

Oral Memoirs
Of
Cynthia and George Tomes

An interview conducted on

May 29, 2015

Interviewers: Melinda Holder, Meredith Elsner, and Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai

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 Cynthia and George Tomes are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on May 29, 2015.

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HOLDER: Alright, so for the purpose of the recording, can you say your name?

C. TOMES: Cynthia Tomes.

HOLDER: Cynthia Tomes. And the name of your relative who was in the armed service?

C. TOMES: George Tomes.

HOLDER: George Tomes, okay. Um . . . When they enlisted in the armed forces, what branch did they serve in and what years were they in service?

C. TOMES: Army.

HOLDER: Army, okay.

C. TOMES: I'm not sure what year uh . . .

HOLDER: Okay.

C. TOMES: I know what age he was.

G. TOMES: Nineteen eighty-six.

C. TOMES: Nineteen eighty-six.

HOLDER: Nineteen eighty-six? Okay.

C. TOMES: He was 31-years-old.

HOLDER: And in which military conflict were they taking part in?

C. TOMES: Desert Storm in Germany, and uh—

G. TOMES: It was Cold War in '86, and Desert Storm started in '91, '92.

HOLDER: Okay.

C. TOMES: And um . . . and then Iraq.

HOLDER: Okay. So, Desert Storm, Cold War, and Iraq, okay. And what was your thoughts about his decision to serve in the military?

C. TOMES: It was perfect because he had talked about, uh, for years he'd talked about missing getting to go to Vietnam. And you gotta understand when you're 20 you talk about the things, you know, you miss, and um . . . and I finally got tired of him talking about that kind of stuff and

uh . . . his father was military also. And so, I decided I was gonna drive him down to the, uh, recruiting office and go ahead and sign up. Because he was going in the, um, army band.

HOLDER: Yes.

C. TOMES: Uh . . . it seemed like a good opportunity. Plus, schoolteachers do not make much money, and actually he was . . . could wind up making more money in the military and also we'd get to travel.

HOLDER: Yes.

C. TOMES: So, it was a good thing.

HOLDER: M'kay. Um, did you have any hopes or concerns about their . . . about his service at the time?

C. TOMES: No. I really didn't. Um, no. Really I wasn't really concerned about the military . . . him being in the military until 9/11.

HOLDER: Okay.

C. TOMES: Yeah. And then everything changed. And even when he got out of the regular army and joined the National Guard, I wasn't concerned.

HOLDER: Yeah.

C. TOMES: And then 9/11 happened and the National Guard was called up so much more than they used to be.

HOLDER: Yes. And was your family member ever deployed overseas?

C. TOMES: Yes.

HOLDER: Yes.

C. TOMES: To Germany, and we went with him there—Berlin. And, uh Iraq, and he went to, uh, Bosnia . . .

G. TOMES: Bosnia and Romania.

C. TOMES: And Romania.

HOLDER: M'kay. And what was your conception of the United States at the time of your . . . of his service?

C. TOMES: My feelings?

HOLDER: Yes.

C. TOMES: Oh. Great! I mean, uh . . . I mean it's my home. I mean it's . . . It's, uh . . . It was taken for granted probably at . . . at a young age and I'm, you know, and I've learned to value it for more as I've gotten older and what it stands for and what soldiers do for . . . sacrifice, you know, for their country. I probably learned more with him being in the military than I ever as a civilian thought about the privileges we have here, you know. Um . . . yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: How long had you two known each other before . . . he enlisted?

C. TOMES: He was my . . . He was my youngest brother's, uh, band director. He was a schoolteacher, and my brother wanted me to meet him. And my brother is my half-brother. He's a big guy. Doesn't look anything like me and, uh, he didn't. He was really shocked that I was . . . you have to meet my brother. He's a . . . He's a big guy.

G. TOMES: He's a buster. He looks like a buster, a big old bubba boy.

C. TOMES: Yeah, he really does, and so, yeah . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you're from Georgia?

C. TOMES: Yes. Yes, and he was a teacher, the high school band director there at the time, so . . . yeah.

ELSNER: What were some of the places . . . You said you were excited to get to travel. What were some of the places that you did get to see?

