

Andrew Plais Hoyle

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Sanderson: Today is July 1, 2017. My name is Edward Sanderson from the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. Today, we are here with Lieutenant Andrew Hoyle, a Chaplain in the United States Navy. Thank you for coming. Is it okay for us to video and audio record you?

Hoyle: Yes. Absolutely.

Sanderson: Outstanding. So, uhm, one of the things, you are here with us this morning to talk about your role in the Warrior Games, the Department of Defense Warrior Games that the Pritzker Military Museum and the Pritzker Military Foundation as a Gold Sponsor of. Thank you for definitely coming out. And we are also looking forward to hearing you speak later this afternoon on the panel. So, uhm, we'll just go ahead and jump right into it. So, uhm, how long have you been in the Navy at this point?

Hoyle: I have been in the Navy [for] four years.

Sanderson: Four years? And going back, you're a Chaplain in the U.S. Navy. And, I saw that you are ... you got your bachelor's degree from Ambassador Baptist College.

Hoyle: It's a small college in North Carolina. I graduated in 2002 with my bachelor's. Uhm, 2004 with a master's degree. Then, I completed my master's in divinity at Tabernacle Seminary a few years later. So, uh, for a chaplaincy the Master's in Divinity is required. Uhm, I did not pursue the degree for the chaplaincy, but once I had the degree here we are.

Sanderson: I saw that you were on the pastoral staff at Calvary Baptist Church in Pennsylvania, I believe. Correct?

Hoyle: I was. Yes, Sir.

Sanderson: Oh, don't call me sir. You're the sir.

Hoyle: [Laughter] Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. Right outside Philadelphia. I lived in Philadelphia at the time. And had a great time being Assistant Pastor there.

Sanderson: Outstanding. So, uh, after all that time hanging out there...

Hoyle: It's kind of funny that Calvary Baptist asked ...

Sanderson: I went to a Calvary Baptist in my hometown.

Hoyle: Oh, wow.

Sanderson: One side of my family is Assembly of God and the other is Baptist.

[Laughter]

Sanderson: And now they are Presbyterian for some reason.

Hoyle: Oh, that's a pretty big shift.

Sanderson: That side they shift around. [more laughter] They went from the Southern Free Will Baptists to the Southern Baptists to the Independent Baptists. To... I am just kinda like...

Hoyle: Sure.

Sanderson: So, what nature of Baptists are we this month?

Hoyle: 57 flavors.

Sanderson: Right, right. ... So, after all that time, why did you join the Navy?

Hoyle: Well, I was on staff at a church in Pennsylvania, in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. And I took a position as an Assistant Pastor in Virginia Beach at a church. And I was there for about four years. And I ... in that church, the Hampton Roads area of Virginia Beach, Norfolk, everything flowing together. It is full of military, and anybody who lives there or has lived there knows that is the culture. And, uh, I loved working with our military families. I support the families when one of the family members as deployed, working with the kids. I just really learned the military culture, and specifically Navy culture. We had at least one church member of every ... one member of every branch in our church, at least. But mostly Navy centric, being Hampton Roads, for what it is. I learned about the chaplaincy, learned about the diversity that a Navy chaplain does. We cover Marines, we cover Coast Guard, of course we can be on the surface force community, and one point as a chaplain ... Whatever, I just learned all that

diversity. And I really felt like that was what God really put on my heart to minister to that. Navy full-time. And, uh, and, so, that's ... I kind of thought about it for a week or two and talked to my wife. I thought she was going to torpedo this. It's going down. And, uh, she said, uhm, "Oh, I think you'd be great at it." And I thought "I love you, Honey, but, you know, ... [Laughter] At the time, we had a Navy chaplain in our church. He was a member of our church. And I said, why don't we invite him out to dinner. He and wife out to dinner Sunday after church. I am going to ask him, "What does a Navy chaplain do? Do you like your job?", whatever. And I thought that this is really going to close this door to my wild ideas. And, no kidding, it's Saturday night, or he could say, "that I was just telling my wife he'd make a great chaplain." So, uh, we went to lunch Sunday after church with him, his wife, and their kids. And we did the small talk thing. And I told him, I said "I got be honest with ya, the real reason that we invited you to lunch was that I wanted to know how you like your job. I'm, I'm curious about being a Navy chaplain." And without missing a beat, he looked at me and said, "You know, I was just telling my wife that he'd make a great chaplain." [laughter] And it was like, "Wow!" Maybe God is doing something here.

