

Interviewer:

Okay. All right, well, good afternoon. Today is July 17, 2015, and I'm here in the West Point Center for Oral History with Geoff Bacon. Glad to see you, Geoff; how is everything?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Good to see you, too, sir; everything is well.

Interviewer:

Good. Can you please spell your first name and last name for us, so that we can have that for our transcriber?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

G-E-O-F-F-E-R-Y B-A-C-O-N.

Interviewer:

Okay. And Geoff, tell me a little bit about yourself, about where you grew up, and what you've done prior to coming to West Point.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I'm from Waukesha, Wisconsin, and also I'm a cheesehead - go, Pack, go. I went to prep school before coming. I was a unrecruited football player - I was a recruited football player. Spent my time here, you know, being on the football team, joining some other organizations as well.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So yeah. Now I'm a 2015 graduate.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about your childhood. What did your folks do when you were brought up?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So my mother, she was a social worker; she retired now, 20-plus years. My father, he works for G.E. He's a shipping manager at their headquarters in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I have two older brothers. I have a twin brother. He's five minutes older than me, so I guess you can call him my older brother. He has Down's Syndrome. Then I have an older brother who he's a correction officer, back home in Milwaukee.

Interviewer:

Okay. And what'd you do when you were growing up?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Growing up is just family, really. I don't know, it's kind of the only way to describe it. A lot of time with family, and a lot of time playing sports. I've been playing sports since I can remember.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Played soccer, ran track, football player - that was later, in my high school days, basketball. I'd say basketball's my first love, although I'm not that good at it, but nonetheless. So stuff like that. A lot of stuff with the family like a big roller skating family, so.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I got my skates. I brought them up here when I was a Cadet a couple times. Got caught skating in the basement of Arvin, got kicked out a couple of times, but you know, so that's really what I did in my childhood. I spent a lot of time with friends and family.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

A lot of time with friends and family.

Interviewer:

Howâ€™d you get interested in West Point?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

To be honest with you, itâ€™s kind of crazy. I really didnâ€™t know what West Point was until probably December of my senior year. I would get letters. So I was one of the best football players in my city around my junior and senior year, and I knew I was going to be recruited. I wanted to get recruited. And my coach, he would sit down and talk to me; like, â€œWhat do you think about the military? What do you think about the military?â€ And I thought I didnâ€™t really know what he meant by that. I just said, â€œItâ€™s whatever - you know, if they want to recruit me, Iâ€™ll see what they have out here, hear them out, see what they have to say.â€ I got a lot of letters. Like I would get letters over and over, and I would just throw them in the trash, â€œcause I figured nothing would really come out of it. I really - I knew I wasnâ€™t going to the military. But - little did I know. So Joe Ross, heâ€™s a graduate of the Military Academy. He coached for a while. He was my recruiting coach and everything like that. He would text me, and try to call me, e-mail me, but I really didnâ€™t respond too much, and I really donâ€™t know what happened.

â€œCause about fall, in the fall of my senior year in high school, we just started talking, and he would just tell me about the school and everything. He took some visits up to my high school in Milwaukee, and so he just sat down and talked to me, told me about the school. Like I said, I didnâ€™t really know what West Point was. I didnâ€™t know that militaries had academies and everything like that. I just figured just to a recruiting office, and you join, and you see what happens. I do have an uncle, he was in the military, but it was kind of like before I was born. He was part of the 82nd Airborne, so he has a lot of pride in that. So a lot of times, for the games and stuff like that, like Army-Navy games, I will always either wear his 82nd patch, or Iâ€™ll wear one of my old teammates. One of my teammates had deployed with the 101st, I wear his patch, so.

Interviewer:

Whoâ€™s that teammate?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

George Fletcher. He was Brigade Sergeant Major his Firstie year, my Plebe year. Now heâ€™s with the 75th Ranger Battalion.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Heâ€™s deployed right now. Heâ€™s doing really good, though. He was a big reason why I now - speaking personally - why I branched Infantry, and I think why some other guys branched Infantry as well. But kind of going on back, like family-wise, I really didnâ€™t have too much family history in the military. Like my grandmaâ€™s brothers and stuff like that joined the military, my granddad joined the military, but I mean he kind of caught on the later

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

End of World War I. My familyâ€™s pretty old.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

My familyâ€™s pretty old. I wonâ€™t say the ages, though. So yeah, like I said, I really didnâ€™t know too much about the military. Like growing up, you kind of think about it, like, â€œMaybe I could do the military,â€ but then reality sets in, and itâ€™s like, â€œItâ€™s never going to be military.â€ But obviously that wasnâ€™t the case for me.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about Joe Ross.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Oh, Coach Ross - Coach Ross is the man. He was - so a lot of times like you hear athletes and stuff say, "I didn't know what I was getting into when I came here," and stuff like that. But Coach Ross, he was 100% honest with me. Like every - he told me like, "Some days are going to suck. You're going to have good times, bad times. But you can get through it," and everything like that. And I always appreciate that about him. And I remember - I have a classmate, he's from Milwaukee as well; we both were recruited for football, Mark Johnson Harris. And I remember we kind of, we looked Coach Ross up one day or whatever, and you just see all this stuff he did when he was in military. He was a Ranger with the 101st. When he was deployed to the Middle East, they caught like one of the people that was on like America's Top 100 Wanted, or something like that. So it's like, "Man, like Coach Ross, he's the real deal," and stuff like that. So he was a great guy.

He still texts me to this day and stuff like that, just to make sure I'm all right, and stuff like that. So when I was at the prep school, I tore my A.C.L. Like before I could get back from the game, I had a text from him saying like, "How you doing? You okay?" and all this other stuff like that. And literally everything he told me happened. Like a lot of times, especially as an athlete, you know, coaches might tell you what you want to hear instead of, you know, the real deal, and stuff like that. He said - and I remember, I will never forget this - He told me, he said, "Yeah, man. We're expecting you to come in and get a starting spot," and stuff like that. And I was like, "He's not serious," and stuff like that, but I mean everything he ever told me, it was true. He said, "If you work for it, you'll get it." Academically, I pretty much struggled my whole West Point career; even at prep school I struggled. But he was always there to kind of push me and stuff like that. And I think it kind of started like when I was in high school, recruiting me, 'cause I don't like - I think - so I wasn't - I did it.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I did well on my A.C.T., but on math, I really stunk. Like I remember I got 60 on the math, and I took it four times; I could just never do math. Reading, writing, and all the other parts of it, I was fine, but I just couldn't get the math. Like I just could not do it. They had me take that thing over and over and over, and Coach Ross - and this is the week prior to me coming and taking my recruitment here. And my mom, she wanted to come; she didn't come on any other recruitments, but she wanted to come here, so she bought a ticket and everything. And Coach Ross knew, and he was like, he said, "I got some bad news." He's like, "Can you see if your mom can get reimbursed for her ticket?" and everything like that. And then I called her, and she's like, "No." 'Cause it was the whole grade thing. He was like, "I don't know if we can get you in," and I was pretty like distraught. Then I got a call from Major King, Major Adisa King, and him and Coach Ross, they are like two of my biggest, you know, motivators. Both of them are my mentors and things like that since I've been here.