C. TOMES: Uh, we went to Berlin, Germany and I loved it. Uh, I did not like their winter. Once winter got there, I was ready to come home, you know. And . . . And it would . . . And I did come home for a little while it . . . just and then I realized, "No I needed to get back." And, uh, it was more difficult with small children. I think these days, people still . . . They . . . They have ways of getting around all that, and also telephone and computers. We didn't have computers, you know, like that. You know, they were just starting to, you know, pick up. There was no Google or anything like that and, uh, telephone service, it was nothing for me to drop \$900 a month calling home, right?

G. TOMES: One time it happened, yeah.

C. TOMES: One time it really happened. And that was . . .

G. TOMES: [Indistinct]

C. TOMES: Yeah, yeah. I missed home, and it must have been in the winter time. I missed home so, uh . . . Yeah, it was . . . It was different. Now, technology you feel like you're just on the other side of the world, you know. I mean . . . not on the other side of the world. It seems like your right next door to your loved ones. I mean . . . it's . . .

G. TOMES: With Skype.

C. TOMES: Yeah, with Skype and everything.

HOLDER: And when you were in Germany, did ya'll get to travel to any of the surrounding countries?

C. TOMES: Yes, uh, I had some friends that we knew from Fort Benning, Georgia, and they were in another part of Germany. And so, we were able to take the duty train and travel over there and visit them, and so that was pretty neat. And we got to take the British train while your sister was over there visiting us.

G. TOMES: Oh, yeah.

C. TOMES: And we got to eat, uh, a British meal. It was, yeah, it was for breakfast they had what? Pork and beans and tomato.

G. TOMES: Yeah, different.

C. TOMES: Yeah, it was totally different. It was cool.

HOLDER: And while you were in Germany . . . did you . . . I'm sure you got to experience some of their food, and culture and stuff.

C. TOMES: Yes, yeah, yes. And we'd go to Polish markets. Uh, or he would, not me. I . . . With the three kids, it was difficult for me to get out much.

G. TOMES: The black market.

C. TOMES: Yeah, the black market. He'd go to the black market until the Polizeis would pull up, and then everything would shut down. But . . .

G. TOMES: Yeah, Saturday morning at five o' clock, you show up, and then police would arrive at 7 A.M. every Sunday morning. It was a deal. Yeah, you'd pick up crystal and kinds of things, like for 50 cents we got this nice crystal set. Uh, that's over there by the . . . at the Ku'damm, uh, but yeah they had a deal with the police. When the police showed up, trunks closed, everybody went home.

C. TOMES: Yeah, money was tighter back then and, uh, with three kids it was . . . Between living on a lower budget and having three small kids, it was difficult to get out that much. Uh, I did work for, uh . . . as a volunteer, and with the military FRG.

G. TOMES: That was before it was called FRG.

C. TOMES: Yeah.

G. TOMES: Yeah. It was the Berlin Volunteers.

C. TOMES: Yeah, Berlin Volunteers. And working with them, I could get free babysitting. Um, there was all kind of events that we could go to . . . And, uh, it was covered, you know. You know, in the civilian world, volunteers they aren't organized. I mean, the . . . The companies that, you know, have volunteers, they don't usually get organized and . . . and do so much for volunteers, you know. But the government can afford to, you know, all the way around, so . . .

G. TOMES: Treat you pretty good.

C. TOMES: Yeah, they treated us really well. Really well. It was nice.

HOLDER: And what kind of activities did they have?

C. TOMES: Uh, it's been a while. I've slept since then. Let's see, uh . . . Let's see, uh. Well, they'd take us out for dinner sometimes and . . . and lunch and, uh, there'd be parties, and uh . . .

G. TOMES: Oh, yeah. Wine tasting parties.

C. TOMES: Yeah, yeah. That was fun. Yeah.

G. TOMES: Tasted a lot of wine, too. Feel it the next day.

C. TOMES: Yeah. And uh, let's see, what else did we do while we were in Germany? Um . . .

ELSNER: You said you had little ones with you?

