ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

WAYNE MAPLES

An interview conducted on

February 14, 2016

Interviewer: Katie Cooper

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

"War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present"

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Wayne Maples are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on February 14, 2016.

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COOPER: Okay um, could you tell me your name, please?

MAPLES: Wayne Maples.

COOPER: Wayne Maples, and this is Katie Cooper. Tell me when and where you were born and where you grew up.

MAPLES: I was born in Weimar, Texas in 1951.

COOPER: Where's Weimar at?

MAPLES: It's down by Houston area.

COOPER: Oh, okay.

MAPLES: It's uh, close to Columbus, Texas.

COOPER: Um, so you're not from West Texas, because some of these questions are about West Texas.

MAPLES: No, I started down in basically in Central Texas.

COOPER: Okay. Um, when and where did you enter the armed forces, and what branch did you serve in?

MAPLES: I entered the armed forces in Houston, Texas, and I joined the United States Air Force, and I went to San Antonio for training—starting out.

COOPER: Okay um, what were your years of service?

MAPLES: I spent 7 years, 7 ½ years in the service.

COOPER: Okay. Um, during your years in the service were you primarily in the enlisted ranks, or a noncommissioned officer, a warrant officer? And if you served as an officer, what was the source of your commission?

MAPLES: I was not an officer; I was a noncommissioned officer. I was a staff sergeant, and I served in the Air Force in a . . . anywhere from a formal position in the military to a supervisor of a K-9 section in Vietnam. I also worked in security service, and uh, I traveled many places where we dealt with Dy . . . uh . . . Goodfellow Air Force base. I was stationed here in 1971 with the security service.

COOPER: Um, in which military conflict did you take part in?

MAPLES: Vietnam.

COOPER: Um, why did you enlist in the armed forces, or what motivated you, or were you drafted?

MAPLES: I joined in the United States Air force to keep from being drafted to go to Vietnam.

COOPER: Um, what . . . so your motivation was to keep from being drafted?

MAPLES: That's correct.

COOPER: What made you want to be in the Air Force?

MAPLES: Because anything that had to do with ground troops involving the Army or Marines involved going to Vietnam and being drafted.

COOPER: Um, what was your training like?

MAPLES: My training was uh . . . started out in schools uh . . . I started out to try to be in the air traffic controller, but uh, that area at the time was limited. So they transferred me from Biloxi, Mississippi to Dyess Air Force base in Abilene, Texas where I underwent training there, and I was sent to Lackland for dog handler training in Lackland, and I came back to Dyess Air Force Base, and I left there 30 days after I returned from training to go to Vietnam. I did not get a 30-day delay en route. I went straight to Vietnam.

COOPER: And did you get to pick the dog handling or was it kind of assigned?

MAPLES: The job—the dog handler?

COOPER: Yes.

MAPLES: I had an option of either being a military police man or a security dog handler, and I chose the dog handler position because I felt like, uh, I wanted to do something besides gate guard duty.

COOPER: Right, and could you tell me kind of what . . . like what it was like learning how to be a dog trainer and all of that?

MAPLES: It's 6 weeks of extensive training: first of all, getting to know the dog. Because these dogs have never been . . . that you're training with . . . you train with that particular dog and that dog follows you to one station, which after I got back to Dyess Air Force Base, that dog stayed there and I went to Vietnam and had to establish a new dog because I was sent there as a sentry dog handler and I went through a patrol dog school at Lackland Air Force Base. So, when I got to Vietnam I was transferred from sentry dog duty to scout dog duty, which is the same as patrol dog duty at the time. Now the patrol dog duties involve on-base patrol and places like the commissary, BX, things of this nature. They can go into businesses. The dogs that we worked with in Vietnam were scout dogs. Their job was trained to find the enemy.

COOPER: So were, they were trained to find . . . I mean how could . . . ? So I really don't know anything about it so . . .

MAPLES: The Viet Cong were who we were looking for.

COOPER: Right, right.