Sanderson: Yeah, right.

Hoyle: So, that was really the start of the application journey.

Sanderson: Outstanding. I saw, a, and through the records that we, uh, ... and the PMML website, saw where you've been on three ships so far: the [USS] Leyte, the [USS] Carney, and the [USS] Gonzalez.

Hoyle: I have been assigned to three ships. So, I deployed with the USS Leyte Gulf, I did a NATO deployment with Standing Maritime Group 2 [SSMG2], deployment there. That was the first ship I deployed on. In the meantime, once I finished with Leyte Gulf, I was assigned to Desron 22 [Destroyer Squadron 22] and served there as a chaplain for a while before I was pulled for a deployment with the forward deployed ship the USS Carney. They are stationed in Spain. So, I deployed with Carney and Leyte Gulf. In between, I covered Desron 22. But we were, uh, obviously pier side. They had just finished a deployment. And now currently, after I came back from limited duty, was assigned to the USS Gonzalez.

Sanderson: Um, Outstanding.

Hoyle: This was in ...

Sanderson: In the four years, you've done a lot. Especially for chaplains. Sometimes they get pigeon-holed in one spot and they're there forever.

Hoyle: Right,

Sanderson: And I mean, sometimes it is hard for them to get out. There either like yourself deployed a lot or in one spot.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: And that sinkhole is like ... it's like just get me out of here.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: Right.

Hoyle: They only see those bulkheads.

Sanderson: But, uh...

Hoyle: The Navy on the East Coast runs a ministry center model. That covers all the cruisers and destroyers on the East Coast. So, they take a pool of chaplains. Most of us are lieutenants. And they have in Norfolk about nineteen chaplains that cover about thirty-three ships. And, so, our goal is ... I shouldn't say our goal... The supervisor's goal is to cover all the ships 100 percent or as close as we can on deployments. So, in order to do that, we kind of have this constant shuffle. When somebody rotates from a deployment, they will cover two or three or four ships and when the next guy goes out. There's kind of the shuffle that goes again.

Sanderson: Right.

Hoyle: And so, it's interesting. It's one of the few places that chaplains get to do that. In the Navy, as opposed to just being assigned to one command. Uhm, but it does. In just a short time, a few deployments, meeting multiple commands, meeting multiple commanding officers. It's a good way to get the culture quick.

Sanderson: Of, definitely.

Hoyle: But it's a sharp learning curve.

Sanderson: Oh, yeah, I was going to say they definitely throws in the whole idea of trial by fire.

Hoyle: Absolutely. It is sink or swim.

Sanderson: Right, right. And now, kind of going back when a you first joined, because you went to Newport, Rhode Island. Went to **ODS** [Officer Development School] up

there. Did anything... Did that help prepare you for basically getting into the culture of the military? Or just all of a sudden having to ... hey, you're chaps? And especially on the smaller ships, smaller voyages, you are the friend, the counselor, the psychologist, the Psych tag, the psychiatrist, you're everything rolled up into one.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: And the springboard for everything. Did anything ever help during that? Did anything during ODS [Officer Development School]? Did anything help prepare you for that better?

Hoyle: I'd .. Definitely so. We went through Officer Development School and I ... My first day, I'd been a a civilian with no military background whatsoever. And really didn't know what to expect. We had, uhm, our class leader was an HMC [Hospital Corpsman Chief] who had gotten out, pastored, and was coming back in as a chaplain. And, so, I think ... About twenty or twenty-two of us chaplains were in that Officer Development Class. And so, he was kind of ... There were a few other **priors**. But he kind of ... definitely knew the ropes and sometimes, he'd be like okay, this is what we do here. You know. [laughter] This is what this means. But Officer Development School was fantastic in the sense that I know when it gets ... it's affectionately called knife and fork school.