C. TOMES: Yeah, we had, uh, a two-year-old, a four-year-old, and seven. Yeah.

G. TOMES: Six, seven.

C. TOMES: Six to seven. He was three years older than the others. So, uh, between sending them off to school and everything and waiting for them to come home on the buses and stuff, and, uh, we . . . When he'd get home from work, we'd take them swimming and stuff like that. There was, uh . . . Berlin was the best base to be at because they gave so many, uh, nice activities over there. They had indoor swimming pool, and uh, so when it was snowing outside, you know, you had this free indoor swimming pool that was warm. The water was warm, so . . .

HOLDER: And do they have much memory of their experience in Germany?

C. TOMES: Uh . . . The oldest might but, by the time he left, uh, he had some bad school experiences. So, he . . . No, he prob . . . He was happy to get out of there. Uh . . . The other two . . . uh, Johnathon, our middle son, he went to JFK, uh, German-American school. And, uh, I was really trying to get the oldest one in that school, but it was . . . The older the children, the longer the waiting list was to get them in, so I could never get him in. By the time he . . . the slot came

open, we were heading back to the United States. Uh . . . But we were able to get the middle son in. He was going into kindergarten. But he had a speech impediment, so he was only there for a couple of months and they recommended me to put him in the DODS school. You know, but . . . but he did get that experience and he . . . They had different cultures, uh, that they learned, you know. The Germans would learn the American cultures, and, you know, back and forth. Like, uh, he spent the night with a German family, and what was it where you put your boot out?

G. TOMES: Oh, yeah the Christmas thing!

C. TOMES: Yeah, that was cool.

G. TOMES: If you'd put a boot outside the door, they'd . . . Santa Clause or whoever . . . Saint Saint somebody come up and put . . . fill it with presents.

C. TOMES: Yeah. You know about it. Yeah, it was cool. It was . . . It was really neat and I've got some pictures with that. And that was good for him, and so . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did they pick up the German language? All of them?

C. TOMES: No. Little . . . Little kids, no. My oldest son, he did in the DODS school. He learned some German. Um . . .

G. TOMES: Kids play together anyway. They find a way to do it.

C. TOMES: Yeah, the . . . the middle one, when he was going to the German-American school, it didn't matter. It's . . . They seemed to understand each other. It was weird. It was really . . . It was neat to watch. They just accept and kind of learn expressions and attitudes I guess.

HOLDER: When your family member participated in the military conflict, what was your understanding of the conflict?

C. TOMES: Uh, Desert . . . Desert Storm, I really didn't think about much. I really didn't think about it much. That he had to pull more . . .

G. TOMES: Guard duty.

C. TOMES: Yeah, guard duty. And I remember him coming home frostbite on his hand . . . or nearly frostbite on his hands, you know, 'cause of the activities that was he was having to pull security and, uh, but I really didn't . . . It wa . . . I was scared. I was scared for him and wondering, because we were in a foreign country, exactly how safe we were at that time. And then when the Berlin Wall came down, we were out there then, and at that time, uh, to me it just reminded me of Disney World. It was, uh, quiet. Berlin was pretty quiet and then the wall came down, it was like Disney World. It was like people from everywhere just, you know, uh, coming through. And then . . . And then, uh, because it's so poor over there. And I mean it . . . We . . . Our apartment was right there on . . . by the wall so, when that wall came down and those people started coming through, they were pretty poor. And I don't think a lot of times they understood

things. If you left a blanket over a balcony, that blanket may not be there the next day. And . . . But, uh, it's just . . . you know, it's just different and, um, a lot was changing real fast. Real fast.

HOLDER: Mhm. And what about when he was in Iraq?

C. TOMES: Uh . . . That, I was very concerned. My . . . Our middle son, Jonathan, the one that went to German-American school, he also was deployed with him, so . . .

