

This Week at VA

Episode #18 Jared Lyon- Navy Veteran, Student Veterans of America CEO

Hosted by Timothy Lawson

(Text Transcript Follows)

[00:00:00] PSA:

Man 1: The VA has made it extremely easy to access information to get out there and find benefits that are there for you.

Woman 1: Veterans might be eligible for things that they have no idea they are eligible for, no matter what age you are.

Man 1: That's your benefit. That's what you earned. Take advantage of it.

Man 2: And the only reason I am sitting here today talking to anybody is because of the VA.

Narrator: Explore the many ways VA benefits can help you purchase a home, earn a degree, advance your career, and so much more. Learn about VA benefits you may be eligible for. Visit [explore.VA.gov](https://www.explore.va.gov) [Link to Explore VA page] today.

[00:00:37] Music

[00:00:47] OPENING MONOLOGUE:

Timothy Lawson (TL): Hello, everyone. You're listening to *This Week at VA*. I'm your host, Timothy Lawson. It has been a busy week here at the Department of Veterans' Affairs as the Senate has confirmed Dr. David Shulkin as our new Secretary with a vote of 100 to 0. We all look forward to working with Dr. Shulkin as we work to continue our service to Veterans. I'm really excited about this week's interview with Jared Lyon. Most people in the student Veteran space are familiar with him and knows that he is doing a great job as president of Student Veterans of America. But before we get to my interview with Jared, I want to highlight some questions and answers from our Facebook Chat with VFW [Link to chat: <https://www.facebook.com/VFWFans/photos/a.105538677135.103853.62330592135/10154098959902136/?type=3&theater>] that we held on Wednesday. VFW was kind enough to host a chat and lead the

discussion with frequently asked questions regarding education and career benefits and resources provided by VA. I browsed through the comment section and decided to pull a few important ones to mention here. Question one, or first question that I pulled: how is eligibility determined for programs like the post-9/11 GI Bill and the Fry Scholarship? Well, first, for the Fry Scholarship, children and surviving spouses of an active duty member of the armed forces who died in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001 may be eligible for this benefit. You can find out more information at VA.gov [Link to VA's webpage] by simply searching Fry Scholarship or you can even Google 'VA Fry Scholarship' [Link to more information about Fry Scholarship: https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/fry_scholarship.asp]. The post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service after September 10, 2001. Individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days can also be eligible. This benefit provides up to 36 months of education benefits, generally payable for 15 years following their release from active duty. Uh, second question: what benefit is available to Veterans who have a service-connected disability that impacts their employment? Uh, well VA's voca- VA's Vocational Rehab and Employment offers eligible Veterans one-on-one counseling and training to boost your skills and build your career. Uh, dependents may also qualify for vocational counseling services if they meet eligibility requirements. Uh, more information about that can be found at benefits.VA.gov/VocRehab [Link to VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment page]. That's V-O-C Rehab. Uh, and the third question. This came from a member of the audience: "I have exhausted my VA education benefits and now have a doctorate but cannot find a full-time job and I am concerned about my financial health." Well, VA offers employment resources at vets.gov/employment [Link no longer active] and you can also go to veterans.gov [Link to employment resources for Veterans from Department of Labor], which is an employment resource portal created by the Department of Labor. To see the entire forum, go to facebook.com/VFWFans [Link to VFW Facebook page]. Uh, VFW currently has that discussion as their pinned post. This week's feature interview is with Navy Veteran, Jared Lyon. I've admired Jared since he began his involvement at Student Veterans of America. SVA is a very respected organization in the Veteran community and Jared's current leadership has contributed to their success. Jared is going to share with us his experience in the military, his insight from being a student Veteran, and advice he can provide to current or prospective Veterans pursuing higher education. Enjoy.