MAPLES: Okay. My job was, I actually became a United Nations employee. I was not, I was assigned to the Air Force but I was loaned to the United States Army, to the South Koreans and to the Australians who were also United Nations forces there in Vietnam. And since they needed scout dog handlers, whoever at the time needed one, was basically who I worked for.

COOPER: Oh, wow. So were they, they were specifically trained just to sniff out people or was it also bombs or was it…

MAPLES: The uh, the first 2 dogs I had that were shot out from under me were strictly trained for scout dog. Their job was strictly tracking and locating the enemy. But the 3rd dog I trained after I requested him from Lackland Air Force Base . . . and he was, with the assistance from one of the scout . . . one of the patrol dog handlers, one of the sentry dog handlers, he and I taught this dog how to track explosives and even drugs. And uh, my job with it was to do the scout dog work, but he also located land mines, booby traps things of this nature. Anything that had a human scent involved on it.

COOPER: Hmm, what kind of dogs were they?

MAPLES: German Shepard.

COOPER: All of them?

MAPLES: No, there were some part-Collie German Shepherds; there were some that were Doberman Pinscher. Uh, at the time military went with German Shepard a lot because of their adaptability to the weather. The average temperature over there was like 115, 120 degrees.

COOPER: Oh my gosh.

MAPLES: With humidity of about 100%.

COOPER: Oh my gosh! That's crazy. So did you . . . even when you were kind of off duty was the dog always with you?

MAPLES: No. There . . . every military installation had a kennel for us to bring the dogs to for rest. Even if we went to an Army installation, they had kennels that we could take the dog into where he could be fed, watered and rest.

COOPER: Yeah.

MAPLES: And then we stayed at another area.

COOPER: Okay. Did you . . . ?

MAPLES: But we checked on them on a daily basis.

COOPER: Yeah, did you and the dog get pretty close?

MAPLES: We were very close.

COOPER: I bet. That's neat. Um, what were race relations like when you were enlisted?

MAPLES: Bad.

COOPER: Could you tell me a little about it?

MAPLES: Well, the situation was, a lot of the African-American men that were in Vietnam were drafted. It wasn't by choice, so their attitudes were pretty strong, uh, a lot of black militant. I was involved in a raid where we arrested 21 militants that formed a Black Panther group in Vietnam.

COOPER: That were on your . . . ?

MAPLES: That were Americans.

COOPER: Oh, wow.

MAPLES: Oh, yes. This was something that wasn't publicized to the American public because the military dealt with their own problems is the way they looked at it. But uh, it was sometimes a touchy issue. Sometimes, uh, I had a lot of friends that were black, and uh, it didn't . . . we didn't have those type of situations. It was more of a situation that built in the Army than it did in the Air Force. Uh, you didn't see that much on the Air Force bases until right into 1970. That's when it started getting a lot stronger.

COOPER: And could you tell me again what years were you enlisted?

MAPLES: I was in Vietnam at the end part of '69, '70 and '71.

COOPER: Okay, it got worse afterwards. Did you find your service challenging?

MAPLES: Yes.

COOPER: How so?

MAPLES: I wanted to stay alive. Uh, mainly through . . . I enjoyed the United States Air Force. I was fortunate enough to, after I completed that train . . . that that tour in Vietnam, I came back to

Goodfellow Air Force Base and went into security service. My job involved patrolling security service areas, with a . . . you know, we did not have a dog here at that time. Uh, so I did a lot of traveling. I went to a lot of different security installations that were, uh, required someone with a Top Secret clearance. I had a Top Secret clearance, one of the highest in the country. It's an SSIR clearance. And uh, at that time uh, we uh, spent a lot of time traveling all over the United States. Goodfellow was like a home port kind of like the Navy. Uh, I had a brand-new car; it had 857 miles on it when I actually left Goodfellow Air Force base. I decided to cross train out of the, uh, military police division and go into heavy equipment to get some knowledge that maybe I could use on the outside, that would be a more profitable, uh, future. So at that point in time, I got out of that career field and moved on to the equipment part where I was fortunate enough to . . . I spent 3 ½ years in Germany. I came back I was stationed at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas. Uh, I had the unfortunate experience to be there when Lyndon Baines Johnson passed away. I mean it was a fortunate situation, but it was a sad one. Not that I had any feelings about President Johnson keeping us in Vietnam, but it was one of those issues where you hate to see a president pass on.