Major King actually just got back from deployment from Afghanistan. So they kind of, they both pushed me, because Major King - Coach Ross called me and told me like, "I don't know if things are going to work out. You know, your math score's pretty low, but we're going to try our best." And then Major King, he straight up - he called me at like an hour later, and he told me straight up, "I'm going to get you in, but you're going to have to work for it." And he said, "You need to take the A.C.T., every one they offer." I literally took like four A.C.T.s.

Interviewer:

Wow.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Not including the one we had to take at prep school. But they got me in, and they've been like strongest mentors, like really strong mentors. Like Major King, he does this

whistle thing - like I wish I could do it. I can't do it, but it's ridiculous. And it's like when he does that, it's like he has your attention, everybody's attention, and everything like that. And then Coach Ross, he's just like - it's like you don't want to let either of them down, 'cause they've done so much for you, you know what I mean? So I always had - like a lot of like where I am today is kind of because of them like getting me in, and kind of pushing me and stuff like that.

Interviewer:

Do you know what year Coach Ross graduated?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I want to say he was Major Ross in like 2006.

Interviewer:

Okay. 'Cause I know Adisa King was late in the '90s.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

It was in the '90s. It was in the '90s.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I think early '90s.

Interviewer:

And I know Adisa King's older brother, too.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Akili?

Interviewer:

Yeah. And I know of Adisa from reputation -

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

From a good reputation.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yeah, it's crazy. He's ridiculous. Like Major King, the stories he's told me, the video he's showed me, like videos that his unit has made and stuff like that, it was crazy, the stuff. He's ridiculous. I remember like he came to - so he was here throughout my recruitment process, and even when I was at prep school, but then he had to leave. Like as soon as we graduated prep school, he left, and Colonel Greene came back. We love Colonel Greene - now Retired Colonel Greene -

Interviewer:

Is that Gaylord Greene?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Gaylord, yeah. We love Colonel Greene, but I was like, 'Dang.' At this time I didn't know Colonel Greene. I'm like, 'Man, can we get Major King back?' and stuff like this, 'cause it was like everybody loved Major King. Like mothers loved Major King and stuff like that. They really loved Colonel Greene, but like Major King, he was just that guy, and stuff like that, so. He just - him and Coach Ross, they both kind of like gave things like reassurance. I know personally Joe Ross gave my mom reassurance of me coming here, and stuff like that -

Interviewer:

That's good.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

As well as Major King. And then Major King, I remember he always like challenged us to try to, you know, be better, stuff like that.

Interviewer:

And how was the prep school for you?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Oh, the prep school? I like to say I loved the prep school, but I didn't live it up as much as I should've. Like I was a - I stayed cooped up in my room a lot, because me personally, I'm more of a relaxed guy. I'm a simple guy. Like watching a movie on a Friday or Saturday night, that's a good night for me. I don't have to go out and stuff like that. I wish I kind of would've tried to experience more things, like maybe go to the city more and those type of things, hang out with friends. I hung out with friends a lot, but not as much as I probably should've.

Interviewer:

And you were still back at Fort Monmouth then?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I was at FLASH HOUSE, Fort Monmouth, 2011.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So it was a great experience. I learned a lot about myself through prep school and my Plebe year. I know when I first got to prep school, things were kind of rough for me, simply because like you know when you - I really didn't know anything about the military. And you know like with the military, it's not always about respecting the person; it's about respecting the rank, and everything like that. And for me, it was like - like in Milwaukee, it's like you have to earn like your respect type of deal. And granted, in the military, too; like you kind of earn a certain amount of respect with the rank that you get, you know what I mean? But you still have those good and bad apples, and that's in every part of life. But for some reason, I just, I didn't understand that when I first got here. So my Platoon Sergeant at the time - granted, when we first came, we didn't know that they were Cadets. We found that out later. My Platoon Sergeant, Sergeant Seranno, she was short. She was from like I think she was from either Brooklyn or the Bronx; Hispanic, she was on the boxing team. She played basketball, did some boxing, too. And like looking back now, I'd say like she's a great role model now. She kept track of me and everything like that, but we - we - we knocked heads to begin with. Like granted, I was pretty disrespectful. Looking back, I was pretty disrespectful to her in C.C.B.T., and like kind of that initial, those initial phases and things like that. And she was like - she would pull me aside and say, "You disrespect me 'cause I'm a woman," and stuff like that. And I would be like, "I don't know what you're talking about. I just don't like you." It would be that type of deal, and things like that. But as it went on, like I said, through my Plebe year, and like I started to get the hang of it probably toward the end of C.C.B.T. She actually, she wanted me to like - I don't know, I guess she might've saw something I didn't see, 'cause in the end, she wanted me to be like leadership. I was like, "Sergeant," I was like, "with all respect, I just want to, you know, try to, you know, adjust to West Point, to the prep school, first." And when I got here - she took a semester off, so she was a summer grad, 'cause she was supposed to graduate before I got here.

But she would check on me my Plebe year and stuff like that, to make sure I was all right. So I really appreciated her and those type of things. Like I say, prep school was not - prep school was not easy for me. Like I said, I had those initial problems on our C.C.B.T. Then academically I was struggling; like to begin, English, I was all right, but I was failing math. Like I was like failing bad and stuff like that. And I had a teacher - I can't remember her name - but she told me - she pulled me aside one day after class. She said, "Now, you might want to consider like maybe R.O.T.C. or something; if you're really serious about the military, you might not want to be here," and stuff like that. And I'm like, "Dang," like I'm just a kid out of high school, and I'm kind of just trying to play football, and she kind of - it was kind of discouraging, but at the same time, it was kind of motivating in a sense. So I mean from that point, it was pretty tough. And then Coach Simi, Tom Simi, he's at Lenoir - he's at another school now.