Sanderson: Right, right.

Hoyle: And to some degree it is. But it is taking somebody like myself with no Navy experience, no military knowledge really whatsoever and saying this is what a destroyer looks like. This is what you do when you cross the brow. This is how you salute. No, that... you did it wrong, let's do it again. [laughter] And just those basics were essential to learning how to survive, because coming into [your] first command, we chaplains, generally come in as lieutenants - junior grade.

Sanderson: Mmm, hmmm.

Hoyle: And within ... at one-year end we promote to lieutenant. And as you know as you come in with a wardroom that ... basically a lieutenant jg, well they think that they have at least two years in, if not close to four, but then by the time you put on lieutenant on a destroyer level, you are a department head rank if you will. And, uh, so, if it's obvious that you don't know what you are doing, it doesn't build good rapport. So, Officer Development School was really good about that. Uhm, right after Officer Development school we moved on to Chaplain School. And they really honed in on that more. So, because they really understood, uhm, ... Our instructors are chaplains. They kind of understand that shift from civilian pastoral ministry to chaplain ministry. And really, really prep us there well.

Sanderson: Outstanding. And especially, uh, I think, uh, I've met a few chaplains over the years where probably the hardest curve is the fact that they go in and based off ... It's like, especially the newer chaplains, they're used to the ministry and their style of preaching within their own denomination. They walk in like now I've got to handle everybody.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: And that is a ... is a very steep learning curve for a lot of 'em. Just with the fact of ... oh, well, I actually have to take confessional. [laughter] I'm not Catholic.

Hoyle: Sure.

Sanderson: And depending on the denomination, one guy ... He was part of the Church of Christ--

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: -- to the point, where he was like, ... He was like... I never heard a catechism. And you know, I mean, anything ... it completely blew his mind on it. And it's good that the Chaplain School really helps you guys out. Because, I mean, let's face it. If there's one person on the ship that you can depend on one hundred percent of the time, it is always the chaplain.

Hoyle: It should be.

Sanderson: Right. And you guys do an awesome job, especially working with the medical side. And, uh, kind of going into that, uh, what is some of the stuff that kind of compelled you to start working with the Warrior Games?

Hoyle: So, I ... Last summer, well, let me back up a little bit. When I deployed with the USS Carney, I finished up that deployment in April 2016. And I had been having some pain in and just didn't feel well. And so in the fall of 2015, I had followed up with medical at the hospital and the thought was that I had probably had a hernia. I was active, athletic, young. It's just kind of the normal thing. You probably have a hernia. It hurts about where a hernia hurts. And, uhm, so will take care of it. We'll get you into general surgery and no big deal. Well, in the process, I deployed to Carney on short notice. Uhm, so, it was one of those things that the ship was going out, they had requested a chaplain, it worked up the chain, and, uhm, my...my..one of the surface chaplains, the O-6 chaplain called me on a Wednesday evening, and he said, "Hey, Chaplain Hoyle, I want you to deploy with the Carney." And I said, "Yes, Sir. I am excited to go. When do you want to go? Or when am I going?" And he said, "Well, we'd really like you to

fly out Friday.” [laughter] So, “Okay, Sir. Uhm, I’ll be in the office tomorrow morning.” So, I went in the office the next morning and ... They’re great. My superior chaplain, my director said to me, “We’re going to pretend like we like your family and not send you out Friday. We are going to give you the weekend to be home and pack.” And he said pretend, but I knew they were taking care of me as best as they could. So, uhm, so I deployed the next Monday and went out to meet the ship. That stopped all that medical stuff. Uhm, but I just kind of had this low-level pain.

Sanderson: Mhmm, hmm.