G. TOMES: We were in the same- well, we're in the same division together.

C. TOMES: Yeah, so they both deployed together. In a mother's mind you think, "Okay, Johnathon's gonna be fine, he's over there with dad. And I . . . That made no sense at all, except for, you know, daddy was going, daddy'd take care of son, you know. Which was not true. I mean they were in totally different jobs, totally different, uh . . . Johnathon worked night shifts in aviation and, uh, he worked during the day and, uh . . . So every once in a while they caught up with each other, you know, and ate meals together but, uh . . . Yeah, just two different jobs. And, yeah, I was very concerned for him and also worried for my uh daughter-in-law, you know, 'cause they weren't married for very long when he had to be deployed.

HOLDER: And did- were living near his wife at the time? So--?

C. TOMES: Yes. She was living at the house for a while, and then I encouraged her to get an apartment and, uh, here in San Angelo and she worked at the library. Uh, Yeah, she . . . Yeah. And we've got a wonderful relationship honestly. You know, it's . . . it was . . .

HOLDER: What's your most vivid memories about your . . . about his time in service?

C. TOMES: Most vivid. Um, I don't know.

G. TOMES: Having the baby?

C. TOMES: Oh, yes! Yes, uh, yes. Shortly before . . . Okay, he . . . I take him to, uh, to sign up in the military and then, uh, before he can actually go to basic training, uh, I find out I'm pregnant with our third son. And, uh . . . And, uh, let's see. So he left shortly . . . only a couple days after, uh, I found out I was pregnant, and he definitely worked hard to get his self there for the birth. And I told him, "You better be here for it."

G. TOMES: I've gotta pass that run.

C. TOMES: Yes, he . . . So even though he was 31, and he . . . you know, and that running stuff was really difficult for him, he worked at it and he made sure . . . And also he . . . a musician. After basic training he went to, uh, West Virginia.

G. TOMES: Right. It was a six-month school, got out in four.

C. TOMES: And . . . Six months, and he got out four months, you know, so he hurried. He knew he better hurry. He . . . So he got there, and everything was good. He . . . And our son was born, and two days later we were driving to, uh . . .

G. TOMES: Fort Benning.

C. TOMES: Fort Benning, Georgia. To . . . For his station.

HOLDER: How did his combat experience affect you?

C. TOMES: Uh, I think it's taught me to be more independent, you know, because I had to do things, um, and make choices while he was gone. And, uh . . . And I . . . And some people like to, you know, say, "Wait 'til your daddy gets home!" And that's . . . That's never been fair. I never play that card with my kids, you know. And, uh, but when daddy would walk in the door, they knew . . . They knew who was in charge, yeah.

HOLDER: So, it changed the dynamics in your household?

C. TOMES: Yeah. Yeah, it did. It did.

HOLDER: Did you have any fears about your . . . about your family member returning home?

C. TOMES: Yes, sometimes when he would talk to me on the . . . on Skype, he couldn't tell me what was going on and, uh, sometimes they would have the incoming, uh, fire . . . What do you call it?

G. TOMES: Right.

C. TOMES: Yeah, and . . . But he really couldn't talk about it but I could tell that that had been happening. And he'd use keywords to let me know that, uh, it, you know, wasn't good. And then there'd be total quietness, no Internet because somebody had died, you know. And they . . . They aren't allowed to use the Internet, uh, because with technology . . .

G. TOMES: Until the family's notified.

C. TOMES: Yeah. And with technology these days, you know, somebody else could tell the parents before the military gets to tell the parents, you know, what has happened. So, uh, it would be quiet, and when it was, you know, a day or two quiet, you worry, well, is somebody going to come to your door? So . . . 'cause we didn't write letters, did we?

G. TOMES: No, we used to email and Skype.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Tell us more about this . . . um. . . organization?

C. TOMES: Uh . . . the, uh, volunteer stuff?

WONGSRICHANALAI: Yes.

C. TOMES: Uh, it's since 9/11. It's been more organized FRG stuff, you know, 'cause there's so many more, you know, deploying I guess. And, uh, it's great. They . . . They do a lot. I . . . I did it for a little while here, uh, at Camp Mayberry but it really didn't work out because we're four hours from Austin and there was just . . . It's silliness. They needed somebody that was right there all the time. And I know the lady that took my position, and. . . as FRG leader. She works. I mean, if somebody, uh, has a emergency, she finds ways to get funds, you know, for that emergency. Uh, Sometimes . . . the craziest things happen too. She's told me stories of things that can go wrong, like the husband may deploy and never, uh, let the wife know that there'll be money coming, you know, and, uh, coming in. There's some crazy.