[00:04:12] Music

[00:04:16] INTERVIEW:

- TL:** Jared Lyon! The President of Student Veterans of America. Navy Veteran. Someone that I have watched grow in this organization since my first years at AU, which would have been 2013—you were- you were here at that point, right?
- Jared Lyon (JL):** Um, I was still at Syracuse University—
- TL:** Okay.
- JL:** working at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, but a proud alum at that time.
- TL:** Yeah. Okay. So, you joined here in '14, then?
- JL:** Uh, 2000, uh –
- TL:** I feel like you've been here for a while.
- JL:** I think it was October 2014. I think you're right, yeah.
- TL:** Ok, yeah.
- JL:** Yeah.
- TL:** And I remember when they announced you to be the new president. And the people that I knew that knew you better than I knew you were really happy about that. And I think the community, in general, was really excited for that new step in leadership. So, I know I'm a couple year late, but congratulations on being able to take that opportunity and—SVA is, I mean, booming like crazy. I see the national- the NatCons are trending on Twitter—
- JL:** Yup.
- TL:** and all of my friends go. I feel- I experience a little bit of FOMO [Fear of Missing Out]. I'm like, "Why aren't I there?!" –
- JL:** [Laughter]
- TL:** I know I'm not a student anymore, but I feel like I should be there!

JL: Well you should be there, brother. You should.

TL: That's true, yeah.

JL: You should.

TL: That's true. Hopefully next year—Where's it going to be next year?

JL: So, we haven't announced yet.

TL: Ok.

JL: That's- That'll be coming in the coming weeks.

TL: Ok.

JL: But you'll like it.

TL: Ok. [Whispers] Vegas. Anyways—

Both: [Laughter]

TL: That could be- That could be dangerous, a bunch of Veteran's running around.

JL: We have had a NatCon in Vegas before.

TL: Yeah.

JL: We have. It was- It was a while ago. We haven't had one since.

TL: Sure.

JL: So...

TL: Sure. So, Jared. The one thing that everybody on this podcast has in common is they made the decision to join the United States military.

JL: Mhmm.

TL: Different branches, different jobs, different in careers, but we all share that one experience: deciding to join. Bring us back to that decision for

you.

JL: So, for me, the decision to join the world's finest navy was- was- You know, I think, like, for a lot of us, a decision that you make when you're really young. And so, to kind of go back to that for me, you know, that 18, 19-year-old. For me, I, uh- My mother and father didn't go to college and college was perhaps on my horizon. It definitely would've been for athletics. I was a little- I was a little, actually, nervous about the prospect of school. And it was- uh- kind of a random scenario. I had graduated. And it would have been, you know, probably around May. Thinking about going to college. Had some offers on the table. But I had talked to a Navy recruiter by happenstance, and I had always known since a really early-on point in life that I was going to serve. I had an affinity for the Navy because, of course, like a lot of young men around the age, I loved Top Gun. So, I thought I was gonna be Tom Cruise someday.

TL: Sure.

JL: Didn't know you had to go to college first. But when I talked to that Navy recruiter it was like, you know, "Have you ever thought about going in before?" It was all these opportunities to earn your degree later, or while you're in, etc. I'd heard about something called the Montgomery GI Bill at the first time, that time. I went home; I did some soul-searching. I didn't really talk to my parents about it because I knew that they would be a little apprehensive about the decision. [I] went back to talk to the recruiter again. You know, take the mock ASVAB. Then, you know, then it's MEPS and then I- So, you know, I think I started the decision in May and made the decision myself. And I left for bootcamp on August 5, 2001. So, I forgoed college to enlist in the Navy. I joined a peacetime military. You know, August 5, 2001, means that I was actually in bootcamp in Great Lakes, Illinois, on September 11th. So, I was actually in basic training—

TL: Yeah.

JL: when September 11th occurred.

TL: So, I've had quite a few people on the podcast that joined pre-9/11—

JL: Sure.

TL: and experienced 9/11 at some point in their career.

JL: Absolutely.

TL: And I'm always curious to know: what shifts in the environment did you notice between September 10, 2001, and September 12, 2001?

JL: So, I went to Navy bootcamp, right? Certainly, not Marine Corps bootcamp. But I'll- But I'll tell you, on September 11th, there was something noticeably different. Your environment is controlled a lot more, obviously, when you're- when you're, you know, in- in basic training in the sense that, like, you know, you're not seeing the outside newspaper every day.