But he's doing really good. It's Lenoir - I can't even pronounce it, but he's

doing really good. Coach Tom Simi, you can ask any football player, anybody heâ€™s coached, everybody loves Coach Simi. Heâ€™s crazy, but yet heâ€™s genuine. He cares about his players, not just on the field, but off the field, in every aspect of life. Like when I say crazy, I had a - we were practicing one time, and I had my helmet on, and he walks up to me, grabs my facemask, and head-butts me. He doesnâ€™t have anything on. Iâ€™m talking - and Iâ€™m just sitting there like, â€œAre you crazy? Like whatâ€™s wrong with you?â€ But he pushed me, like. And I remember I told him what happened, and he was hot. He was so mad. He was like, he said, â€œWho does she think she is to like tell you something like that?â€ I think he went to talk to her or something like that. But I mean he pushed us, and our prep school team, like we were really good; like we were really good, and he pushed me, and he always encouraged me, even when he came here. And he still does - heâ€™ll still text us, and hit us up on Facebook, those type of things.

So I mean it was really good to have him. And so at prep school, kind of how they do it here, how they put people in different levels for their class, I was put in ROCK math. It probably was the best thing for me. MR. PYLE, heâ€™s at the prep school right now - him and MR. DEVON, there were two math teachers, they came like in the middle of the semester. And then they kind of wanted to volunteer the football team. Granted, I donâ€™t know how much they knew about football, but they just wanted to like be around us and stuff like that, so they became coaches. And Mr. Pyle was the rock math teacher, and he really like - he got me right. I ended up being on the Deanâ€™s List second semester at prep school, and I give like a lot of that to him and MS. PORCELLI. Like Mr. Pyle, he made a ax out of a clipboard and a ruler, so he would like - he wouldnâ€™t hit you with it. He would like hit the desk with it and everything. So math at prep school is a little different than math here. Two hours a day, and itâ€™s like - and he made us stay.

Like so after the first hour, sometimes you can leave. At least thatâ€™s how it was when we were there, sometimes you can leave, but he wouldnâ€™t let us leave. He would make us stay or whatever, and Iâ€™m talking like it gets kind of long and things. So like if youâ€™re like dozing off, falling asleep, heâ€™d just hit the desk with the ax and stuff like that. Youâ€™d just pop up. And he also didnâ€™t let us use calculators, either, so I mean he kind of - like going by the high school, like I was pretty smart in high school, but Iâ€™ll be honest. I kind of like stopped working as hard. I didnâ€™t work as hard as I shouldâ€™ve, so I would say I kind of fell behind, and itâ€™s kind of my fault. But Mr. Pyle, he kind of caught me up, and everything like that. He never - like he never made any of us feel back for being in rock math. â€ Cause to be honest with you, like guys that - I was pretty low in the class. I think I was like out of 225, I was like 200, maybe, and like people that graduated at prep school like really higher, like really high ranking, I graduated at West Point ranked higher than a lot of those people, and some people got kicked out.

Interviewer:

Wow.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So that makes me feel good.

Interviewer:

So thatâ€™s determination, right?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yeah, yeah, I mean -

Interviewer:

And hard work.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yes sir, most definitely. So even at prep school, like those teachers, they kind of pushed me. Ms. Porcelli, she was another math teacher. Like all the teachers at prep school, I really canâ€™t say anything bad about them. Ms. Porcelli, sheâ€™s - she - I love her. Like she - so I had her second semester, and she didnâ€™t make us stay the full two hours, thank God. But yeah, she wanted - like she would stay with me so I can like - I needed repetition.

Like I needed to practice, so she would just practice like problems with me, and stuff like that. So it would get to the point where like everybodyâ€™s gone. Iâ€™m sitting at a desk, sheâ€™s sitting at her desk, and Iâ€™m just writing, just doing it, just doing the math, and stuff like that. So I really appreciate her. Like Iâ€™ll go back - well, I go back - I went back, so itâ€™s kind of weird, since I graduated and everything -

Interviewer:

Sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

But I went back for they have the prep school visits and stuff like that, and she just showed me so much love and encouragement and those type of things. Sheâ€™s talking about how she remembers now just this little old C.C., and now Iâ€™m a Second Lieutenant, and stuff like that. And I had MS. BONGE at the time, but now Ms. Burnett, Mr. Salisbury as my English teachers; they really helped me a lot. So I mean I loved prep school, and my T.A.C.s, MAJOR SEGURA and Sergeant Irvine, First Sergeant Irvine now, they helped me out a lot, too. â€˜Cause I was pretty rough, like discipline-wise, and Major Segura, I remember I thought he was the nicest person during C.C.B.T., but during the academic year, he just switched. Well, he was still a great guy.

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Like he always had our best interests at heart. And I remember Sergeant Irvine gave me hours one day, and I was like, â€œWhat?â€ I was so hot. And he gave it â€˜cause we had a pink water stain in our toilet. You could barely see it. But I mean he was, Sergeant Irvine, he was the type like attention to detail. It was big with him.

Interviewer:

So how well did prep school academically and militarily prepare you for West Point?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So personally, it helped me a lot, just â€˜cause I needed that year to kind of adjust to the kind of military sense, just to learn about the military, â€˜cause I didnâ€™t know anything about the military. So I appreciated the prep school for that. Academically, like I said, it helped me out a lot, just â€˜cause I needed that catch-up time. I know some people donâ€™t need that, so a lot of people, theyâ€™ll say prep school doesnâ€™t really help them academically, but I mean it just depends what level youâ€™re at.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

And what you do while youâ€™re there, and how you use it. â€˜Cause I mean itâ€™s there for a purpose.

Interviewer:

Sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

And I liked it. I was glad I was there. Iâ€™m not sure if I wouldâ€™ve gone to prep school on West Point, but.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

You know, I liked it; Iâ€™m glad I went.

Interviewer:

Then when you got here, what sort of positions did you hold in the Corps? Like for some of your details, or the academic year, and things like that?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Well, I mean of course I was Team Leader, BY THE Team Leader -

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

During academic year. I got lucky. I had the same Plebe both semesters, and he was - he was so squared away that he was more squared away than me. It was like, "What am I doing for my leadership detail?" I didn't do Buckner -

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

As a Pluck, I guess. I did it as a Squad Leader, and that was the best thing I've ever done. 'Cause personally, I mean you can say what you want to say about the different leadership details. You know, when you say Beast, that's the more premier one. Personally, I like to think that Buckner is the best one as far as like testing your leadership, teaching you about leadership. Because I look at it like this. Like the new Cadets have to listen -

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

You know what I mean? Like they have to, and anyways, they're scared. It's not hard to, you know, make somebody follow directions when they're scared. The Yucks, they know what's going on, and they really don't have - although it is for a grade, they don't have to listen to you if they don't want to, you know, so. I think I learned the most about like leading people. That was one of the areas where I learned the most about leading people was from Buckner. I'm glad I did it. Like I remember so they did something where if you were a Buckner Squad Leader, you didn't have to do CLDT or something like that. And I remember we were all - it was a couple football players that were in those positions. We were all like, "Man, we can't be Buckner Squad Leaders. We can't do this," and stuff like that. And by the time we were done, we all loved it. We all loved it.