G. TOMES: Yeah, there's a bunch of wild stories.

C. TOMES: Yeah, there's some wild stories, and then also there's emergencies. Like, say, the soldier does die overseas. Lot of times the FRG steps in and, uh, helps, uh, them to line things up. Like what.

G. TOMES: Yeah, yeah. A lot . . . A lot of business to take care of.

C. TOMES: Yeah, a lot of the business, uh . . .

G. TOMES: A lot of business.

C. TOMES: Yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So how's it organized? Is it by region, by county, by town, by . . . ?

C. TOMES: Uh-

G. TOMES: Unit.

C. TOMES: Unit, yeah. The unit, yeah. 'Cause he was actually the one at Camp Mayberry uh that was in charge of taking care of the band, like that you're a full-timer under the National Guard. He had to . . . When they started setting up FRG, and he . . . had to . . . He had to, um, they were fixing to . . . What . . . What would they do? Uh, inspection . . .

G. TOMES: Yeah.

C. TOMES: And you had . . . And then they told you and you had to have an FRG. You had to have our book . . . I mean, yeah, the FRG book, you know, with all the information . . .

G. TOMES: All the policies, letters . . .

C. TOMES: Yeah, so he's the one that knows . . .

G. TOMES: The what-to-do list if this happens list. The plumbing goes out in Mrs. Jones' house, what do you do, who do you call?

C. TOMES; You help get . . . find funds and, uh, it really does make it easier for the soldiers, uh . . . when they're . . . especially when they're deployed, you know. I imagine there's consequences if the soldier's being bad, you know, stupid. Like they'd rather go drink than to make sure there's, you know, the roof's not leaking or the plumbing is working or the electricity's been paid. You know, but, uh . . .

G. TOMES: That's where all the crazy stories come in.

C. TOMES: Yeah, there are some crazy stories there. Immaturity is everywhere.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So you interact with other spouses who . . . ?

C. TOMES: Right, but I had . . . I really didn't. I honestly didn't. Because I only did it for . . .

G. TOMES: You did in Berlin.

C. TOMES: Yeah, I did in Berlin, but I didn't do it, uh, here. They're in Austin because we . . . I lived here, and he was . . . He had an apartment over there. See, we were living two places back and forth and, uh . . . I just wasn't there enough. You need to be there often to, uh, take care of this stuff. And in Berlin I didn't . . . I wasn't in charge. I worked, um, up under somebody, and I . . . over there in Berlin I did mainly secretarial type stuff, you know. Typing and, uh, filing and stuff like that, so . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: And after Berlin you moved to Bronte?

C. TOMES: Yes. You know what brought us here?

WONGSRICHANALAI: A job?

C. TOMES: Yes, he told you that. Yes, 'cause, uh, we actually wanted to go to Georgia, yeah. But, uh, yeah he was getting out of the military, and then decided to go National Guard along with his teaching.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So what did you- what were your impressions of West Texas?

C. TOMES: Dry. Very dry. I've been fine. In fact, it was pretty green when we were driving. You know what, when we were driving from Georgia, it was like we're going through state after state after, you know, real fast, and I thought, "Oh, wow, we're gonna be there before we know it." And we hit Texas, and it was 10:30 at night, and we thought, "We'll just go ahead and keep driving. We're almost there." And no, no. It took us another day, a full day to get . . .

G. TOMES: Drive through Texas.

C. TOMES; Yeah, just to drive through Texas. We . . . That was our first clue that it was big. And that . . . That . . . was that before Google?

G. TOMES: Yeah, yeah.

C. TOMES: It was before Google. Yeah, and we didn't . . . We didn't have a Google Map or anything. We were . . . And we just figured it's right in front of . . .

G. TOMES: The old-fashioned gas station map.

C. TOMES; Yeah, exactly. And, uh, it was actually . . . I think there was a lot of rain like it is right now, when we first got here 'cause you kept on saying, "Wow, it's greener than I remember."