COOPER: Right. What was the uh . . . . You said heavy machinery. What all does that entail? Like what did you do exactly?

MAPLES: When I cross trained into the heavy equipment field, we worked on what they called aircraft loaders. Uh, one of the most extensive type pieces of equipment the United States military uses. They have different-size aircraft loaders. They have . . . on the average, one of them has about a mile and ½ of electrical wiring.

COOPER: Wow.

MAPLES: Combined into one umbilical cord. They have almost ½ a mile of hydraulic hoses. Uh, very, very extensive information that you need to know as far as diagnosing hydraulic problems, electrical problems. These equipments, this equipment was designed to load these aircraft in just about any position they are in, ya know. They can load them from a 45-degree angle to a flat horizontal position, 4 feet off, 3 feet off the ground.

COOPER: Jeez, that's crazy. What conception did you have of the United States at the time of your enlisting, and what did America symbolize to you, and what do you think it stood for?

MAPLES: Well, I came from a population of 89.

COOPER: Oh, really?

MAPLES: All of my family served in the military. I was a patriot. I love my country. And I did my duty because that's what they needed me to do. Ya know? And uh, it's a tough question. But, you know, I . . . I served my time. Uh, I did my job; I did my duty. Uh, I have a Purple Heart. I was wounded. I lost 2 friends, 4 classmates and . . . don't talk about it too much. What else?

COOPER: And if any of these you're not comfortable with, that's completely okay.

MAPLES: Do what? No, I'm comfortable; I'm alright. Just get a little emotional.

COOPER: No, it's absolutely understandable, and thank you for everything you did. Um, what exactly did . . . it's asking: where were you deployed overseas, which you told me you were, and if so, what did you understand about the mission you were being asked to complete?

MAPLES: We were supposed to be a policing nation assisting the Vietnamese to establish their own defense. Unfortunately, we've always been a policing nation, and as you have seen with Iraq and Iran we were basically in the same situation. The difference was we had a jungle to deal with, and we didn't know who our enemy was either because they could be the base barber. They could be the ladies that they used to clean the hooches or our room where we stayed at times. They would come in take our clothes, wash them, bring them to us, but they also had knowledge that they conveyed to the enemy. And you never knew who your friend was as far as the Vietnamese went. With the South Koreans and the Australians, it was a different story, but they were in the same situation we were. We were all there to help that country try to pull itself together to defend itself. And uh, I felt like it was a lost cause.

COOPER: Did you follow the news before you entered the service, and what did you know about the role of the military in the current events before you joined?

MAPLES: Yes, I followed the news, that's the reason I joined the Air Force to keep from going to Vietnam. And needless to say that failed. But uh, the news . . . I think the news media has always been abusive to the military because the information they put out to the public they only show the bad things; they never show the good.

COOPER: Were you able to follow the news during your time in service? And how did you receive information about the US and abroad?

MAPLES: Most of the time, no. The news was not something that was easily accessible. We had a military newspaper, and of course they're going to put in there what they want us to read, and that's what they did. And we didn't know about some of the things, and of course we had recreation areas where we could go in and they would have some news clips on the television. We had a, we actually had a television, or a station from Saigon that uh, we could pick up some news on. But most of the time it was what you heard from home or what you got through the . . . the newspapers over there or the newspaper over there or from word of mouth.

COOPER: So you did get to stay in touch with family though through letters and things like that?

MAPLES: Oh, yes. I even, uh . . . December 4, 1970, I had called my parents because they had been notified I had been killed in action.

COOPER: Oh my gosh! How did that happen?