TL: Yeah.

JL: You're not [hearing] the news, or those types of things. So, we knew something was up—didn't- didn't really understand what it was. They had come into our division, our recruitment division commanders did, and grabbed guys from, like, New York City and New Jersey. We didn't see them for, kind of, the rest of the day. We found out later that they had broken the news to them and actually gave them the opportunity to try to reach family members—

TL: Yeah.

JL: to check in on folks and make sure people were okay, which was actually really cool.

TL: Yeah.

JL: That's what had happened. And then later that evening, our sister division came into our barracks. And we're all sitting there Indian-style. They rolled in one of those—Remember the old, you know, 'it's going to be movie day'—

TL: Yeah.

JL: in elementary school? —

TL: Yeah.

JL: The TV on the cart with the VCR? And they played us what, you know, the best I could describe was, like, a news clip. As to, you know, these are the events that occurred today. And we were seeing them for the

first time and understanding what it was. And in an odd way, I think we thought it was, like, a scenario? A drill almost?

TL: Oh, interesting.

JL: And we didn't almost believe that that was a real thing, that there could have been an attack on US soil. So, it was our senior chief- who was a CB and a tough son-of-a-gun, had sort of the gruff voice- you know, said, you know, "Listen up, gentlemen. This is real. This is not a drill. This is not a scenario. And it means that from this point forward, your time in the military is likely to be in wartime." And that changed. The vibe in bootcamp changed, the mentality changed, the intensity changed. And we knew we were preparing, not just for, you know, how do we march the right way, get our uniforms on the right way, but for the prospect that our nation would be at war. And when I graduated bootcamp, we were the first division to have our families allowed back on base. Everything was, you know, security was a lot tighter. And we got weekend liberty in Chicago; I'd never been to the city of Chicago before. I grew up in the suburbs of Massachusetts. So, like, a big city was Boston to me. And so, to see Chicago for the first time, taking the train in from Great Lakes, Illinois. I'd never seen so many American flags, ever in my life.

TL: Yeah.

JL: And here I am, dress whites, with a bunch of brand-new sailors. You know, no ribbons on our chest, we're brand "newbies" in the Navy. And I can't count how many people came up to us to thank us for our service. And, you know, we really had this, like, sense of, "Gosh, what have we done to deserve any level of thanks yet?"

TL: Yeah.

JL: But it was- It was really interesting for the first time out of bootcamp and back into the broader civilian community to just see a nation united in that way. And especially with the pride you saw in the city of Chicago with that many American flags out. I'll never forget that.

TL: Yeah, absolutely. You went on to do something worthy of those things—

JL: Hope so.

TL: after that. Give me- Give me an experience that you had during your time in the Navy that you think sort of sums up your experience. Something that, sort of, represents. Sort of, when you look back at your- your time in service that, you know, that sort of is, like, the epitome of, like, what- what you experienced.

JL: Wow! Just one. So—

TL: Yeah.

JL: In the Navy, I was a member of the submarine community, which is an all-volunteer group. At the time, it was all male. The submarine community is being integrated, now, with our sisters-in-arms joining very proudly the strong heritage of submariners. But it's a unique part of the Navy. You know, folks often describe it as, you know, it's less than 1% of sailors ever set sail on ships that sink by design, you know. So, you know, everything on a submarine has to do it on the surface, but it also has to do it while it's submerged. So, it's a very complex piece of machinery. Some would argue the most advanced piece of weaponry that our military has ever conceived is a US nuclear submarine. That said, we were- I was stationed on the USS Alexandria, and we were the first vessel in the modern era to do an around-the-world deployment. And so, we didn't necessarily know- At first, it was going to be a full around-the-world deployment. So, I've- You know, in Navy speak, I have the Order of the Magellan. But we actually circumnavigated the globe. And that was something that, I feel, was really encapsulating of my time in service. Is that, you took a crew who had never done that before, who had trained for lots of different scenarios, prepared relentlessly for, really, anything. And we were thrown a mission that, even as we set out on it, weren't really sure what it was and none of us had ever done it before.

TL: Yeah.