G. TOMES: Yeah.

C. TOMES: Yeah. So, 'cause his family is from here . . . Some of them are from here. Yeah, so . . . So he wasn't . . . He was a little familiar with it, so . . . Dry and, um . . . First thing I noticed when we got the house, we were renting it, I noticed there was cracks in the ground. I mean, big cracks like, you know. And I asked the landlord, I said, "Do ya'll have earthquakes?" Because I can't imagine why the ground would crack, you know. Ground doesn't crack in Georgia.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What was the answer?

C. TOMES: "Nope!" And he laughed. It was, uh, dry, just very dry and I didn't know this. I didn't . . . I didn't understand the land could crack like that and just . . .

HOLDER: Yeah.

C. TOMES: I do now. I do now.

HOLDER: Do you have any advice for the families of young men and women just entering service?

C. TOMES: Um . . . no. No. . . . I mean . . . Young people . . . The world that they're . . . The working world and everything is different than what we . . . when we got out of school. We had opportunities, you know. Even if we didn't go to college, we had opportunities. There isn't opportunities right now. And a lot of kids are getting out of high school thinking, well, they're on top of the world. They think they're wonderful, they're . . . They're popular . . . They're, uh, everything's perfect when you're a senior and you get out of school. And you want that to keep on going but, real quickly, you find out this world, there isn't jobs out there like there used to be and they're . . . and the first thing, lot of times, first thing they see is military and it's got the paycheck. I mean, they grow up in the military real fast, you know. And that's good, uh. I think there's a lot of young people going into the military, serving their term, and getting out. And . . . But . . . if . . . If the military didn't give them anything else, it's given them maturity, you know. It's teaching them, "Wow, this is difficult. I want to try it as a civilian." But, uh . . . Uh . . . It's a

good . . . It's a good place to be while they are growing up. It . . . 'cause you will grow up fast. You know, you'll learn, so . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: What did you think when your middle son enlisted?

C. TOMES: Yeah, all of our boys . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: All, all of them. Okay, all of them enlisted.

C. TOMES: All of them had done . . . We actually encouraged them because the . . . This . . . At first, they went off to college and, uh, two of them got their degrees. And, uh . . . Last one, he's just . . . He was a baby and he just fiddled around. And, in fact, now he's getting out. He's gonna go back to, you know, college, and finish it off, you know. And I think he's ready. You know, he's matured a lot.

G. TOMES: Yeah, he wasn't ready when he got out of high school.

C. TOMES: No, he wasn't.

G. TOMES: He just came here and . . .

C. TOMES: Didn't see the reason for it. And I think a lot of college kids are that way. They're having a good time. But, uh . . . uh . . . Let's see, our other two . . . The oldest one, he got out of college, he . . . He was bright, very bright and, uh, gifted. He got a double degree: math and, uh, physics. And, uh, he . . . Or was it computer science and physics? He's got math too, though, He's got math. Yeah, at Hardin-Simmons but, uh, he got out of college and he got a job at Stripes. You know.

G. TOMES: And then he got a computer job, and everything.

C. TOMES: And . . . And, yeah. Well, and then he quit that and decided he was gonna dri . . . Take his girlfriend and they were gonna drive to Georgia to visit my relatives. It took . . . You would see it even after that, even after graduating there's still immaturity there. Yeah, and . . . But, uh, yeah. Yeah, and he . . . He wised up and got him a good job and lost that job and now he's looking for another good job. As our hairs turn gray!

G. TOMES: Yeah.

C. TOMES: But, uh, yeah, it's uh . . .

HOLDER: So you said all three of them have done military time.

C. TOMES: Yeah, uh. Yeah, the oldest one, we, uh, when . . . After he worked at Stripes, we encouraged him to be an officer in, uh, Air Force, and it looked like it would've been great but his girlfriend was persuading him no. She's, uh . . . She's very against military and, uh . . . She

honestly thinks the military ought to do it from . . . soldiers . . . people should not . . . Soldiers should not get paid. They should just do this.

