, we had a conversation about that, or, "How do I respond when I thank a Veteran for their service, and they're like, 'Oh, you don't need to thank me.'" Well, you know, so we kind of help them work

through those things. And a lot of times too, there may be somebody that's just kind of sitting on the fence. So. let's say that it's a National Guard soldier or airmen that's "I'm not sure if I want to do this. I'm not sure if I want to go with Veterans United Home Loans or with, you know, Company A." And so then, you know, my boss will reach out and say, "Hey, Denise, can you call, you know, Sergeant so-and-so or Sergeant so-and-so and just speak to them your experience." All of the military advisors, we have our loans through the Veterans United Home Loans, and we're proud to be able to say that because we believe in the company. We believe in what we do. And so, it just works. And we tell the loan officers use us. Use our names. You know, if you're talking to them, a sailor, "Hey, you know, I got a personal relationship with Rick West or Chief Master of the Air Force Jim Roy. Or you can press her to Sergeant Major of the Army, Sergeant Major of the Army Daily." And the Marine Corps. Okay. Let's get the Marine Corps in there.

(TI): Sounds like a bet.

(DJH): Now, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Ron Green. So, I mean, we just had a great team. Yeah.

(TI): I have to very personally relate or they've both really, I have quick stories about both of them. Saw Major Barrett. He was checking in to my headquarters, combat camera, as I was checking out. I was a Sergeant there. And so, I was there when he got his official photo. So, every first time I see his official photo I'm like, "I remember getting that photo." Sergeant Major Green was a huge influence on my career. He was the Battalion Sergeant Major at the same time. Sergeant Major Barrett was the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. He had a profound time on my career. There was a time when I really didn't know I was in a bad spot professionally as far as leadership, and he really—I don't know what I would have done without him.

(DJH): Oh, that's really a great story. And I hope someday that you're going to be able to share that with him. I mean, there's so many lives that people—

(TI): I saw him in Charlotte when he was a Sergeant in the Marine Corps and I was working for NASCAR and I made a point to go wherever he was to let him know that. And he remembered me. He remembered me, my staff and COs, both of them, my leadership above that. And he goes, "We took care of you." And I said, "Yes, you did." And I never forgot it. So, he is a really good man. He is a

really good man. Probably one of the most influential senior enlisted advisors, senior Sergeant Majors, First Sergeants I ever had my career easily, easily.

(DJH): It's really nice to have good people like that in your career that you can look up to and you can follow and emulate. Absolutely.

(TI): Absolutely. I just remember him coming out of an office coming out, coming down, walking across everybody and coming to my desk and going, "You're not going to have an issue with that anymore." And he was able to handle that issue in a professional manner to where everybody was able to still do the mission and keep me in the mission that I was doing and not take my mind or make me want to move or, or anything. He was able to work the situation out.

(DJH): Yeah. You're able now to focus, right. You just focused on your job that's right. Instead of having whatever it was weighing down on your shoulders. Yeah. That's leadership.

(TI): That's great, man. That's great, man. So, that's very innovative that that Veterans United Home Loans does that. I'd like to, you know, that's a mortgage company and that's, I don't think that's an endorsement or indicative or anything like that. I think what it is is just showing that there is innovation there that I think it'd be great if other mortgage companies emulated that. It's good stuff. Summit 6, six former Senior Enlisted Advisors, and you've talked a lot about a couple of them starting LLC. How did that come about? Is it the ones that were all serving together? Were you all just a good core group? What's the mission of your group?

(DJH): We were a core group at the Pentagon. We all served together. So, you know, I'm like, oh, halfway, three quarters of the way through writing my book and I'm just not loving life. And I get this email from from Rick West, right. And he puts out to the initial six military advisors that we're with Veterans United. So we've added Dan Daley and Ron Green since that. So now there's eight with the original six. He says to all of us, "Hey, we had to write a leadership book together," and my head was about to explode.

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): So, I'm sitting in Colorado.

(TI): You wrote another book? No.