JL: So, we had to operate in so many different environments, in so many different areas of responsibility with different fleets, different navies, different cultures. And as we circumnavigated the globe, it was so cool, to me, to watch, you know, a group of really- Before something like that, you're essentially strangers. And, you know, 140, you know, guys come together and bond in a way to do something that no one's ever done before. It was really kind of neat and such a unique opportunity. Not to mention, on that deployment, lots of amazing missions in support of the US interests worldwide. But we did get some pretty cool ports of call along that way.

TL: Yeah.

JL: So, uh. But it was- it was, for me, the ability to watch a team come together to do something they had never done before. And, on all accounts, by any metrics, be phenomenally successful. And I think it's indicative of, really, folks that I knew when I was in service in the Navy, but then definitely carries over to those that I've met as a Veteran. It's some of the most, really, just ingenious group of women and men that I've ever met in my life that are capable of nearly anything that you throw their way.

TL: Yeah.

JL: And that's- that's kind of what I recall from my time in uniform.

TL: Very cool. Then you got out.

JL: I did.

TL: What prompted that decision?

JL: So, it was a hard decision. I- I, uh- When I joined the Navy- My dad was not somebody that served in the military; my grandfather did. He was, uh- He served in Europe in WWII. He was in the Army. But my dad hadn't. And being a baby boomer of that generation, having himself grown up in the Vietnam era, not being sure that, like, the military was the right environment for his son, [he] wasn't pleased that I left for military service. I think as a man- You know, I turned 19 the day before I left for- for bootcamp. Your dad doesn't know anything, right?

TL: Yeah.

JL: It was after September 11th, I got this wonderfully, you know, handwritten note from my dad just sort of expressing the pride that he had that, you know, that he'd somehow could have raised a son willing to serve this country at a time of need. And my younger brother followed me into the Navy afterwards. So, having the advice that I was given right before I left- for, like, "Oh, goodness. Are you making the right decision?"- to when you kind of get to that point at the end of your first enlistment— "Am I gonna stay or go?"—and your dad is now saying, "You've gotta retire— You gotta do a career. Like, are you kidding me?"

TL: Yeah.

JL: “The Navy is the best thing you could’ve ever done. Your country needs you; you should do it.” So, for me, I had a feeling that I probably wanted to continue to stay in the Navy. I had applied for the Blue to Gold program to try to, like, get a commission for the Navy, and I did not get picked up for it. So, for me, I had put all my energy towards, ‘I’ll-I’ll try to become an officer’. I really wanted to commission as an EOD officer—this would have been around 2004-2005. You could tell the need that we had for folks to be able to do that type of work. Navy EOD had always very much intrigued me. But I didn’t- I didn’t get picked up. And now you’re like, “Well, what do I do?” So, you start looking for the orders that you could perhaps get. You’re starting to really make the decision. You know, it’s, “If I reenlist, it’s probably for a career.” And I knew that if I had stayed in the military, I wanted the opportunity to try to become an officer. And I saw the path after I didn’t get picked up for Blue to Gold as it would be faster for me to get out, and then start using the GI Bill to finish my degree, and then try to commission back in through OCS. So, for me, getting out was, like, ‘that’ kind of a thing.

TL: Yeah.

JL: It was also, like, “Well, if I get out, I’m gonna need to work; I can’t not work. I’ve got, you know, obligations, etc.” Didn’t have a family but, you know, car payments and things. You know, a—

TL: Sure.

JL: lifestyle I was accustomed to.

TL: [Laughter] Yeah.

JL: And so, I needed to go on the job search, and I had no idea where to start. And so, actually, [Chuckle] went on base through a random way to direct there, and there was just a binder full of resumes. And they were essentially, like, “Hey, find your rate,” which is, like, you know, your version of, like, an MOS—

TL: Yeah.