MAPLES: We were ambushed out in the field and we were, had been walking through rice paddies most of the day. My boots were soaked, full of mud, things of this nature. I had taken them off, rinsed them off, and of course in your boots you put your dog tags on each side of your

boot. So, if you lose one leg they can identify you, or if you're killed, they can immediately identify your body. Because wearing them on your neck they rattled and they could give you away even with the rubber cushion you could put around them. So, it was one of those deals where I left my boots in a hurry and uh, the dog and I ran for the jungle, which was the safest place to be at the time. And it just happened to be that there was someone that was also killed in this ambush because we were with the Army, and he did not have his boots on. So, they just associated my boots with his body. It was quite a mess.

COOPER: That must have been horrible for your family.

MAPLES: It was kind of funny because by the time they notified them, my mother had gotten a letter from me telling her about the situation. So, she was able to tell the Red Cross that, no, that's not my son. We need to go back and . . . of course, then I called. I went to a uh, an American Red Cross and called to talk to them just because I wanted to make sure everything was okay, and fortunate enough we got it straightened out.

COOPER: Thank goodness you sent that letter.

MAPLES: Oh yeah, that and the fact that the first sergeant made it a point that uh, or I should say the sergeant major, made it a point that we all make contact when we got back to a base so that if there was any confusion they could figure out who, what, when, where and how, and who the gentleman was or who, if there was any unidentified people—men that had been killed—they could clarify quickly who they were. But it wasn't a pleasant situation for the family.

COOPER: Um, did you serve in direct combat during your deployment? And it says were you wounded in action. I know you said you were . . .

MAPLES: Yes.

COOPER: Could you . . . ?

MAPLES: I got hit with shrapnel.

COOPER: Oh, where at?

MAPLES: In the legs.

COOPER: Could you tell me about it?

MAPLES: It wasn't anything extremely serious. It was an explosion from a 1-22 rocket. Uh, it hit close to our hooch, and shrapnel blew out part of the walls and windows and stuff like that. These rockets were fired from about 8 to 10 miles out, and they were really not that accurate. But sometimes they would get close. I have some pictures to show you what they'll do to a building. But I just caught a piece of it, a couple of pieces in my leg, and uh, I had to have it removed because it was embedded. And one piece that took for . . . after I got out of the service because they decided it wasn't a health risk and left it there. And it came out by itself.

COOPER: Wha . . . how? It just . . . ?

MAPLES: It worked its way up, and . . . and one day I noticed I had a uh, looked like an infection, like on a . . . like a pimple, and I went to the doctor and they lanced it and took it out.

COOPER: Oh wow.

MAPLES: Just a small piece.

COOPER: Did that ever affect your walking or stuff like that?

MAPLES: No.

COOPER: Was it on the top or bottom part of your legs or . . . ?

MAPLES: Uh, it was below the waste.

COOPER: Okay, wow. You're lucky.

MAPLES: Oh, yes. I am.

COOPER: What did you think of the local inhabitants that you encountered?

MAPLES: Sometimes they were glad to see us, but a lot of times they feared us. Uh, they feared us because we uh, we left them in a situation where the Viet Cong could come back and retaliate against them because we could not leave troops there to protect them. And many times, that's what happened to a lot of the villages unless we could move them into an area where they were supported by American troops. And the Army and Marines did most of that. Our job was recon. We were . . . our job was to mainly go out and find enemy, the enemy locations and the troop movements and uh, to respond from there.

COOPER: When you interacted with local inhabitants, what did you think their conceptions were of the United States? And did you ever engage them in a conversation about what America meant to you?

MAPLES: Most of the time the communication wasn't very pleasant because first of all, uh, unless you had a Vietnamese interpreter, uh, you couldn't understand what they were saying. But you could read their faces many times, and . . . and many times it was fear. And many times it was hatred. So, you didn't know whether you were really there to help them, or you were just in their way.

COOPER: How did you stay in touch with . . . . Oh, you said through letters and phone calls through the Red Cross you stayed in touch with your family?

MAPLES: The letters were mostly . . . I only made 2 phone calls while I was in Vietnam. Uh,

and one of them wasn't the American Red Cross. I happened to run up on a uh, radar station that was used for calling in airstrikes. And they had access to a land line that uh you could speak to your family with. The only thing you had to do was to teach your family how to say over in the conversation when they stopped. So that you could speak because they had to switch it, they had to manually switch it when you were talking to each other.