Hoyle: I deployed with Carney. The pain kind of grew. But I figured hey, we’ll take care of it when we get back to Norfolk, whatever. And, uhm, and so, I got back in April. Started the process. Went through the hernia surgery. No hernia present. I didn’t think anything of it. And, uhm, and then in July, the pain was so much worse, and I went back to... went to the emergency room. And, uhm, I said I don’t know what to do. I had gone to the doctor a couple of other times. They ...did some X-rays. We are not seeing what we want to see. You probably want to request this CT scan. And, so long story short, they diagnosed me with stage 3 testicular cancer, which is ... I did not know at the time, the most common cancer for males ages 15 to 35. So, I was 36 at the time. A little late. But, uhm, definitely a demographic ... when you think of the military, it’s mostly male and mostly somewhere in that age group. Uhm, and so, right away, they realized I was late stage. I started chemotherapy, went through surgery, and then as I was released from limited duty. I was declared in remission in March.

Sanderson: Congratulations.

Hoyle: Thank you, Sir. I had... Thank you.

[pause]

Hoyle: In ... you asked me to ...

Sanderson: No worry...

Hoyle: I am giving you a long story.

Sanderson: I know.

Hoyle: In November, I needed to go to Indiana University for the surgery. That was referred out to, uhm, to that hospital there. And my command was working the details of travel and what can be paid, and non-medical attendance, and my wife, all this stuff. As they worked it, they said you need to go talk to Wounded

Warrior. And it wasn't a suggestion. It was... This was the director's command, if you will. Commander's intent.

Sanderson: Right.

Hoyle: And I said, Wounded Warrior? I thought that was for injured people in combat or whatever. And they said, "Just go talk to them and we're going to work with them. And make sure we can cover you the best we can." And so, I contacted Wounded Warrior and right away I had a Coast Guard chief, who is assigned to Wounded Warrior. And I met her. And she said, "Oh, yeah, you fit all the qualifications. We are going to start your paperwork and get you processed." And that was my initial contact with Wounded Warrior. And they tracked my case. They gave me a non-medical case manager and I communicated with them and they'd check up on me on a regular basis. In March of this year, when I was declared to be in remission, I went to my Wounded Warrior representative, because we had been in communication. And it was great news. I wanted to share it with somebody. And I said I got to tell you that the doctors said I'm in remission. And she said "Great. Congratulations. Do you know about our Adaptive Athletics program?" And I have no clue what that is. So, long story short, that was the foundation for Warrior Games. And that's how we got here.

Sanderson: Outstanding. That is very cool. It's good that they were taking care of you and your family. Especially with something like that. It's... You need that back up support. And it's always good to have. And it's good that they are taking care of you. And were taking care of you as well. So, with that, ... can you explain a little bit of your participation in the Warrior Games?

Hoyle: Yes, uhmm...

Sanderson: In what you are involved in? And the whole reason why, if you wouldn't mind....

Hoyle: [Laughter] So, finding out about Warrior Games in March or adaptive athletics. They contacted me and told me, "Hey, there's our training camp in Port Hueneme, California in May. So, I attended that. And, ah, all these different events. And I didn't really know what the, the requirements for qualifying or not qualifying, or who gets put on what team. So, I just went out and said, "Well, I'd like to try to swim, and I'd like to try to cycle, and I'd like to try to run. Because I had been a runner before. I'd done a few marathons. I think, pre-cancer. So, uhm, I went out for those things. And I made those teams. I'm on the track team. I'll be swimming. And on the cycling team.

Sanderson: Outstanding. Ah, so, you'll be a over there tomorrow at Lane Tech.

Hoyle: I will.

Sanderson: If I see ya, I'm going to definitely be cheering Navy, Team Navy on.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: Hey, go for it Chaps!

Hoyle: [Laughter]

Sanderson: If you hear a hick yelling "Chaps!" that's me.

Hoyle: That's good.

Sanderson: [Laughter] Outstanding. And now, that's awesome. Especially to be on those teams. Not only one team, but also the two others.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: Um, how is it ... how's the camaraderie with you and your teammates?

Hoyle: The camaraderie is ... in one word, amazing! Uhm, the first day that I was in Port Hueneme we climbed into one of the duty vans, one of the government vans there, and so, there's the chatter. What's your name? Where you from? Whatever... And some of the people knew each other from previous camps that they ... the year before, whatever. And, right away it was, "What's your name?" "Oh, okay, I may forget that because I have a TBI [Traumatic Brain Injury]" or "I may forget that because of the medicine that I am on." Or "I may forget that because I have chemo-brain." Or whatever. And just that understanding that we all have some kind of challenge and I hesitate to use the word limitation, but challenge to work with was... It just kind of gives that instant bond. And there's no comparison of your injury is worse than mine. Or you know, "I'm glad I'm not like you." Or anything like that. It's just this ... You know what we're a team and we're here because we've all faced challenges. But each one of us to some degree or another has made the decision to get up and keep going.