Interviewer:

Who were you out there with?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Trenton Turrentine, Mike Ugenyi, Lamar Johnson-Harris - yeah, he was a Squad Leader out there - Richard Glover, Todd McDonald, Joe Drummond - the Iron Lion, as we called him - yeah, Chevaughn Lawrence. Those are just a couple guys that were out there.

Interviewer:

Okay. And how were academics for you during the - how did academics go for you? What'd you major in?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I majored in Sociology. After Plebe year, I was pretty rough; I had a 1.8. I graduated 2.5, though, so it was an improvement. Yeah, academics were pretty rough for me; I kind of went back to that same thing at prep school. But I ended up just doing A.I., stuff like that, and it really helped me out a lot.

Interviewer:

How often were you able to do A.I. being a football player?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

It's tough, but I mean you can manage it. So they did - I was here when Coach Ellison did like the schedule change, where he changed practice to the morning, so that kind of freed up the afternoon a little bit to do A.I. Plus you had Dean's Hour/COM's Hour to do it, and you had a couple drops here and there. Like I didn't - I've never had - I never had the opportunity to take a lot of naps while I was at West Point.

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Just 'cause I had to go to A.I. Like I had to - I wouldn't have graduated.



Interviewer:

And did your instructors, were they helpful to you?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I've always had good instructors. I remember MAJOR OPIE. She was in the History Department. I don't know if you know her.

Interviewer:

Yeah, I do.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

She was like I loved Major Opie. She was scary, too, 'cause she could just - I remember she would just get us. She would get us. She had a seriousness about her that just it was instant, and she didn't laugh much. She did laugh sometimes; so it was pretty funny if she did laugh. But she would - I remember the day before the TEE, she was - I don't know if she was supposed to be helping me or not, but she literally sat down. I think I went to the TEE with a D, or something like that. She literally sat down with me the day before, and we went through the whole semester, and I ended up passing the class with a C minus, so my grade went up. So I mean I really can't - again, I know all teachers at West Point aren't the best, you know, but I've been pretty lucky and pretty fortunate to have had good teachers that have been willing to help me. Sometimes I've had to go to different teachers, but I mean I just let my teacher know, like, "Hey, I want to go to this teacher. I think they can do a better job of helping me." So I mean teachers have been pretty good to me at West Point.

Interviewer:

So you kind of took charge of your education, then, and you went out looking for the extra help, and you saw what you needed to do to accomplish the mission, right?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yes sir. So when I was at prep school, there was a Captain there - she's now a Major - but she said, "If you get kicked out of West Point, it's your fault." And I really didn't understand; I'm like, "How could you say something like that? Like this is the hardest place ever. It sucks being here." Like I could just say that, and I didn't realize it until I got here. Like if you get kicked out of West Point for academic reasons, or discipline reasons, too, I guess. But if you get kicked out of West Point, it's your fault. I've had teachers where I've e-mailed them at midnight, and they got back to me by 12:30. So I mean it's really your fault. You have to - and you have to find what works for you here. I know I did. 'Cause initially when I got here as a freshman, they tried to make all the football players do the same thing, and go to A.I. I mean not A.I., but they tried to get Cadet Tutors. They'd do study halls and stuff like that. And I'm like, "No." You can't expect - like so we always look at Joe Drummond. We just - like Joe's up here, 'cause I mean Joe is an amazing guy.

Great personality, very smart, hard-working, very athletic, and stuff like that. And granted, Joe's worked for everything he has. But it's like you can't make a Geoffrey Bacon, who doesn't understand this stuff - you can't try to force him to study the same way Joe Drummond does, that's a, you know, academic -

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

All universe type of a guy. So that was my thing, so -

Interviewer:

I had Nate Combs in class.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

See, Nate's the same way. They're like -

Interviewer:

Yeah. Smart.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

When you're studying in England for a year, you know? He just made it to VERGE

school, by the way, just got his TAP. So you can do that, so second semester I kind of figured it out. My first semester when I first started it kind of bugged me, too, a lot. He was always PUMPING my room, so my room wasn't the best place for me to be. But second semester and throughout the time I've graduated, I don't, I never went to the library again. Like I couldn't go to the library, I couldn't go to study halls in here. It's just too loud for me. I'm the type of guy like let me throw my headphones in and zone and focus.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So that's kind of what I had to do. And I mean once I did that, my grades, they increased a lot.

Interviewer:

Okay. What can you credit with getting you through West Point? I mean in addition to your own determination and hard work, what was your support network?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So I have some good friends. Yomanda Martin, she - like a lot of academic stuff I have to give her credit for, 'cause she kind of pushed me. Like a lot of times I didn't want to do it, and she would make me do it. I mean at one time we had a math project, and I thought I picked a good group. I'm like, 'Man, I'm getting these guys and they're going to help me out.' They did nothing, and it's the night before the project's due, and we have barely anything. She stayed up till like 3:00 helping me. Like, 'This is how you do this. This is how you do this.' And she's just showing me, walking me through everything, and I remember like she helped me a lot. So academically I have to give a lot of credit to her. And besides that, I'll give it to my teachers and stuff like that for kind of helping me.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about the football team. You played football for four years here, right, and five, if you count the year at the prep school.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

That's right.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about the football team and what that meant to you.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I love the football team. It's kind of hard to put into words. You know, a lot of people don't see what goes into being a football player here, you know, the bond that we share, everything that we go through. I mean we do it together, so you know it's like an unbreakable bond. To be a part of football, to start and finish, it's good. Like I mean we don't - personally, like I don't look at the guys that, you know, started and kind of fell off - I don't look at them the same as I look at the guys I started and finished with. I mean like those are my brothers. Like I call their mom like, 'Mom,' you know what I mean? Like they do the same with me. It's that support network. Like you can - we've literally fought. Like we fought, those type of things, but I mean two seconds later it's like, 'Come here, man; like what's going on? Give me a hug,' type stuff, like. And you know, you have problems, those are the guys you go to.

So I mean it's crazy. My best friends are some of the football players.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

But that's not to say that you're always going to be around football players.

Interviewer:

For sure. Sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I mean personally, I had to learn like sometimes you get tired of football players, 'cause you're just around them so much, and it's only natural.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I mean but at the same time, you still love them and stuff like that.

Interviewer:

What kind of lessons did you learn in the locker room?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Oh, in the locker room?