COOPER: Kind of like a walkie-talkie phone?

MAPLES: Yes. You would say, "How are you doing mom dad? Over." And they would, they would talk and sometimes she would forget to say, "Over."

COOPER: And you're just waiting.

MAPLES: Yeah. And you'd have to wait. But it, it was one of those deals that you ran up on the situation, and I took advantage of it because I knew it made them feel better to know, you know, that I was talking to them

COOPER: Mmhmm. You were a good son to call your mama. How did your service influence or affect your family at home?

MAPLES: My parents were proud of me, very much and uh . . . but the people back home, when I came back to Washington, it was uh, not a pleasant thing. People didn't like the American soldier because uh, we were a bunch of child killers and everything else they could think of to call us, and I'm sure that some of that uh, may have been true. Uh, it didn't involve me because that's not what I did. Uh, it didn't involve the patrols that I worked with that I'm aware of. But a lot of times if there was an enemy that was encountered, my job was to go to the rear, and they dealt with what the problem was so I never saw what went on. So I could never answer the questions. I had the questions presented to me by uh, military intelligence, and I never could answer the questions because I never saw what or who they uh, enacted with, and . . . and like I said, in the rear you don't see anything.

COOPER: Right.

MAPLES: You're just back there waiting for them to come and get you.

COOPER: Oh, wow. And how did that make you feel? Going and fighting this war, then coming back and people being so negative?

MAPLES: People hating you?

COOPER: Yeah, I mean that must have been horrible.

MAPLES: Washington was uh . . . Washington state was the worst. Fort Louis—that's where I came back to—they threw tomatoes, eggs, uh whatever they could, ya know. Some of it never. . . no one threw a rock. They always threw just vegetables basically. I don't . . . I guess they thought we needed more vegetables or something. They did protest. They were outside the

military instillation. Yes, they had signs. Yes, they we were all mean people. But in my hometown, around small towns like that, you don't have that situation because all these people are military oriented, and they all know that you're doing your duty and that was important to all my relatives. Because all of my relatives served in the military

COOPER: So they understood.

MAPLES: Yes.

COOPER: Um, what are your most vivid memories of your time in the service?

MAPLES: Well, the vivid memories are quite a few. As you can see I have some collections. I enjoyed my days off—my *day* off. Every 30 days, you got a day off. Yes, there were no days off. Uh, vivid recollections of over there was uh . . . . The monsoon season was uh, horrible. It didn't matter whether you wore a raincoat or not; you got just as wet whether you had it on or not. We wore, we had a poncho that when we were out in the field and it rained, it didn't rain like it does here. In Vietnam when it rains, it's like a steady water faucet. You can't see from here to you. So, when it rained like that, we would find . . . hopefully we were in the jungle and could find a spot where it was fairly heavy, dense foliage so we could use that for blocking the rain. Then I'd put my dog under my poncho with me so I could keep him dry. So, if we had to respond at a moment's notice, we were together. I didn't have to worry about where he was at, or what was going on.

COOPER: How long would that season last?

MAPLES: Monsoon season is kind of like wintertime here. It can be, it can be, ya know uh, usually it was like a month. And it didn't, it didn't rain steadily for that solid month it, it rained off and on, but that was the way their seasons were set up. And I was fortunate when I went through the heaviest monsoon, I was at a station called Tuy Hoa, which was on the beach of South Vietnam, and uh, our main concern was to watch the beachline for . . . for the Viet Cong trappers, which were the men who were dressed with explosives on their chests to try to sneak into the flight line to blow up the airplanes.

COOPER: What sorts of technology did you use in the service?