Sanderson: Hmm.

Hoyle: And that's why we are here. And so, I think that foundation just makes for incredible mutual support. And that team blending. It's like that's my teammate and we're there. So.

Sanderson: Hmm. Outstanding. That was one of the things that I've always been curious ... with the guys that actually get involved with the Warrior Games, because I'd

briefly heard about it when I was on active. But I'd started teaching up at Great Lakes. And, so, it was one of those [things] where I got to pigeon-holed.

Hoyle: [Laughter]

Sanderson: Great mistakes.

Hoyle: [Laughter]

Sanderson: There's a reason why we call it that.

Hoyle: [Laughter]

Sanderson: You get there and it's like I can't leave.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: It's like you have to retire or get out.

Hoyle: That's funny.

Sanderson: Or go on the other side of the world. But it was one of those... That, especially the fact that, you know, we had heard about it, but it was, kind of like, especially when it first started out, like okay well, I know it's supposed to be there. It was this. We never really got a good understanding of what it was.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: And, uh, really, until the PMML started ... when we started hearing about, we're going to sponsor this. To the point where. Okay, well, ... and now it's like it is starting to grow even more, because ... especially... used to have to do it on a military base or a closed installation. And now you're in the Windy City.

Hoyle: Right. The public venue.

Sanderson: Right, right.... It's like, you know, has that changed the team dynamic any? More of ... beforehand it was more of just your comrades cheering you on versus mass crowds, now everybody is cheering you guys on.

Hoyle: Well, I can't effectively speak to the... whether it's changed because I was not part of the program prior. But I can say that my sense, and when I talk to my teammates ... I haven't done a formal survey, but I think we are all on the same page here that there is a level of appreciation doing this in a public venue. And I think it is good for us. And I say us, as in wounded warriors collectively, but even

more so individually to recognize that it's not just our military that stands behind us or our VA [Veteran's Administration] or whatever. But our nation appreciates the sacrifice. And you can walk down the street. And I am sure you've had before people say, "Thank you for your service." Or whatever. But this is different. You drive down the lane and you see the posters on the light poles. Or whatever. Wow. This is pretty amazing. Uhm, I think it sends a message to each one of us that is not able to be communicated in any other way. And so I think there is incredible value in that. In doing this in a public forum. In a public venue. Uhm, And I think there's probably, although I am not on that side of the fence ... There's probably incredible benefit for the public as well to see, "Hey, these are our wounded warriors and they are not people who are ... whatever.... that can't be trusted, or we need to lock away." Or whatever. PTSD is really debilitating. They can't do anything. Or whatever. But they say, "Hey these people they can push, they can go, and they can function." I think it probably cuts both ways. And for the positive both ways.

Sanderson: Mmmhmm. Outstanding. Yeah, it's definitely a ... looking at it ... because even some of the people in the organization ... because like I said, I'd heard about it, but I'd not really ... it was more kind of like ... it was compartmentalized. Really, if you are outside the military had no idea.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: A lot of people are like what's that? And I'm like, well, you know, basically it's there to help with recovery. It's there to help people that have gone through something... that have gone through a major trial. To continue ... it's not really something ... you know, in the military, we haven't talked about it a lot. But outside it's kind of no one really talked about, but ...

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: Now when they started seeing this stuff, and they're like ... they started going through and reading some of the bios, and actually looking at some of the other stuff. It's opened a lot of people's eyes to the point where like the inspiration we get from you guys. To the point, where I am like you know, that is awesome. For you guys to ... and just the fact that you guys are inspiring us ... inspiring everyone to the point of you've gone through this trial. But now you are doing something on an Olympic level. To the point where ... Let's just say, uh, you've got a lot of people that are walking in and... All I've heard is from people is how awesome and inspiring you guys are. And some of the colleagues that were at the McCormick yesterday and today, that's what we're hearing.