Interviewer:

From your coaches, from your other players; what kind of life lessons?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Well, about perseverance, about accountability, about humility, and also how to be tough. I mean so learning things from under Coach Ellison's regime to Coach Monken's regime, they're two different things. But I learned a lot from both of them. You know, Coach Monken, he's big on toughness, you know, and he showed us what toughness really was.

Interviewer:

What kind of toughness?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I'm talking about being in the middle of February, being outside at, you know, 5:00 in the morning on a field when it's 5 degrees below zero, guys getting frostbite out there, but you're still out there pushing. That's the type of toughness, you know what I mean, where, you know, if you can get it in your head that you can do it, your body can do it. That's the type of toughness that Coach Monken wants, you know. Knowing the difference between being injured and being hurt, and even if you're injured, you can still push through it, you know what I mean? Those are just the things that he kind of instilled in his players, that we needed, and that you do need. That can help you get through life; real up-front guy, but.

Interviewer:

How are you going to take those lessons out to your Platoon, do you think?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So personally I'm just going to try to challenge my Platoon. I know for me like sometimes when people tell you something like over and over and over, you don't always get it, and sometimes you just get tired of hearing it. But sometimes you have to actually be put in a position where you can kind of see it, you know what I mean, so you can experience it. I mean you can tell me I need to be tough a hundred million times, but for sure when you make me do mat drills at 5:00 in the morning in the middle of February when it's negative 5 degrees outside, I'm going to learn what toughness is. So that's what I want to try to do personally. And also, you know, just kind of show humility, and show that I don't know everything. That's the kind of thing that Coach Monken really didn't micromanage things, but at the same time he tried to learn everything, or tried to like put himself in other people's shoes, I guess, if you want to say it like that. I mean it was kind of cool to kind of just see how Coach Monken ran his system.

Because he did special teams, but besides that, he let the rest of the coaches do everything else. I mean he would chime in every now and again, but he really showed how to facilitate it, that type of deal. And that's one of the things I think I want to take to my Platoon once I get there is, you know, I don't want to micromanage, but at the same time, I just want to be able to observe and learn and know what's going on at the same time. To where if one of my Privates or somebody in my Platoon, they have a question that I can answer, or they say, 'Hey, LT, do you know this?' I can say, 'Yeah, I know it.' And if I don't know it, I'll just go ask, that type of deal. So I think that's something I learned from Coach Monken, that that's good to do. You don't need to

step on everybody's toes. Because I mean so just an example - this really didn't happen, but for instance, like Coach Monken isn't the Defensive Coordinator, you know what I mean? So Coach Bateman is the Defensive Coordinator. Coach Bateman knows so much about defense, he probably knows more than Coach Monken knows about defense.

So for Coach Monken to try to step on Coach Bateman's toes and say, "You need to be doing blah blah blah blah," that's probably not smart. So for me, when I become a PL, I kind of want to make sure I don't do those type of things where I'm stepping on my Squad Leader's toes, stepping on my Platoon Sergeant's toes. But at the same time, I'm competent enough to do different things, and to know what's going on. So that's one of the big things that I want to take to the real Army, once I get there.

Interviewer:

Okay. Who's been your biggest influence while you've been here?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I mean I can't give it to one person.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I've had a lot.

Interviewer:

We got plenty of tape.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yeah, I've had a lot. So when I was at prep school, we had a coach - well, he was the F.A., actually - Coach Chase Prasnicki. He passed away. He was killed in action in Iraq - I mean Afghanistan, I'm sorry - the summer of me going - my sophomore year summer, whatever. When I remember at prep school I was pretty shy, and they put me at middle linebacker, and that's like - I don't know if you know, but you know who Steve Anderson is? He would tell me, "You need to be like" - we call him Fifty - "You need to be like Fifty. You need to be loud. You need to be having fun," and everything like that. And he kind of like, he brought so much - Coach Prazniki kind of taught me to enjoy the game and stuff like that. Like talk trash if you want to, you know, those different type of things, and prep school was so fun, as far as football-wise. I mean granted, maybe he shouldn't have did this, but me and another teammate, we were on restriction for our grades.

And he went - and so we had to do Saturday morning study hall. And as soon as we were done - we were done by like 10:00 - he went to the O.C. and said, "Look, I'm taking these guys," and he took us - we went to a Chinese buffet. And then we went to his house, and we just played video games all day, and I mean stuff like that, you know what I mean; just kind of helping us out kind of in the time of need, so he was a big impact on me as far as, you know, kind of what you want to do as far as military-wise. He always wanted to push himself. He was F.A., but he wanted us to go to like - he went to Ranger School, Pathfinder School, he wanted to do all that type of stuff. He kind of pushed us. He was really good at math; like he was amazing at math, so before practice he would have a couple of guys in the meeting rooms on a board working math problems and stuff like that. And he actually knew what he was talking about. Like you know, you get some people that say they can do things they really can't do.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

He actually could. He would take the time to like work out with us, and he actually go to know us, and he got to know me. So he's been a big influence on me. A lot of the guys that were prepsters, we miss him a lot, 'cause he was just a great guy. And some of the

names I named earlier, like Major King, you know, Coach Simi, Coach Ross, those have been a big influence on me while I've been here. Colonel Nelson, I don't know if you know him. He's in the English Department. He's my sponsor. Him and his wife like. So I had a sponsor for the Ice Cream Social, but he wasn't my real sponsor.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

It's kind of coincidence - named Major Bacon, so it was kind of funny. But he wasn't my real sponsor, and I didn't have a sponsor for the longest time. And granted, this might be like - this might not be politically correct, but I'm like, I don't know. I didn't know like - the thing I love about West Point is that people really don't judge in a sense. You know, they're not scared. Like if you go to Milwaukee or something like that, Caucasian family isn't going to most likely - it's very rare that a Caucasian family will take in a young African-American male and just welcome him in with open arms, and stuff like that. And Colonel Nelson and his wife, they did that, and I was like, "What is this?" So it made me feel like this could actually like be a home for me. So I'm like I'm in debt to them like forever, 'cause I just love them that much. And Ms. Nelson at the time my freshman year she was actually teaching here in the Management Department, and she knew my grade situation and stuff like that. But she never made me feel bad about it.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

You know what I mean? She always kind of pushed me. Like some sponsors, like some of the Cadets she sponsored had like 4.0s, and little me, you know, I'm trying to build my stuff up, and she was like, you know. And she'd like pull be aside, she'd be like, "Geoff, I see you're doing a lot better," and that type of stuff. And so like I love Ms. Nelson; like that always made me feel really good, and that I actually like could do something, I could make it through this place. So they were big impacts on me. Like even Colonel Nelson. So he ran cross country while he was here. Like he could still run like a nine-minute two-mile thing - I think he can. But he was like on that level, and stuff like that. And I remember I did Air Assault this summer after graduation, and I remember I was telling him what I'm about to do, and he was telling me, "Yeah, you got to beat my record." I'm like, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I did my 12-mile in an hour and 38 minutes." He said, "I still hold the air assault record for that." I'm like, "Sir, look here, I'm just trying to graduate Air Assault. I'm not trying to break any hour-38-minute 12-mile."