(DJH): Exactly! That was my thought. He could hear me screaming from Colorado, I'm sure. So, I waited to see what everybody else was

going to say because I'm in the throws of my own book. Right. And so, one by one, they all came on board and said, "Yeah, great idea. Yeah. Let's talk about this. Let's get started." So, I, you know, great idea, I'm in. And I was, cause, you know, you can't be the only one, right? You can't be only one to say no. And certainly, as the National Guard person and the only girl, I could not say no. I'm part of this team and I'm all in. But the beauty of that book Breaching the Summit was that we have our own chapter. It wasn't like I had to write the whole book. Right. So, we all had our own chapter and I was able to take some pieces from my book, From the Prairie to the Pentagon, and just rework, rewicker it, you know. Reword it a little bit, do some wordsmithing, change some things around. And so, I was able to use some. So that's how that came about. So with the book—and then we had to form, you know, we formed this, you know, LLC. So, Breaching the Summit, Summit 6, six of us, right? And so, we have gone to like the Coast Guard Academy as a group and had a panel. And I believe that there's other places where a couple of our team, Summit 6, will have you go and speak or be on a panel at AUSA. COVID stopped this. But they were going to have a panel of us because Casemate Publishing picked up our book, Breaching the Summit, excuse me. So, they were going to have all the authors there on a panel and do a book signing that was going to be really cool. And then COVID kind of kiboshed that.

(TI): So, hopefully that changes soon.

(DJH): Yeah. I hope so too. Yeah. As a matter of fact, I'm leaving shortly after this. I'm headed to Grand Rapids. I'm going to speak with the National Guard, Michigan National Guard Association. I was so excited because, you know, we haven't been out doing much right. Interact with soldiers and airmen and ooh good. But yeah, so that's Summit 6. it's been a great experience with the guys, and we're all really lockstep on what we're doing, and we go and we speak on leadership and various things like that.

(TI): Is it two books or one? Cause I noticed that there's Leadership Lessons from Six Military Trainers at the top and then Leadership Lessons from the US Military's Best. Is that that two books or one?

(DJH): So, we have Breaching the Summit. Okay. I don't have the black one in front with me right now. So, when we first published Breaching the Summit, the cover was kind of black and down below it had all of our pictures on the front cover. When Casemate picked up our book and decided to publish it, they changed the cover and they put us on the back. The content is the same, but, you know,

they gave it a different look in the front. So, we've got a different, you know, with the ocean and the summit. They're breaching the summit,

(TI): Different wrapper on it, little different wrapper.

(DJH): So, it's the same book. Just the, yeah, the cover is different.

(TI): Gotcha. And like you said, you guys do speaking tours, but it's changed a little bit under COVID. How have you guys been able to adapt to that? Change those things, you know?

(DJH): Unfortunately, all the speaking had just, it just stopped. Right. And we understand that means organizations weren't allowed to host different venues, but we're seeing now this year things are starting to pick up. Right. And so, we have high hopes. So, I believe our boss is trying to get all of us to the American Legion Convention in August, I believe it is. Don't quote me on that. It could be September, I forgot. But to have all of us on a panel, right. And then maybe do a book signing after that type of thing. And individually we do those things as well. So, for example, when I go to Michigan now, as part of their registration, the first 100 people get the book Breaching the Summit as part of their registration. And then I do book signings across the country when I'm here, there, as well, you know, the other guys do too. And I, you know, I do it for both of my books, right. Guys are promoting Breaching the Summit, but I'm promoting both of mine

(TI): Now, is it just speaking tours or other corporate or educational professional coaching opportunities that you're pursuing?

(DJH): Yep, there are. There are different organizations will bring us in and depending upon what the need is, I mean, they may target an area that they want us to specifically talk to not sharing our story, but this area of leadership or different things like that. Absolutely. There are opportunities.

(TI): Very good. Very good. Now what is your stamp on the book? What did you want to share that you wanted to get in your writing that you wanted to get across?

(DJH): In Breaching the Summit?

(TI): Yes.

(DJH): There's about 180 years collectively, right, combined. But the six of us that wrote that book, and we really believe that this book is a leadership book from the highest levels of our senior enlisted core.