Hoyle: Wow.

Sanderson: I want to say, first off, thank you for your service. But also thank you for doing this. And basically, putting yourself out there. And coming in and talking with us. The fact that you're telling us stuff that really is outside of the family, so to speak.

Hoyle: Sure.

Sanderson: Whereas, you know, especially with something along those lines going through something as traumatic as having to go through the chemotherapy, having to go through the surgery, and then putting yourself out there. Thank you for that.

Hoyle: It's a pleasure. Ugh, I mean, I don't want to go through cancer again, but I am glad that it can be used for good. And I think, like you said, this kind of thing. The Warrior Games open to the public like this is truly a win-win. Everybody. The athletes win. I think it is good for our military as a whole. And definitely good for the general public.

Sanderson: Mhmm. Outstanding. Now, I did have a question ... Uhm, would the rest of you guys? Would the rest of the teams have ... Has there been like a...How is it... Of course, there is always the interservice rivalries ... Oh, God, here comes the squid... Here's the jarhead. Here's the hooahs. Here's the cheer force. You know, you know.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: How has the camaraderie been among, outside the Navy team with the other teams?

Hoyle: I do not know that I could speak to that very well yet. Uhm, probably, by the end of the week, I'd have a better answer. Uhm, I think again we certainly realize and appreciate what everyone of us has been through something. But, uh, I think that is going to play out more as the week progresses. We train separately. The Navy does their own little thing. And the Marines... We come together just for the games. So, it's yet to be told.

Sanderson: [Laughter] And how's your interactions with the Aussies and the Brits? The Australian team and the British team?

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: I'm sorry.

Hoyle: Again, I think it ... We're competitive. We want to compete. And, we know. Hey, we're here. Let's go out there and do your best. But there's that draft. Hey, we

want to win too. [Laughter.] And, uhm, I think similarly it's going to play out through this week. We've seen a little bit of it already on the volleyball court, and at the range, and that kind of thing, and on the basketball court. But I think it is going to ratchet up.

Sanderson: Outstanding, definitely, I look forward to seeing and watching that. You know. And like you said, of course, ... Sorry. I am always gonna cheer for Team Navy. Granted, I spent my time as a corpsman playing with the Marines. I love my Marines. Sorry...

Hoyle: Go Navy! [Laughter]

Sanderson: Go Navy. Yup. [laughter]. Yah, got to take care of the ...

Hoyle: That's right.

Sanderson: Uhm, on the website for the DoD [Department of Defense] Warrior Games, I was noticing that everyone has a quote under it. You had on yours, "Do the next right thing."

Hoyle: Hmm.

Sanderson: Can you tell us... one, what that means? But, also, why did you choose that quote?

Hoyle: Well, sure, if I can tell that without choking up. Ahm, as I was diagnosed and beginning my treatment, it was a pretty aggressive chemotherapy regimen. And, uhm, there were some dark days. And my wife, my kids were there to support. But they were hard. And, to be honest, I did not really know if I would make it. If I would live. And, so, I took a long hard look at... my kids currently are ages, thirteen, eleven, and ten. And, ah, so, subtract a year. With different birthdays and whatever. So, that's their age. And I don't have a little baby in the cradle or anything like that or grown kids. But kind of in the process of that growth. And, ah, I took a hard look at and thought... what do I want my kids to remember? What do I want to teach them if I do not have many days left? What can I give them that they can cling on to that will benefit them for the rest of their life? And, uh, that's where I landed upon, "Do the next right thing." And I don't know what life will have for them. What God will bring into their life or take out of their life or what challenges or struggles or blessings. But I wanted to teach my kids to do the next right thing. Whatever it is. Just do the next right thing. If it's closing the door, do the next right thing. If it's helping the lady across the street, just do the next right thing. If it's being honest because you told a lie, just do the next right thing. And, uhm, that's where I landed on that. And that really kind of became our family motto. And it still is. [laughter]. If you were to

ask one of my kids, what's your family motto. It's going to be, "Do the next right thing." And it was born out of that, kind of that, not knowing what the future holds and what can I leave my kids with. I don't, I may not have three months or even three weeks. I didn't know. To teach them all these great things that a father wants to instill in his children. And so, I boiled it down to, "Do the next right thing." And that's where it came from. That's where it is.