JL: in the Marine Corps. “Find your rate, find other people that were around your rank, and just put your resume together based on their resumes.” It was actually fairly decent advice given at that time around 2005 when I had decided to get out. There wasn’t a lot of the same resources that we have today. So, I did that and then uploaded it to,

like, every job board you could imagine, just blindly. You know, your monster.com's and the federal job boards, etc. And I wound up getting a call from a retired Navy chief at Northrop Grumman sort of saying, "Hey. We have a position. It requires a security clearance"—which I had had from my time in the Navy— "and you seem really interested." So, it was actually a fellow Veteran having actually made that reach to me, then help me get that interview that I probably wasn't all the way qualified for. But he had looked at my resume and told his boss- I find this out later. He was, like, "Hey, this guy was a submariner. And he was also a diver on submarines. There's nothing he can't figure out. And he has a security clearance. —

TL: Yeah.

JL: Let's consider him". So, I at least got my foot in the door for the interview. I wound up getting the position and taking my first job. So, I knew getting out that I was going to have a job to go to. It was back in Florida, which was where family was, even though I grew up in Massachusetts. My family moved to Florida my senior year in high school. So, it seemed like, "Okay. I'm going to get out. I'm going to go to work and go to school—

TL: Yeah.

JL: in an effort to try to, maybe, come back in."

TL: Sure. So, a lot of Veterans in their first few years of getting out experience some sort of emotional crisis.

JL: Sure.

TL: Is that something that you experienced?

JL: An emotional crisis, I'm not- I'm not sure that I would call [it] that. I mean, for me, one of the struggles that I had, I think, was, like, more-an identity. You know, I don't think I considered myself a Veteran when I first got out. And not necessarily in the sense that I wasn't proud of my service or didn't know that I was a Veteran. But, like, a Veteran to me was, like, you know my "pop-pop" who served in WWII, you know?

TL: Yeah.

JL: I'll be a Veteran when I can wear the cool campaign ball cap—

TL: [Laughter]

JL: pull my pants up a little bit higher around the waste. Like, that's when I'm a Veteran. You know, like, for me, I was trying to get out and, like, get life going. So, it's like, you know, 'Who am I now and what's my same, kind of, purpose?', I think? [That] Was the thing that I was working through in my transition. But I think something that I found a lot of benefit from is as I got out- A couple of months later, you know, a good buddy that I had served with got out and moved in with me. We wound up having, like, one of those houses with four bedrooms that we were renting that I just started filling up with brothers I had served with.

TL: Yeah.

JL: And so, a few months after that, my other good buddy that I served with had gotten home from Afghanistan, moved right in. And so, we had, like kind of a great support system of each other. I don't think we knew it at the time, but we kind of came home together, realized we've got to get out butts in school, work full time so we can afford it. We all started off at community college. But I was creating, like, a peer group.

TL: Yeah.

JL: Like, a support group organically. We didn't even realize that's what we were doing. So, I think it became really apparent early on in my transition that, like, I was- I was probably gonna have a tougher go at it if I was doing it alone. And just, sort of, in the sense that, like, guys I had served with, we were good friends. We were getting out at the same time, we got out together.

TL: Yeah.

JL: If that makes sense.

TL: Yeah. Now you're at SVA.

JL: Yeah.

TL: Running, what I think, is one of the more finer organizations in the Veteran space. One that definitely inspires. And I think that's something, even in itself, is worth its weight in gold—

JL: Sure.

TL: in our community. I remember meet- I'm sure you know Timothy Jones.

JL: Oh, yeah.

TL: We've done- We did a story on him last year. And the first time I met him, all he could talk about was how much he loved SVA and how much he was looking forward to the next NatCon.

JL: That's awesome.

TL: And from, you know, getting involved at AU, I became the president, AU Vets, for only a semester. But, you know, you- all that's need to notice the impact you can have—

JL: Absolutely.

TL: on a peer group. Something I'm interested to hear about- maybe you can use your own experience in school as an example. When I was getting out of the Marine Corps, I remember my first sergeant telling me, "If you go back to school, shop the best schools. Like, you are free money to those organ—

JL: That's awesome.

TL: to those institutions."

JL: That's awesome advice.