G. TOMES: She told him that. He was in the Air Force Academy. Said, “If you continue this Air Force Academy, I will not marry you.”

C. TOMES: Yes, so he, uh . . .

G. TOMES: Dropped out.

C. TOMES: So he acted goofy and did not buckle down and do the mature, grown-up job. So he got out. So, uh, yeah, so . . . She wears the pants. But . . . And . . . Yeah. Yeah, and then Johnathon did it with him, and it was very good for him.

G. TOMES: Yeah, he was in for eight years.

C. TOMES: Yeah, Johnathon did a good job. Yeah, he did. He did a good job. It was just time for him to get out, and I don’t blame him. It’s difficult on marriages. It’s really difficult and, uh, and they . . . They had just recently gotten married, too, and yeah. And I think if . . . She was . . . If she wasn’t living at my house . . .

G. TOMES: He got out for the right reasons, yeah. Did a . . . Did a good eight year term.

C. TOMES: They could’ve easily . . . That marriage could’ve easily wound up in a bad, you know, divorce. Just because.

G. TOMES: Another deployment, yeah.

C. TOMES: Yeah, just because of deployment.

HOLDER: So have either of your other two sons been deployed or just the one?

C. TOMES: Uh, our youngest one went to Afghanistan, and he’s infantry. Yeah, he’s . . . He tried infantry one time, got out, and I thought, “Phew! He didn’t make it. Wonderful.” And he . . . And then about six months later he says, “Guess what? Mom, I’m going back in the military.” I said, “Oh, yeah? What’s your MOS?” “Infantry.” I said, “Steven! Why’d you do that. There’s so many different MOSs. Why did you pick uh infantry?” And he . . . The whole time, I mean . . . He isn’t . . . He does not have the infantry mentality. I mean, I think infantry is more like sports people. They’re more . . .

G. TOMES: You gotta be . . . At heart, you gotta love the great outdoors. You gotta love the hiking, and the . . .

C. TOMES: But good news.

G. TOMES: He . . . He made it okay.

C. TOMES: The good news . . . If, uh . . . Something I found . . . found funny was, uh, if any of those infantry people needed to know how something was spelled they'd always come to him. So, you gotta understand, they always did UIL Spelling, so yeah, they could spell very well. But um, and he . . . He also . . . He would always complain to us. He's, you know . . . Their attitude and their . . . Their, uh . . . Their way of talking and thinking is just . . . and he didn't belong there.

G. TOMES: That *Star Trek* Klingon mentality.

C. TOMES: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, he didn't . . . It wasn't for him but he did do it and, uh . . .

G. TOMES: Served his three years.

C. TOMES: Yes.

G. TOMES: Got out with an honorable discharge.

C. TOMES: He . . . He told me not so long ago . . . He said, "Mom, when I deployed I really thought that was it. I wasn't coming back." He said, "I figured I'd die because . . . When he went to basic training he, he heard all the stories, you know, of how many, you know, going over there and dying. And . . . But thank goodness. It was at a better time uh when he served over there. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: They inherited from you the service. Did they inherit any musical love or talent?

C. TOMES: Trey. Trey, yeah.

G. TOMES: Oldest son did but not as much as I do. He played trumpet through high school and college and then he kind of gave it up. But he can go right back to it. Like if he decided to move here, I could get him in the community band over here. He could . . . He could do it.

C. TOMES: Easy.

G. TOMES: But the other two, band basically was just a social event.

C. TOMES: Johnathon, he was uh into martial arts. And by the time he was up in high school, I was taking him to martial arts every day. So, him and, uh, Steven. And Steven did violin, but he didn't take it serious. He did the Suzuki.

G. TOMES: He never . . . They never really pursued it.

C. TOMES: No. Yeah. Yeah, he never really learned to read music.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Anything?

HOLDER: I'm good. Um, do you have any concluding remarks or any stories you want to share?

C. TOMES: Nope, you got anything?

HOLDER: Okay. Anything? Nope? Oh, good? Alright.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, thank you very much.

HOLDER: Thank you very much.

C. TOMES: I hope I was helpful.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Oh, certainly.

C. TOMES: Okay, thank you.