And it can be used for the emerging leaders that want to see how did they do it. It could be used for, you know, our first, second lieutenants that are making their way on how to maybe get some tips on how they could manage and lead the enlisted corps. It's for corporations to see from a different perspective. Perhaps some leadership—leadership is leadership, and it's transferable from the military into the civilian sector to the corporate world. Leadership is leadership. Okay. So, we're hoping, and we have had corporations reach out to us about speaking and utilizing this book as well as our military. And when I see, like I carry books with me all the time, right. So, if I see a soldier and an airman in the airport, you know, we'll give him a copy of the book. Right. Just sign it to them. And here's a copy of this book, depending upon what the conversation might be. Right. I mean, it might be just what they need at that very moment. Right. So yeah, we wanted to share our leadership experiences, kind of how we, you know, did this, broke that summit, right. Breached it, and in the hopes that others will learn from that and that they can see all six of us that wrote that book came from pretty humble beginnings, very humble beginnings. That's the core. Today is so much more educated than we when we were, you know, junior and making your way through. So, we wanted it to be able to share our stories in the hopes that it will help them reach their full potential as well.

(TI): Very good. Very good. If you were to pick out one focus of leadership that you wanted to make sure that you got through that book, what would it have been?

(DJH): The biggest thing for me probably would be to respectfully do not take no for an answer. That was huge for me through my whole career. And I always put that respectfully at the front because you know as well as I do you have anyone in the uniform, there is a way to buck the system and then there's a way to buck the system. So respectfully, right? It's this. So, this story I'll tell you I was a Senior Master Sergeant in a billet that was an E-8, hard E-8. There was no promotion opportunity. And I was okay with that. I really was because it wasn't about promotion throughout my career. It was about how can I better serve in different positions. How can I be, you know, make a difference on this organization? I would have been so proud to retire as a Senior Master Sergeant, but it just so happens that this position opened up the State Command Chief for Hawaii. I said, "I can do that job. I meet all the requirements." You know, it was open to all chiefs and eligible senior master Sergeant. So, prepare, prepare, prepare along your whole entire career. You

have to prepare for that opportunity that is going to come when you least expect it. So, I wanted—so, just so happened that the Air Guard Commander was in our building. And I said, “Sir, I’m interested in applying for the State Command Chief job.” And he told me flat out that I couldn’t do it. He said, “You’re a full-time technician. Only a drill status. A part-time guardsman can service in that position.” Well, I knew better than that because other states had full-time command chiefs that perhaps were technicians in a different job as well. So, I said, “Well, sir, where would I find that information that you are telling me? What regulation would that be?” “I’ll get back to you, Sergeant Jelinski-Hall.” Two weeks later, still nothing. General so-and-so, per our conversation. And I got a response back from him and he said HR, it was a human resources. HR, whatever. “And while incompatible with your full-time job, there is a waiver process.” That’s all I needed to hear. So, I got into that regulation. Trust, but verify, right? It’s not done with just cause it’s always been doesn’t mean it is or should be. It’s not always fact. People will tell you something that they believe in is fact that it’s not. So, you have to dig into the books yourself. And so, I did write up the letter for the, you know, for the waiver, got it approved. Done. So respectfully, don’t take no for an answer. I can’t tell you how many times I was told, “No, you can’t. No, you can’t. That can’t be done. Can’t be done.” Put the how in front of that. How can be done because of how assumes that it can be done. And I, my experience has been most of the time, 99% of the time, there is a way there is a way over, around, under. And I don’t mean, you know, skirting regulations or doing anything that’s not within, you know, the regulations. That is not what I mean, but be creative. Think outside of that box, right. Look at it from a different angle and you can probably do it, whatever it is. There’s a waiver. There’s a way

(TI): Leadership lessons from Denise Jelenski-Hall. I’m just going to shut up and listen. I like it. Love it. Denise, uh, what is one thing that you learned during your time in the service during your time in the military that you apply to what you do?