So I mean they always encourage me. Colonel Clancy, she's in the Chemistry-Life Science Department, she's like a mom to me. She was my mentor. So the football team, they assigned us mentors.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So sophomore year, she got assigned to me and stuff like that, and she would like have me over at her house and stuff like that all the time. Even now, she gets to know my family, so - and she's hilarious. Like if you've met Colonel Clancy - you probably - I don't know if you have or not - but she is just so funny. It kind of goes back to like things, how things were back where I'm from to how they are here. Like you just have this Colonel, Caucasian Colonel, and this like African-American 20-year-old, you know. Them having like a chemistry is like not going to really like happen where I'm from, and stuff like that. So for it to happen here, it was almost a shock for me. And I remember like - so I'm in a fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated - and I remember talking to her like, "Ma'am, this is what I want to do. Where do I apply?" And she would be so inquisitive and stuff like that. And I told her what I needed to get there, and she'd be

like, "All right, we're going to get there," like stuff like that. And if you would see like the smile on her face.

She always like kind of like encouraged me and wanted me to like do good and achieve my goals and stuff like that. And she would always have me over and stuff. She got to know my family and stuff like that, and she was the one, like she'd always like make little jokes and stuff, and it'd be so funny. I remember - so she was like, "Oh, so what are you doing with your college loan?" and stuff like that. I'm like, "I'm thinking about getting a car, ma'am." And she's like, "What do you want?" I'm like, "I want a black Expedition." And then I will never forget that, it was so funny like, and I loved her for this, 'cause she could like - you always knew if she said something, it was 'cause she was joking with you. She never meant anything by it, and she could always like lighten the mood and whatever. And I told her, I said, "I want a black Expedition." She said, "Bacon, that's really black," and it was just so funny, 'cause me and her, we had that type of relationship where we could just like joke around with each other and stuff like that. And like she really like got to know me and stuff like that. And I mean she does that - like her husband, he's getting promoted. I think he's at the War College right now.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

But he was a Battalion Commander at Fort Drum, so. But so it was just her and her peers. And she has a PAIR, she brings the PAIRS around us and everything like that, and she genuinely loves Cadets, and stuff like that. And I feel like she had a genuine love for me, like when I said she's like a mom for me, she really treated me like a son, and that was kind of like - it took a while for me to understand. And when I finally did, like I was so appreciative of her for that, and even now, she's one of the people I'm going to miss her; I'm going to miss her a lot.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

And stuff like that. But she still will keep in contact, so it's not too much. I remember like she's introduced me to things like African-American culture, like I kind of introduced her to. Like she always wants to learn about different things, so she's like, "What about fraternities? What about this, this, and that?" And I would teach her things. She came to my probate and stuff like that, and my father's a member of the fraternity as well, and she's sitting next to my dad the whole time, and she was asking my dad questions, stuff like that. And I just love that about her; like she actually wanted to learn about me, and about what I would like, and about some of my goals, my culture, and stuff like that. At the same time, she would teach me about hers as well, like granted, I don't know as much as I want to know about it, but I'm big on like symphonies and that type of thing, like orchestras, and she's really into that stuff. Every time you get in her car there's something like that playing - classical music. And I would just ask her like, "Ma'am, what's up with this classical music?" and stuff like that. And she would like always talk to me about it and stuff.

So I just love that exchange of cultures with her, 'cause I mean like I said, that was something you really didn't experience a lot in Milwaukee. I mean, you know, you have it here and there, but not to the degree that I've had it here with some of my mentors, and stuff like that. So I mean that's why she's probably a big influence on me in helping me get through here. Another person is Doctor Donnie Horner. He's a '81 grad. He's the Athletic Director at Jacksonville U now. He was a graduate. I mean he retired as a Colonel. He went to M.I.T., Stanford, and stuff. But the story on how I met him is weird, almost. I remember I wanted to put - it's back when I was on Twitter and stuff. And I'm just getting messages from a old guy, and I'm like, "Who is this man?"

â€ And I just - I never read them and stuff.

Iâ€™m like, â€œWho is this guy?â€ And heâ€™s just like, â€œHey, how you doing? Blah blah blah blah.â€ Heâ€™s like, â€œGood game,â€ and just be talking about football or whatever, and Iâ€™m like, â€œWho is this guy? Like leave me alone,â€ or whatever, that type of deal. I remember he hit me up one day, and just, â€œHey, good game, blah blah blah,â€ this other stuff, and I went - I clicked on his page. Iâ€™m like - and then I read it. It said, â€œâˆ¼81 grad,â€ itâ€™s like â€œArmy football,â€ â€œM.I.T. grad,â€ â€œStanford grad.â€ And Iâ€™m thinking, â€œMaybe I should write this guy back,â€ or something like that. So I did and he started talking to me, and he started telling me about Army football and stuff. He told me about himself, like his military career and stuff like that. And he kind of just wanted to get to like know me, and stuff like that. And âˆ¼cause he was Coach Rossâ€™ mentor when he was here.

Interviewer:

Wow.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

âˆ¼Cause he was kind of in the same position as Coach Ross when Coach Ross was here, so he kind of like took me under his wing and stuff like that. He introduced me to his family and those type of things. His daughterâ€™s like my big sister now. So it was crazy, âˆ¼cause I remember he was just always ask like, â€œHey, how you doing? Howâ€™s West Point treating you? Howâ€™s the week going? How are your grades?â€ That was big, that he always wanted me to like work on my grades, âˆ¼cause he saw an importance in grades and stuff like that. And I remember telling him where I was at, and Iâ€™m like, â€œSir, Iâ€™m not doing well.â€ He was like, â€œMan, donâ€™t worry about that.â€ He was always talking about Coach Ross, âˆ¼cause Coach Ross have bad grades. I thought I had bad grades, but Coach Ross had bad grades. And thatâ€™s what made me think like if Coach Ross could do it, I can do it, or whatever. And he would kind of just send that encouragement my way, to kind of just show me that whatever. So heâ€™s a really big influence.

Interviewer:

And whatâ€™s his name again?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Donnie Horner.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Or Donald Horner. I call him Doctor H, though.