TL: Yeah. He's, like, "If you don't end up going there, that's fine. But never think you can't get into a school because you're not smart enough because you have the money that they- that they're looking for."
[Laughter]

JL: Yeah. [Laughter]

TL: And school's a business. You know, when we look- when we look- When we really get down to it, you're adding to a demographic that they're proud to report on, right? You're adding to a Veteran population that schools love to—

JL: Sure.

TL: to, sort of, boast about. And so, that's what made me feel confident in being able to go to a private university like American. I tell my friends: pick one Ivy League school that you wish you could go to and just apply.

JL: Absolutely.

TL: And, if you don't want to move to that part of the country- even if they accept you, put the acceptance letter on the wall. Tell everybody you got accepted there, and then go to the school that you really want to go to.

JL: Absolutely.

TL: So, tell me about your school choice and, sort of, how you would make those recommendations to other Veterans that are just transitioning out or just getting ready to use their benefits—

JL: Absolutely.

TL: on school choice.

JL: So, to be honest with you, brother, that first sergeant, his advice was money. Like, that's not typically the story I usually wind up hearing. I think that our organization, nationally, is almost on a mission to stop hearing, "I wish I would've known," or "I wish somebody would've told me," –

TL: Yeah.

JL: as it pertains to higher education. So, if you look at who today's student Veterans are nationwide- SVA at the national headquarters, we definitely invest heavily in research. Primarily because, I mean, you've met our national headquarters staff. We're not a huge team. We're based here in DC. But we made the realization, I think, because a lot of us are prior service, and now Veterans, that we knew in the military: work smarter not harder, right?

TL: Mhmm.

JL: And so, we find our ability to do that through research. So, some basic demographics on student Veterans- and something that, I think, doesn't probably come to a shock to folks, like ourselves, who have been student Veterans- but nearly two-thirds of our population, we're first-generation college students.

TL: Yeah.

JL: So, you know, when you look at a first-generation college student, broadly, about their choices about where they choose to go to school, it's not always such an informed choice. 'Cause think of how anyone makes a decision: you start looking at your own affinity structure. So, people that you know in your network. And you start asking questions. And if not everyone that you know has gone to college, you know, you start, just, piecing things together on your own. And so, you're limited in your ability to make an informed choice. But I can't echo your sentiments enough. If you're a transitioning service member, and you're thinking about when you get out, you're going to go to college, shoot for the moon. I think, as Veterans, sometimes we're- we eat too large a slice of humble pie, and I think that's indicative to our population. And that's- that's a cool thing. But as it comes to your education, it is the one thing that you will get that no one can ever take away from you. And I refer to your college degree, our college degrees, as the great equalizer. I mean, when you achieve your associate's degree, your bachelor's degree, your master's degree, your PhD, your doctorate, you, quite literally, are on par with everyone else that has done that. And so- regardless of the fact that, like, you know, I'm a guy whose parents didn't go to college and I have a master's degree- you know, I'm no different than anyone else with a master's degree now. And that's- that's really what your education is. So, for me, it's, sort of, that ability to make an informed choice about where you go to school is super important. But my own transition to higher education was fresh out of the Navy. I didn't really know where I was supposed to go, other than that same chief that got me that first job- About two weeks after I was at the company, sort of, just, sat me down and said, "Hey, Lyon. What are we doing?" And I was, like, "Well, the big goal is, you know, I'll finish my degree and then try to commission back into the Navy." And he goes, "Where are you enrolled in classes?" And I was, like, "Uhh. Well, you know, I'm getting settled in, I'm trying to..." And, really, what I needed- I needed a kick in the butt is what I needed at that time. Because I probably would've, just, delayed a little while longer. And the longer you delay those decisions, the harder it gets to make them. And he goes, "Listen, after lunch tomorrow- Go home tonight and gather whatever you need- because after lunch tomorrow, you're heading down to Brevard Community College, and you're not coming back here until you're enrolled in classes."

TL: Yeah.