(DJH): The first thing that comes to mind is you have to care about people. You just do. I mean, you can get so busy, just, you know, marching down this way and not focusing on the force and then you miss them. I have a great story about that, but that now taking off the uniform still applies. You know, I care deeply about, you know, United Through Reading. I care deeply about my church. My husband and I are facilitators for Focus, which helps young

engaged couples prepare for marriage. Well, we've gone through a lot of bumps in our roads, so we want to share, right? And we gotta care about them. We don't go through the mechanics of it. We could just check the box and do what's required, but we share the good, the bad, the ugly, right? You notice people, you know. I mean, there've been times that I've been out on a hike and someone might be sitting down over there and you can see that they're stressed. You know, maybe they're dehydrated. Maybe they're heat exhaustion. Maybe they have altitude sickness. You just have to be mindful and care about people. And I learned that throughout my career to pay attention and not take care of in that sense, but, you know, be there with a resource. Be there with a word. Be there with, you know, taking care of them and helping them to be successful. So, I was at this graduation, this NCO Academy graduation, and you know, these engineers have gone through six weeks of, you know, what, right? And they are tired, and they're exhausted, and they want to get home to their families. And they're standing up on stage, you know, flight by flight. So happy to get their graduation certificate. And there was this one NCO in this lineup, right, that was just head was down. Her body was just drained. You could tell something is wrong with this. And so this should have been one of the happiest moments of her life in her career, right? Like all the others, you saw the big smiles. And I made a mental note that after the ceremony, I was going to find her. Now, you've got a room of 300 Airmen, all in service dress uniforms, right. We all look the same. What's the likelihood that I'm going to find her. And typically, you know, as senior leaders, you're the last ones out of the room. And I'm talking with various Airman that graduated. And I found the Hawaii group that graduated and, you know, connected with them for a bit. And I believe that this was to the grace of God this young NCO walked by me. And I said, "Excuse me, excuse me." And I won't go into details, but we had a long conversation and this Airman was in stress. I mean, she needed some help bad. So. I made the connections, got all of her state command chief, connected them. And I, to this day, that was, gosh, back in probably 2011 or 2012. So. it was like 10 years ago. She has wrote a testimonial in my book and you can go read that. And she talked about how I saved her life that day. And to this day I stay in touch with her. You know, it was just taking those minutes to find out what the need was and what was happening. You know, an NCO that just doesn't know me from Adam, you think they want to open up to me, but she trusted enough to open up and that I was

going to follow through and help her cause she didn't know where to turn. Right.

(TI): You showed that you were engaged. You showed that you were an engaged leader, and that's sometimes—a lot of times that's all it takes to really gain that trust, really affect somebody like that. And that's great.

(DJH): She's had a great career, you know. She's married, has a daughter. She's thriving, and ah, so proud.

(TI): That's great. No, just showing that engagement, being that engaged leader, you know, you take care of your people, the mission will take care of itself.

(DJH): Absolutely. Absolutely. If you serve pure of heart, when I say that it sounds a little nanny panties, but serve pure of heart, meaning that you do it best for the country. You do the best for the organization in which you're serving. And you do the very best for the people that you are responsible for and that you're leading, and you know what, you will have a successful career. Absolutely. I believe that.

(TI): Yeah. And then, like I said, you take care of the people, taking care of the organization's going to take care of itself. Absolutely. Denise, we've talked. We've covered a lot. We've covered a lot of ground. Is there anything that I've missed or haven't asked that you think is important to share for anybody that's listening? Parting shot, if you will.

(DJH): A parting shot. I want to give a parting shot out to all the families. You know, we serve, we put on that uniform every day. and we stand pack to pack, shoulders to shoulder, you know, with our brothers and sisters. And the family is left behind. And oftentimes when we, you know, recognize our military spouses here and there, but I give all credit to our military spouses who enable us to go and do the mission. And the work of the Department of Defense is serving in our respective branches because they are home taking care of everything. So, when we put on that uniform, we don't have to worry about it. It's taken care of at home. So, spouses that listen to this. Thank you. Thank you for your contributions. We serve. You serve as well. Thank you for all that you do for the respect of branch that your spouses is in because I know that that whether it's the Army, the Marines, the Navy, the Air Force, Coast Guard, the National Guard, I know that each one is better because of what you are doing in supporting your military member that's out there fighting the good fight.