Sanderson: Outstanding. That, that is awesome. Very... Thank you for sharing that. Especially with the fact of ... it's very short, sweet, but very poignant at the same time. And one of the things also that with some of the trials that you've gone through... Have you noticed a shift in how you work with sailors, before and after? When you've been on board ship in the Desron? Have you noticed that there has been a shift?

Hoyle: I have. Uhm, right, wrong or indifferent. There is this temptation to kind of fall into the trap of, "Oh, the chaplain is here." With the cape on his back or her back or whatever. Uhm, but God put me in a place where I was not the one bringing ministry. I was the one being ministered unto as I went through my chemotherapy and surgery. And, kind of a long answer to the question, but as I went through chemotherapy, my director of our ministry center directed that us chaplains, us. Someone would come see me every day I had chemotherapy in the hospital. And, so, as a patient there was this constant flow of chaplains coming to visit me. And they ministered to me because I could not do anything. And, uh, it was like last August to September... the former... one of the ... from [USS] Leyte Gulf, the CPO [Chief Petty Officer] 365, those guys that were getting ready to put on Chief [i.e., about to obtain the rank of Chief], called me up and said, "Hey, Chaps, you took good care of us. Uhm, what can we do for you? Do you need your grass cut? Do you need leaves raked? Whatever you need we are here for you? We're going to support." And, so many people, the USS Carney sent me cards signed by members of the wardroom and people from the deck plate. They sent me a care package while they are on deployment. And, "Hey, we're thinking about you." We're praying for you. We're giving the updates on your health over the IMC [the main intercom on the ship] I was just ... blown away at the level of care that I received. Medically, yes. But even more so that, that support from people that I would have said, "Oh, I'm the chaplain kind of thing." Call me that proudly, but sometimes we fall in that trap. And, having gone through that, now when a sailor walks into my office and they're hurting emotionally or spiritually. And they're broken. Uhm, my heart breaks with them a little bit more. And not in pride. And it's not about me. But many times, I may say, "I don't know exactly your circumstances, but I know what it feels like to feel what you feel." Uhm, and so, it's compassion [on] a whole another level. And, uh, it's good for me. [laughter] I need it. Uhm, I think in the end that our sailors benefit from, hopefully, a more compassionate chaplain.

Sanderson: Outstanding. It sounds like you really took care of them beforehand, and you're taking care of them even better now. Unfortunately, for you to have had to go through that ... That right there truly shows the military family right there.

Hoyle: Absolutely.

Sanderson: They're taking care of you well after you left. And, that's also ... That they did that.

Hoyle: That's what it's about. And it's incredible. And I had to learn that the hard way. But not that I've mastered it. I'm still learning the lesson. But I... It's really changed my perspective.

Sanderson: On that, we'll definitely be learning that for a long time. Even after twenty years, I'm still learning stuff. Even after retiring... I'm thinking I'm retired no one is ... I get the text, get the email, now "hey, how are you doing? How have you been?" And, I'm like ... [laughter] I haven't talked to you in ten years. How did you get my number?" ...

Hoyle: Obviously.

Sanderson: Exactly, I'm like. Oh. Well thanks! Thanks for checking up on me.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: Right on. That's ... when you are in the military, you join a ... you gain a couple of million brothers and sisters.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: And of course, you get the goofy ones.

Hoyle: Sure.

Sanderson: You know, the ones off to the side. The, the Army, and the Air Force ... ya know, we call them the goofy cousins off to the side. But we're all one big family.

Hoyle: Right. And there is that, that camaraderie and respect at the end of the day. And they care. It really is.

Sanderson: And [indistinct words] ... Well, uhm, at this point, within the realm of questions that I had I'm out of ... Is there anything that you would like to add? Or talk about that we haven't covered? Or ...