JL: “Aye, chief!” You know, like, that- I kind of needed that. And, for me, I wound up being ‘that guy’ that, as other guys were getting out, “Hey, man, got to get to school”. Like, that’s the thing. Start somewhere. And whether it’s applying to an Ivy League or, you know, a top-100 university, whether it be private or public, I wish I had shot for the moon a little higher. [I] wasn’t super engaged as a student Veteran when I was in community college. I was focused on working and the transition, etc. And I regret that. But I did a series of different things after I left my first job. I started a business; I failed a business. I started another business that actually led me to a job in major league baseball with the Washington Nationals. I spent three seasons as their manager of Florida operations before leaving baseball to, literally, go back to college. I was 28 years old and I still only had an associate’s degree. And I kept thinking of it as that great equalizer. And I knew wherever I wanted to advance in my career, I wanted to have the opportunity to be in a management role or a leadership role. And, you know, like, every job application I would look at, you know, had a box that I couldn’t check. That box was bachelor’s degree, at least, at a minimum. So, I kept calling my bachelor’s degree a sort of “check in the box”, and I saw an opportunity to apply to my stretch school, my dream school, which was Florida State University.

TL: Yeah.

JL: I had a miscalculation. In the state of Florida, you go to community college and get an associate’s degree from a community college, you’re guaranteed admission to the state schools in the state of Florida. But I didn’t know that.

TL: [Laughter]

JL: And so, you know, I apply and I get- You know, no sooner do I apply, I get the acceptance email, like, you know, two or three weeks later saying you’ve been accepted to Florida State University. Brother, when I looked at that, it might as well have said Harvard. I was like, “Whoa! I got in!” Now, you make that decision: ‘Do I?’, you know, ‘Do I go or not go?’. So, I decided to go to Florida State. I get on campus. I’m 28 years old. I make all the mistakes everyone does moving to a new city, especially in a college town. I think you can just go ‘get’ an apartment. Like, that’s, you know—

TL: [Laughter]

JL: its own- Someone should write a book on moving to a college town as a grown-up.

TL: [Laughter]

JL: It's tough. And my first two weeks on campus, I kept feeling like I made a big mistake. To use a Navy term, I was a fish out of water. I just- I didn't feel like I related to, now, my new peers who were 18-22, traditional-age college students on a campus with 40,000+ students. And I just- I didn't know how to find my place. It was in those first two weeks I had talked to my girlfriend—my wife now, my girlfriend at the time—and I needed that second kick in the pants.

TL: Yeah.

JL: Where I was, like, "I'm thinking about leaving, I'm thinking about quitting." And she was, like, "You don't quit, that's not what you do. Like, what do you mean you're going to quit?" Like, just- You know, she gave me, like, a pep talk—tough love, right? And the next day, as weird as it sounds, the next day I saw a little advertisement on my campus that said: 'Are you a Veteran? This room, this date, this time.' And it was an advertisement for my SVA chapter at Florida State. And so- it's funny- I showed up to that first meeting. I don't know that I was looking for Veterans. As you recall, so I'm not- I didn't know that I was a Veteran at that time. But I think what I was looking for was other grown-ups. And I was, like, "Well, Veterans are going to be like me. They're going to be around my age." And I showed up seeking that opportunity as a nontraditional student to find other nontraditional students. And I related instantly to the shared life experiences of Veterans. So, that's how I came to SVA. Before the end of my first chapter meeting, I asked so many questions. I was volun-told to become the Vice President. I later was elected as the club president. But it was that opportunity to find a group of peers on campus that I could relate to and not have that be the 'end all, be all'. To have that group really serve as the launch pad to get involved with other things on campus and other students on campus. Because- back to that statistic where nearly two-thirds of us are first-generation college students- when we go back to college as transitioning service members, we have an opportunity to build an affinity structure, a network of, you know, folks that also got into those universities. Like, American University. What a network! You know?

TL: Yeah

JL: Florida State University. I later went to grad school at Syracuse. These are amazing institutions of higher learning that recruit some of the best and brightest minds to not only attend the universities, but to teach us at those universities. So, if you're that student Veteran that kind of puts the blinders on and just goes to class, you'll graduate. And you'll get a fancy piece of paper that you can put it in a nice frame and hang on your wall. But then when you start going to look for that next job or that next opportunity, you don't have an enriched network that higher education can provide you. So that's where, I think, SVA can be so vital. Is we are a group of student Veterans where you can have, you know, that peer-based mentor group (i.e. a chapter) to meet other like-minded individuals, to serve as the launch pad to the other amazing opportunities that our colleges and universities have to offer, from associates to PhD, and sort of everything in between.