MAPLES: We actually got the night scopes just before I left Vietnam. That was about the most creative new technology that we had. We had, we had what they called a CAR-15, which was a short version of an AR-15 rifle. Uh, some of us were allowed to carry pistols, mainly .45s, because they were accessible through the military—the ammunition was accessible. Uh, as far as, uh, fancy equipment, or all the things that they have now, I wish we'd had then. Uh, we . . . but we don't, but we didn't, and like I said, the night light or the night scope would help us a lot of times because you could see the enemy moving in the darkness. It would light them up. It was a green light. It was very interesting because you could see the bodies. You couldn't identify them as by description, but you could tell they were people that were moving in the darkness, and it helped us tell when they were coming or when they were out there. If they were, if they were moving around enough that they drew attention, we were able to spot them.

COOPER: I bet your dog helped a lot with that too.

MAPLES: My dog was my best friend. And I trusted him more than the people I was with because a dog has, number one, the mentality of a nine-year-old child. They're very smart. I don't care what dog you pick. You can teach any dog a trick. You can teach a dog protection. It can be done. My dogs and I were, were all big buddies. And like I said, a lot of times, I didn't go places if I didn't take them with me.

COOPER: Bet they helped you through, not even spotting things, but just like maybe having a friend there also.

MAPLES: Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. 'Cause you could sit there and people would say you're half-crazy because you talk to your dog. But that's how we learned to work with those dogs because if they didn't like you, you had to learn to get them to like you and it took, it took different measures. I sat for a day and a half reading to my dog so that he would get accustomed to my voice so that he would know who I was. And, uh, it was things of that nature. It builds a bond between man and the dog. And like I said, they are so much more alert to protecting you once they've been trained in the proper techniques. And anything you do, you know, they're there beside you. [Phone rings.]

COOPER: Okay, um, did you expect to face any challenges when you . . .? Oh, we actually kind of talked about that—the challenge that you faced in Washington, D.C.

MAPLES: Oh, yes. Coming back to the states was another story because I had problems when I came back because, uh, of the [Phone rings] feelings people had.

[Phone call removed]

MAPLES: When I first came back, I was remorseful, uh, because of the receptions we got from people in different places. I drank. I didn't smoke dope. That's one thing that didn't do anything to my interest. I saw a lot of people in Vietnam that had caused their demise in some way, shape or form. Whether they were killed in action or whether or not they went to prison because they were stupid enough to get involved in it deeply. Uh, I wanted to come home. And I wanted to come home in one piece, so I was very cautious about what I did over there. Because even these guys bought so much, uh, drugs that they didn't know, uh . . . they were buying them from the locals, and they could have put strychnine in there, things of this nature, and there were some that were killed by that, that, you know. The government had to lie about how they were actually killed when they were brought home in their body bags, basically. But, uh, I got over that after a couple close encounters or experiences that didn't go my way. And, uh, I never did jail time or anything like that; I just got into trouble. And, uh, I finally realized it was time for me to straighten up and stop worrying about what the other world thought and go on about my life and try to make the best of it.

COOPER: And how old were you when you came back?

MAPLES: I was 21.

COOPER: Wow.

MAPLES: That's the bad part about these type of conflicts because they take the young, and so many of them come back with so many problems because they haven't adjusted to life in general, period. But, uh, I don't make excuses for what I did over there, and I . . . I don't enjoy seeing these people on the corners using the cardboard signs saying, "Vietnam Veteran. Please help." I don't believe they are veterans. If they are, they're lazy, or they've failed to realize there's more to life than begging.

COOPER: After your time in the military, has your conception of the United States changed?

MAPLES: Yes.

COOPER: How so?

MAPLES: Well, I don't think we should be involved in these conflicts or these police actions or these wars. These are situations that we can't win. And I hate to see the mass majority of those military men that serve over there that get injured, come back, and, with the injuries that they are . . . because they, uh, are the ones that are becoming handicapped, and they are the ones that are going to be a burden on the government, which the government is the people. Therefore, that means that you and I and every other American has to pay the price for what these honorable men did.

COOPER: How do you feel about your military service when you look back?