Hoyle: I think that as we think about wounded warriors and such. I think the importance of caregivers are important. And for me, it was my wife and my family. I would have never survived. I believe that. I would never have really pulled through the chemotherapy and the treatments and everything like I would have without my wife. And that's probably true even to the point of ... When I was in terrible pain, she said get in the car we're going to the emergency room. And, I'm stubborn and I was thinking ... Normally, I would say no. I would not take myself to ... I think that caregiver role is really important. Uhm, I think there is something to be said for understanding compassion fatigue as well. As we talk about wounded warriors and whether they are military injuries or illnesses or otherwise, to realize that compassion fatigue is a real thing for someone who is a caregiver. And, uhm, and maybe that needs to enter into our conversation more as we talk about rehabilitation and recovery. To think about those primary caregivers. And then I think as we talk about wounded warriors, well, to keep in mind the invisible versus the visible wounds. Uhm, the guy that's missing a leg or whatever is there to see. That's a wounded warrior. But, uhm, the guy with a TBI [Traumatic Brain Injury] is also going through some things. And, ah, there are the challenges whether they are apparent or not. Uhm. So, I think those are good things to keep in the narrative as we think about wounded warriors and the Wounded Warrior Program. And as the public tries to grasp the idea of what is a wounded warrior? What does it mean to be one? You know, what are the, kind of, the things that we should know as a general public. Those are good things to keep on the radar. And then as a chaplain, I would be remiss if I didn't say that God has blessed me so much that I am able to stand here and go back to the deck plates. And I was talking with a couple of other wounded warriors the other day, and we were talking about adaptive athletics. And someone mentioned that they really didn't like the term adaptive. They preferred recovery athletics. And, uhm, we all understand there may be limitations that everyone of us goes through for the rest of our life. But we want to move forward and recover. I think that is what you see here again and again. There's the archery, the basketball, or whatever. It's about beating those limitations. It's about recovery. Whether that's going back to the deck plates or push-ups or back in the field or whatever. Or whether it's medically retired. Keep moving forward. And, I think that it's important ... Not that there is anything wrong with the title adaptive athletics. Hey. It's alliterated. It's nice, but uhm, the emphasis, at least in our minds, is on the recovery. That recovery may look different, than, you know, exactly what you were before. But in truth, we are all changing all the time. Growing and developing.

Sanderson: Outstanding.

Hoyle: I don't know. Those are some of our thoughts. As I listen to my teammates and can I chew on things on the bus or whatever, what do you think about this, whatever,

Sanderson: Outstanding. Uh, it's good. It's good that you guys are able to have the open dialogues like that and really be able to talk to openly. And you know be able to sit down and be there for each other. At the same time, part of having that open dialogue ... is I think it should be this or being able to say whatever it is ... at the end of the day, like you were saying about caregiver fatigue, that is a very real thing. And it's not that people lose the compassion. It's just that after a while when people get worn out.

Hoyle: Right.

Sanderson: Across the board. Where they ... not only with the families and spouses and significant others. But also ... those caregivers that are there that are seeing it every day. You really hit the nail on the head on that one. In regard to ... And I'm glad that you brought that up.

Hoyle: Yeah. I felt that way with my chemotherapy nurses. They were phenomenal. They still are. Uhm, and I think that... they made comments to me. As the chaplains came to visit me because I was a chaplain, these chaplains would inevitably turn to the person next to me and say, "Hey, can I pray for you too?" Or whatever. And ... seeing in ... some of the chemotherapy nurses communicated to me as I left. "Hey, we're going to miss you." Not because I was a great patient or anything. But because there were outside people coming into that unit and kind of bringing some hope, a smile, and... you're right. Those chemotherapy nurses are dealing with different people every day, but they are seeing some hard things. And that's compassion fatigue. It's real to address whether we are talking about a full-time caregiver or a medical worker that's dealing with it all the time.

Sanderson: Mmmhmm. Outstanding. Agh, at this point, did you have anything else that you'd like to add?

Hoyle: No, thank you so much for letting me share a little bit of my story.

Sanderson: Hey, no problem. Thank you for coming in and agreeing to do this.