(TI): Gotcha. Very good. What about the—I mean, a lot of my audience is Veterans and VA and VA employees. Anything for them that they might glean from any parting shot that you might have for them?

(DJH): Absolutely. Our Veterans and our Veterans Service Organizations that are out there taking care of our warriors, our nation's heroes. You know, I look at my dad who passed away last year. And I think about the care that he got and the help that he got from those that went, you know, after him, frankly, because he was elderly and here he had younger Veterans helping him navigate through the system of the VA and taking care of him. Right. And that's what Veterans do. They have their buddies back. They have their six. They're out there working for them. And the people at the VSOs that help our military go through, comb through their medical records to say, "You didn't do this." You didn't annotate that." "Oh, you can claim this." Or that they're out there helping where a lot of Veterans, even present day, they don't know where to turn. They don't know where to get, how to get started on doing some things. So, I applaud our Veterans. I'm one of them. My husband's one of them. My step-daughter's one of them. I mean, I've got a nephew who's serving. And I love our Veterans, and they do so much. They still do so much for this country. And it's so patriotic. God bless them, each and every one of them.

[01:28:31] Music

[01:28:35] Closing Monologue:

(TI): I want to thank Denise for joining us here on Borne the Battle. For more information Denise, you can find her bio at summit6leadership/ngb-sea-denise-jelinski-hall [Link: summit6leadership.com/ngb-sea-denise-jelinski-hall]. And the six in Summit 6 is a number. Don't spell it. This week's Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week is from our VA Veteran of the Day program. Every day our Digital Media Team honors a Veteran on all of our social media platforms and with a blog on blogs.va.gov [Link: blogs.va.gov/VAntage/category/veteran]. You can nominate the Veteran in your life by sending in a short writeup and about five photos to newmedia@va.gov. Pedro Munoz was born in June 1957 and grew up in Puerto Rico in a small community on the northwestern portion of the island. His father served during the Korean War and Munoz grew up wanting to follow in his father's footsteps and joined the service. In 1986, he enlisted in the Army and trained to become an automated logistical specialist. He later

attended the Special Forces Qualification Course and graduated in 1990. Munoz then served as a Green Beret with the 3rd Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Shortly after joining the Green Berets, he deployed to the Gulf War in support of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. In the mid 1990s, Munoz went to Haiti in support of Operation Uphold Democracy, which was an initiative to restore democracy to the Haitian elections. And he also deployed for a time to Columbia. In 1999, Munoz, now in his early 40s, earned a slot on the Army Parachute Team, the Golden Knights. He remained with the Golden Knights for several years until the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. In 2002, Munoz returned to Fort Bragg's Special Forces. This time he served with the 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces, as an operations and intelligence sergeant. In 2004, Munoz was deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. It was late in the evening on January 1, 2005, when Munoz and his unit were on a mission to track down a Taliban commander thought to be inside a compound. As Munoz cleared the building, he entered one of the rooms and was struck by gunfire and wounded. The shooter was a Taliban fighter, hiding in a room among women and children. Colonel Mark Gorton, deputy commander of the 7th Special Forces, recalled the incident in a "Tip of the Spear" article and said, "Sergeant First Class Munoz continued to support his detachment, firing selectively, engaging only armed combatants without harming any non-combatants. His dedication and his courage are evident through his actions: protecting innocent life, staying in the fight without thought for himself while supporting his teammates, allowing them to successfully accomplish their mission." Munoz did kill his attacker. His team evacuated him, but he succumbed to his wounds enroute to the hospital early the following day. The 47 year old sergeant first class earned numerous awards and medals including a Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Army Veteran Pedro Munoz, we honor his service. [21-Gun Salute] That's it for this week's episode. If your yourself would like to nominate your Veteran as a future Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week so we can all learn their story, you can just send us an email to podcast@va.gov. Include a short writeup and let us know why you'd like to see him or her as the Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week. And if you like this podcast episode, hit the subscribe button. We're on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, iHeartRadio, pretty much any podcasting app known to phone, computer, tablet, or man. For more stories on Veterans and Veteran benefits, check out our website, blogs.va.gov [Link:

blogs.va.gov]]. And follow the VA on social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, RallyPoint, LinkedIn, Pinterest. DeptVetAffairs, US Department of Veterans Affairs. No matter the social media, you can always find us with that blue checkmark. And as always, I'm reminded by people smarter than me to remind you that the Department of Veterans Affairs does not endorse or officially sanction any entities that may be discussed in this podcast nor any media products or services they may provide. I say that because the song you're hearing now is called "Machine Gunner," which is courtesy of the non-profit Operation Song, and was written by Marine Veteran Mick McElhenny, Nashville songwriter Jason Sever, and Mykal Duncan. Have a great day. Thank you for listening. Got some very special episodes coming up as Borne the Battle Rewinds. Take a listen to those as well, especially if you haven't heard them before or revisit them. They are the very first episode of Borne the Battle and then the very first episode that I conducted for Borne the Battle. Some good stuff. And we'll be back here with some fresh content in a couple of weeks. Take care.

[01:33:38] Music

[01:34:38] Bonus

(DJH): It's humorous now, but it was devastating at the moment.

(TI): The best stories though.

Both: [Laughter]

(DJH): I know. I was serving as the 154th Wing Command Chief, and I was going in for an interview for the Hawaii State Command Chief position. So, oversight over all of Hawaii Air and National Guard Enlisted Corp. And so, I have practiced, and I stood in front of the mirror, and I carried my uniform on a hanger because I wasn't going to have one wrinkle in it. And I had gone over and measured it, and everything was squared away. I mean, it always was, but you do the extra, right?

(TI): Yeah.

(DJH): I was so prepared for this interview. I mean, I was like, "This is going to be my job." I was so prepared. So, I get to our state headquarters, and I go into the ladies' room, and I put on my uniform. And as I'm putting on my jacket, I had a magnetic ribbon rack that was a complete square. And I caught the corner of it on my jacket, right? And it fell to the floor. [Sigh] So I pick it back up, and I put it on. I get it all, you know, lined up with the pocket there

and all that. So, I'm okay. I'm set. I'm standing out in the hallway. I talked to a couple of different officers. I talked to a couple of senior enlisted. Now it's my turn. I go in. They ask the questions, and I feel like I'm doing a good job with the responses. And all of the sudden I'm just feeling very uncomfortable, like something is wrong. And the general is looking at my ribbons, and I'm not going to look down and look at it, but I feel like something's not right here. This intuition, right?

(TI): Yeah.

(DJH): So, I'm done with the interview, shake hands. I go back to the ladies' room to take my jacket off, and then I realized, "Oh my gosh! I put them on upside down!"

(TI): [Laughter]

(DJH): The entire ribbon rack was flipped! Ugh. Because it was a perfect square, right?

(TI): Oh man.

(DJH): And I was like, "Oh my gosh, what do I do?" Do I go back in and apologize? Do I, you know, tell them what happened? No, you can't do that. It's too late.

(TI): Let me point it out. Let me make a bigger thing out of it.

(DJH): Yeah. I was like, "The job was mine. I lost it because I screwed up." And I kicked myself. I mean, I beat myself up all the way home. I was mortified that this happened. And, of course, later I get the call that I got the job, and I was like, "Oh." And I asked the previous State Command Chief, and I said, "Who noticed the ribbons?" And he said, "Nobody said anything. I didn't notice. Nobody else said they noticed." And I'm like, "You gotta be kidding." So, I go back to and said, "I spoke with a couple of officers, a couple of enlisted before going into that interview, right?" They didn't catch it, and no one in this room that I'm going before this panel caught that my ribbons were upside down? Either that or I want to believe that they were just so kind and gracious that they just didn't say anything.

(TI): I just think about all the times that you send in NCOs of the Quarter or Marine of the Quarter, and you check for all of that stuff.

(DHJ): Yeah.

(TI): There it is. It just goes to show that even the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the Hawaii—for the entire National Guard can have an experience like that.

(DJH): Absolutely. It makes you humble. And so, when you see that someone has a discrepancy, it just made me—I always treated people with respect when they made a correction. It just made me more humble because, you know, it happens to the best.

(Text Transcript Ends)