MAPLES: I'd have joined the Coast Guard. [Laughter] If you want to know the truth, I would have joined the Coast Guard. I mean, I love the ocean. I mean, it's, you know . . . I'm a fisherman at heart. So, I know that would have been one thing that I would have done. I went to the Air Force because I didn't want to go to the Marines, and I went to the Air Force because I didn't want to be in the Army. And I went to the Air Force because I didn't want to go to Vietnam. So, I know that if I'd have joined the Coast Guard, I wouldn't have to worry about serving overseas in any fashion, shape or form. And it wasn't because I was scared. It was because I just felt like, after losing . . . seeing my friends that were older than me being killed over there and coming back home to such a small town, the impact was strong.

COOPER: Do you have any advice for the young men and women who are just entering the service?

MAPLES: Yes. Go into the service that offers you technology to use on the outside. Uh, I encourage people to go to the Air Force. They are one of the greatest for technology. They have the ability to learn jobs, such as air traffic controllers, pilots. Uh, get a college degree, become an officer. Uh, there's lawyers, and I have a friend that's a lawyer. He's in the JAG of the United States Air Force. He started out in San Angelo as a lowly second lieutenant. He is now a lieutenant colonel. He's been to the Pentagon. I encourage them to look at the Coast Guard. One

of the most underrated militaries that offer so much in land and on sea, and, uh, the Navy. These are three major, uh, military groups that can give you an education along with giving you a profession. I don't see that in the Army or the Marines because I know they are our first lines of defense. And that may be prejudiced to say, but, uh, they're not as particular as to who they take. Whereas a college degree, a high school diploma is a valuable asset. You can't make a living today with a high school diploma. You can get a minimum wage job. But with a college degree, you have a chance in life like we didn't. Now, when I came back, I went to college because I knew without college, it would be hard for me to do anything. Uh, for my future, you know?

COOPER: What did you go to school for?

MAPLES: I started out . . . I thought I wanted to be a police officer after all I'd been through. Found out that I really didn't want to do that. But I completed a lot of the courses for Criminal Justice, but I turned that around to use that as a private investigator, and I also took some college training for welding too because I worked in the oil field. I thought, you know, that was where I wanted to be to. Found out that's not a good place to be either, as you're well aware of. You know, the tragedy of that is I tried to talk to people about this new boom that we just went through. Tried to warn people that the booms are not safe because we tend to overcompensate in the drilling department to make money. And the only people that benefit from that are the major corporations. So, if you have a college degree, and you learn something in petroleum services, and you learn something in technology that involves working with computers and these type of things, electrical engineering . . . I have a nephew that is an electrical engineer for Exxon, has a firm job. Makes good money. But he has a permanence because he got a college degree, and he developed a desire to do what he did. He built his own little electrical contraption that moved around by, uh, Wi-Fi. And, they were impressed enough that they brought him to their facility in Houston from Texas Tech. And to this day, he's been with them for, I guess, nearly ten years now. And he's vested . . . he's vested with a major corporation and that's where kids need to look at. They need to look at things that they can do to help them, but they need to make sure they have an education, and actually get an education, because our school systems are less than desirable as I see it. We don't teach the three Rs anymore. And that's one of the big things that children need to know: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

COOPER: Where did you go to school?

MAPLES: I went to school in Columbus. I went to Columbus High School, Columbus Cardinals. Population of 2,500 at that time. Uh, quite a small town, but now it's a much larger population. Actually, I came from Glidden, Texas, which was outside—three miles outside of Columbus. I started there in elementary school. We had one teacher teaching six grades. Uh, you still see, every once in a while, you'll find one of these little schools that's still around, but, uh, we had the meanest teacher you ever met. She could carry a switch that could get your attention. First row was first grade, second row was second grade, and right on down the line. And she demanded nothing but excellence from us, and she got it. She got it. I mean, she got our attention and we learned the old-fashioned way, and I don't regret it to this day.

COOPER: Did that help set you up to go into the military?