Interviewer:

Now, you had a leadership role on the football team, right?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yes sir.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about that.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So I was the 2014 Captain of the Army football team. I was Defensive Co-Captain with Larry Dixon, who was Offensive Captain. I learned a lot.

Interviewer:

Howâ€™d you get that responsibility?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

To be honest, I have no clue. They had a lot of better options than me. But I donâ€™t know; I learned a lot from being a Captain of a football team, because I mean being in a leadership position is hard, because you canâ€™t do everything that you did before. Like you know sometimes you just want to be buddy-buddy with your friends and stuff like that. Some days you let it slide, like a guy not working as hard as they should in the weight room, or you know, not cleaning up his locker. You let that stuff slide sometimes, you know,

when youâ€™re not in a leadership role, â€™cause like, â€™tâ€™s not my responsibility,â€™ that type of deal. But I mean when youâ€™re a Captain you kind of have to do all that stuff. You have to make sure like youâ€™re giving your all, and those type of things. So I mean itâ€™s tough; itâ€™s tough, and like I said, I learned a lot about it. Like Coach Monken, he actually taught us a lot. So we had a incident, and me and Larry werenâ€™t - he removed us as Captains, said, â€™No, youâ€™re not the Captains anymore.â€™ And we actually did a revote for Captains, and then I donâ€™t know how, but me and Larry got Captain again.

But he taught me a lot about being in a leadership position. Like you canâ€™t do everything the way you did it before, you know what I mean? You have to like step up to the role. You have to be willing to step up to that role, because one thing he told us, he said like, â€™Youâ€™re replaceable,â€™ you know what I mean? And to be honest, like thatâ€™s true. Itâ€™s the same thing in the military, like Iâ€™ll be a P.L., but thereâ€™s going to be a P.L. after me. Thereâ€™s a P.L. before me. So weâ€™re all replaceable. And he let me know. He said, â€™Look, Iâ€™m replaceable too.â€™ Like he said, â€™Youâ€™re no different, so weâ€™re not going to let things like that slide. Weâ€™re not going to let different things slide. You have to step up and hold people accountable. You have to step outside of your comfort zone.â€™ I think that was the biggest thing. It was tough for me to step out of my comfort zone as far as leading, â€™cause I mean I was used to Coach Eâ€™s way, and things like that.

But it took me a while to get used to how Coach Monken was, â€™cause I remember at first, it was like, â€™Coach Monken is like the big bad wolf.â€™ But I learned that wasnâ€™t the case at all. He was kind of just trying to teach us things that we could use for our lives, and stuff like that, and stuff we could maybe use in our careers.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So like I said, kind of to lead from the front - thatâ€™s what he wanted, you know what I mean? Like you can say whatever you want, but if youâ€™re not showing that, you know, it means nothing. Just donâ€™t talk the talk, and you need to walk the walk. So I would say that was a big thing that he kind of taught, as well as it kind of goes back to the management type of deal. Like the way things were before was like the Captains did everything. They literally did everything. The other seniors were there, but they didnâ€™t really do anything. This year, I got to see everybody step up, kind of, so it just wasnâ€™t me and Larry doing everything. Joe Drummond, Terry Baggett, Tony Giovannelli, Tom McDonald - you had guys like that stepping up - like Richard Glover, Mike Ugenyi - like everybody stepped up. And I kind of credit that to Coach Monken. Coach Monken kind of showed us that, â€™Look, you guys donâ€™t have to - just â€™cause you have the title Captain doesnâ€™t mean that youâ€™re the only leaders on this team.â€™

By no means - I mean sometimes we had to like squash his whole thing, â€™cause sometimes it was too many chiefs and not enough Indians, so sometimes we had to squash that. But for the most part, he kind of showed us that you can all work together, and that kind of makes the functioning so much better, and that was something I learned. â€™Cause I mean granted, the record didnâ€™t show it this year, but as a team, we got so much better. As football players, we got so much better. Thatâ€™s why Iâ€™m so excited about this 2015 season; like itâ€™s going to be something to really look forward to.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

â€™Cause I mean just the things that theyâ€™ve been doing, and the work theyâ€™ve been putting in, you know, itâ€™s about time that they reap what theyâ€™ve sown, and theyâ€™ve been sowing some good seeds. So itâ€™s going to be good to see. And like I said, Coach Monken, he kind of showed us like that just â€™cause youâ€™re a senior, you



donâ€™t have to be a leader either. Like just â€™cause youâ€™re a senior doesnâ€™t mean youâ€™re a leader, and I think thatâ€™s evident with who the Captains are this year. You know, you have one junior Captain this year, Jeremy Timpf, whoâ€™s going to be really good, and heâ€™s going to be a really good leader. You know, you got Matt Giachinta. Heâ€™s a senior. At fullback, he is going to be really good. So I mean Iâ€™m excited to just see everything. I mean I think the coaching staff now, they brought the love for the game back, â€™cause I mean you work so hard. But at the same time, like so you work so hard from off-season through practices, and stuff like that, to where itâ€™s - they were so much harder than the games. The practice, it was relentless. But I mean you worked so hard to where on game day, itâ€™s easy. So game day youâ€™re just having fun, you know what I mean? And I would say like they kind of brought that back, and it took a while for me to see it, to be honest. I remember I was like, â€œMan, Iâ€™m just tired. Iâ€™m dreading this season,â€ and everything like that. And I remember coming back from my injury, I was so happy to be back out there. Coach Monken and the rest of the staff, Coach Bateman, they just showed you like, â€œLook, you need to love the game. Itâ€™s going to be hard to play, itâ€™s going to be hard; theyâ€™re not going to make it easy, but thereâ€™s going to be work.â€ And I would say thatâ€™s something I learned, like while youâ€™re in the suck you donâ€™t realize it, but looking back on like all the blood, sweat, and tears we put into that turf, it was all worth it. For me personally, just to be able to come back for the Army-Navy game and experience that with them and the rest of my brothers, itâ€™s like thatâ€™s something Iâ€™ll cherish. I mean although we didnâ€™t get the results we wanted, Iâ€™ll cherish that for the rest of my life.