MAPLES: I was encouraged to go into the military by all the people that I was around. My dad served in World War II. My uncles . . . one uncle served in the Korean War. One of my other uncles served in World War II. My, uh, all of my nephews' and nieces' fathers. My dad came from a family of eight. All the women that were married to men served in the military. All of my cousins, nephews that were older than me served in the military. We all did our time. And I didn't see where it hurt any of us. Uh, the veterans today don't have a lot to look forward to. Because like I said, the government still treats them like they did in World War II. Uh, the VA helps a little bit for some of them, but, uh, there's so many organizations now that are offering to help these men and women coming back from the wars, conflicts, whatever they want to call it. And, I think the tragedy of it is . . . like the Wounded Warriors [Wounded Warrior Foundation] just recently. I was a contributor to them and I found out that uh—it was on national news— that they had been paying themselves more than they were doing for actual soldiers, so that really puts a bad taste in my mouth. But the VA, they don't . . . they don't provide enough services to those—the men and women.

COOPER: The next question is asking about if you have items or objects that you would wish to share with the project. I know you have a bunch of albums that . . . and I'm glad. I'm glad. I want to see these pictures. And the last question is: Do you have anything else that you'd like to share?

MAPLES: I'd just say, stay in school. Get a high school diploma. And not a GED. A GED is okay, but get a high school diploma. Get something that you can use for value to go to college. Go to college. Get yourself a degree. Don't give it up with an associate's. Go ahead and get yourself a bachelor's degree. Make something out of yourself in school first, so that you have enough knowledge that when you start a job, that you will be prepared to learn what it's all about.

COOPER: Where did you go to college?

MAPLES: I started out at Hartford Community College while I was in Germany. I came back, went to Odessa College, and, uh, that's pretty well where I finished up at. Well, I'm sorry. I went to the University of Texas first when I was stationed at Bergstrom Air Force Base. And then I went to Germany, and I finished up part of my college at Hartford Community College, and then I went to Odessa College in Odessa where I was stationed in West Texas during the oil field boom—1970 or 1982, 1982, '83, and '84. And I saw what it did.

COOPER: And what was that?

MAPLES: It destroyed a lot of people. Because they didn't anticipate; they did not plan. In the oil field business, you have to plan to save. If you don't plan to save, you plan to fail. It's a fact. Because the oil field business is run on a political basis. As you well know, if you look and watch prices of oil go up and down. Right now, we're almost into a recession. And the government is scared to admit it because our president wants to raise us to 41 trillion dollars. This is a recession as far as I'm concerned. And people didn't save. They spent it like no tomorrow. They didn't listen to what it was telling them. They were told, "Yes, we have contracts." Those contracts can be honored very simply. Because what they don't tell you when

they say, “Oh, yeah. We have a five-year contract to drill.” All they have to drill is one rig with one crew. They do not have to drill seven days a week. All they have to drill is 32 hours a week, which means layoffs, unemployment, and a lot of default on loans, which affects your future as well as mine as a retiree in the future. Uh, prices for interest rates, they’re at their lowest, but how long will that last? And when will the public feel the impact and realize what is going on? That is, that’s my big question to the news media. It’s because we’re there. This town has taken a beating, and they just don’t know it yet. And you’ll see it in and everyday job because there’s people . . . I get five, six phone calls a day from people looking for a job. And I can’t hire them because they’ve been on drugs, they’ve been arrested, have terrible driving records. Those are three of the biggest downfalls for a person looking for employment. And it all comes from the oil field. Not that the petroleum business is bad; it’s demanding. They drilled so fast, and they were working so many hours, the people were taking drugs to stay awake and to work 16, 17 hours a day. And that, that shouldn’t ever happen. I mean, these oil field companies shouldn’t have ever gone that route, but that’s just the way they do business. Like I said, everybody that’s got a college degree that’s in a position where they’ve got a secure future that are with these companies, they’ll be watching while all these people are laid off, and they’ll perform their duties, which are required now because now we have oil wells that have wireless capabilities that you can analyze and monitor from a computer in Houston, Texas or in Dallas, Texas, or wherever you’re at because this is the way progress has gone.

COOPER: Is there anything else that you’d like to add?

MAPLES: Nope. That’s good enough.

COOPER: Thank you so much!