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure. Now, you mentioned this a little bit in a couple of your stories that youâ€™ve told already, but racism. Did you experience any racism while you were here at West Point?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I mean people make little comments. Like Iâ€™ve heard things like, â€œYouâ€™re not in the â€™hood anymore.â€ Like people say, â€œYou canâ€™t do this anymore - youâ€™re not in the â€™hood anymore.â€ But theyâ€™ll say it, itâ€™s the manner that they say it in. Iâ€™ve had people come up to me and say like, â€œWow, you really are smart,â€ that type of stuff. I mean it is what it is. I donâ€™t really try to judge West Point on that. I think thatâ€™s more so the people themselves, not West Point. I remember in high school when I decided I was coming here, and I got my service letter and everything like that, I had a teacher, Mr. Wilde - heâ€™s Caucasian, but heâ€™s like Colonel Clancy, one of those type of people.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

That you really - like race is irrelevant to him. So thatâ€™s pretty good. But he told me, he said, â€œLook, youâ€™re going to a place predominately white, so you need to prepare yourself.â€ And Iâ€™m like I really didnâ€™t realize what he was saying and stuff like that. And I donâ€™t - I think this, my junior-senior year, thatâ€™s when I really kind of understood what he was talking about. Not necessarily saying that West Point is racist, but you can kind of see it once you like, you know. Freshman and a sophomore, youâ€™re just trying to survive.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

But junior-senior, you kind of get to observe different things, and I was able to do that, so I kind of got to see what he had meant by that. But at the same time, I think that the racism, that that type of deal is you have to change to come to West Point. And I donâ€™t just think thatâ€™s for African-Americans; I think thatâ€™s for everybody that comes to West

Point. You have to change in a certain way. I know I've matured a lot. I don't do the same things, you know, that I did when I was in high school anymore, so why would you want to do that? I feel like why do you want to stay the same? That's when I realized - I remember when I first came, I said, "I'm going to stay the same. Like how I was in Milwaukee, that's how I'll be at West Point." But it's like why don't you want to evolve? Why don't you want to enhance yourself?

Interviewer:

That's a great point.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

And I would say West Point kind of showed me that. And you can see people who try to resist it, and those seem to be the people that suffer the most. And I wouldn't say it's selling out or anything like that; I would say it's just evolving, like who wants to be stagnant their whole life, you know?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So that was a thing for me. And like I said, I don't think West Point is a racist place. Would I say people that come to West Point are racist? Yeah, but you got that anywhere, you know what I mean? Like racist people, racism isn't dead. That's still a struggle today, so.

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

But that's just not West Point, you know what I mean? That's anywhere. So I wouldn't say it was West Point. But I mean if you want to count those things as racist, I guess I've experienced it. I mean it's not - I mean still got a Charlie Mike. That's something I learned at Buckner, so I say it all the time. Yeah, so.

Interviewer:

All right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I mean you still have to push forward.

Interviewer:

Well, now you're going to be an Infantry Platoon Leader, right?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yes sir.

Interviewer:

You're getting ready to go off to Infantry Basic Course and all that. Potentially, you get to your first unit, it's probably going to be about the time when you're starting to have some women in the Infantry.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Yes sir.

Interviewer:

Do you think West Point has prepared you? It's hard to say, because you're projecting for the future right here. But do you think West Point has prepared you to be an Infantry Platoon Leader with women serving in the Platoon?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I think so in a way, because I mean I look at it like this. If they can do everything that I'm doing, I have no problems, you know? There are guys that can't do it. You know, I've been there.

Interviewer:

Yeah, true.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

So I say this all the time. Olivia Schretzman, she's a really good friend of mine.

Weâ€™re both Buckner Squad Leaders together, and we did the LTP training together, and I will never forget it. So I was scared. I was a Saw Gunner, and she was my Team Leader, and I just - and we had a mission, and sheâ€™s like, â€œBacon, put the saw down.â€ And I put it down. Sheâ€™s like, â€œLock and load,â€ and lâ€™m boom. And sheâ€™s like, â€œFire,â€ and lâ€™m shooting. And I just remember like she was the one, she trained me on everything. I didnâ€™t know how to use it and everything. So lâ€™m like - so I remember I said, â€œIf I could go to Ranger School with Olivia Schretzman, that would be a dream come true.â€ If - I mean granted, I know everybodyâ€™s not going to be as great as Liv, but if I had people like Liv around me, I would be fine. Like if theyâ€™re - obviously, all women that join the Infantry arenâ€™t going to be as good as Olivia Schretzman. But I mean if theyâ€™re half as good as Liv is, itâ€™ll be fine.

Interviewer:

Okay.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

And lâ€™m working on a Marksmanship Committee right now for CST, and the OIC and the NCOIC, Captain Harris, sheâ€™s a female MP, and SERGEANT RICCO is a female MP as well, and theyâ€™re teaching me stuff that lâ€™ve never known before. I mean I feel like so what that theyâ€™re women -

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

You know? As long as theyâ€™re competent, you know, willing to work hard, whatâ€™s wrong with it? You know what I mean. Obviously, theyâ€™re physiological differences, but at the same time, that stuff can be managed. You know, I mean like I said, there are guys that - lâ€™ve done CLDT, you know, with guys, and been out at Buckner with guys that suck, you know.

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

That they canâ€™t do anything. I mean lâ€™ll take half of Olivia Schretzman any day, you know what I mean, over them, you know what I mean? It just depends on the person, I guess.

Interviewer:

Right.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

But I kind of look forward to it, just the experience - yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay. Geoff, is there anything that I havenâ€™t asked you that you want to say?

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

I donâ€™t know, sir. I mean I think we covered a lot. lâ€™ve enjoyed my time at West Point, all the people lâ€™ve met, the experiences lâ€™ve had, the leaders lâ€™ve got to see, you know. Coming to West Point was really good for me. And people ask this all the time, like, â€œWas it worth it? Are you glad you came?â€ I mean granted, lâ€™ve had my ups and my downs, but I mean I donâ€™t think I ever would have met, you know, General Dempsey. Like GENERAL OWEN, he knows who I am, you know. General Caslen, getting to meet him, and getting to actually like know him and stuff like that. General Thompson, General Clark, you know, my TAC Sergeant McMillan, whoâ€™s a First Sergeant now at Fort Benning. MAJOR ESSORY and stuff like that. Getting to meet Major General Miller, who was like Black Hawk Down; like he was there, he did it, you know. Chief Jollota, who was there as well. COLONEL TAPPS, Colonel Collins. But I mean getting to meet people like that, and getting to meet my best friends and stuff.

And I feel like lâ€™ll forever be in debt to West Point for that. No, lâ€™ve enjoyed my time here. Not all the time -

Interviewer:

Yeah, sure. Sure.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

But for the most part. I would say itâ€™s all worth it now, looking back.

Interviewer:

Well, this has been a fabulous interview, and Iâ€™m so glad you came in here to talk to us.

2LT Geoffery Bacon:

Thanks for having me, sir.

Interviewer:

Yeah, thank you. All right, letâ€™s seeâ€¦