TL: Yeah. When I went- I remember when I was involved in AU Vets—

JL: Okay.

TL: I wasn't, like- didn't have an officer position or anything—

JL: Sure.

TL: -I just- We had a lounge and it was nice to leave the rest of the population and, like, segregate—

JL: Sure.

TL: ourselves in this lounge [Laughter] where Veterans can be Veterans for —

JL: Sure.

TL: a little while. I remember sitting in the school of International Studies and seeing the clear-as-day Marine Corps tattoo on someone's arm. And, of course- Like, there's no doubt about it, right?

JL: Right.

TL: No one gets that on there because they like- You know, 'cause they—

JL: Just a fan, yeah. [Laughter]

TL: [Laughter] Yeah, you're, like, just a fan of the Marine Corps, right?

JL: That's a moto tattoo. I love that.

TL: Yeah, like, that's a moto tat. And so, I, you know, I engage with him. And I was, like, "Look, we don't do a lot- we don't do a whole lot of things but, at the very least, we have this lounge that has some coffee and stuff in it."

JL: Absolutely.

TL: And that guy kept on showing up every week for the rest of the time that I was there.

JL: Yeah.

TL: I've heard from a lot of universities that outreach is one of the more difficult things that they have on being able to reach the Veteran.

JL: Sure.

TL: Especially because a lot of Veterans, when they go on campus, aren't willing to- some Veterans' don't want to get involved in that demographic—

JL: Absolutely.

TL: right out of the military. Off those couple of points there, can you, sort of, speak to what you've learned about the Veteran experience on campus as a new student that is- that, you know, is looking for community, weary of automatically associating with the Veteran community.

JL: Sure.

TL: Because there's some stigma there that, I think, some people are unsure of. Just, anybody that's going into their first year, what they're- what they should be looking for in their SVA chapter, the right steps to take on approaching them. Any of those things that inspires you, speak on that.

JL: Yeah, no. It's- It's, um. I appreciate the opportunity to. When- When you, kind of, show up to a campus as a student Veteran, you have, I guess- really, what I refer to as an opportunity and an obligation. So, I'll start with the opportunity. Whether you want to associate yourself as a

Veteran or not, what I think that you'll find in a lot of SVA chapters nationwide—And we have nearly 1,400 of them now, in all 50 states and 4 countries overseas, believe it or not.

TL: Hmm.

JL: And, you know, we, as an organization, have helped directly with some amazing partnership opportunities. With the Home Depot Foundation to- between the Home Depot Foundation and the SVA- build over the past few years 112- build and renovate- 112 Student Veteran centers on as many campuses—

TL: Yeah.

JL: throughout the country. So those Veteran lounges, student Veteran resource centers, they're a great, sort of, home base. And there is a propensity sometimes to, sort of, as you describe, segregate yourself. I'd encourage you to not segregate yourself. Make it a place where it's inclusive, that other students are welcome, as well as student Veterans. Because it's that opportunity to build a network, and this is where the opportunity lies. So, most of us, when we come back to school as student Veterans, we are, like, the uber nontraditional students. You know, most of us are going to be- it doesn't come as any shock- but over the age of 25. About half of Veterans- uh- student Veterans nationwide are married when they go to school. Some, you know, 46% have children when we go back to school, 14% of which are single parents.

TL: 46%. It's that high, huh?

JL: Yeah.

TL: Wow.

JL: Yeah. And so, and about half of us are working full-time when we're back at school. Some 25% are working part-time. So, this notion that the GI Bill is a "free ride". You know, the GI Bill is designed for a, sort of, a, like, a 22-year-old single male or female with no dependents. And if you're that, then the GI Bill, yes, you can probably do it. But if you're an older student Veteran, compared to your traditional counterparts, and you have family obligations or, just, even a car payment and cell phone bill, those types of things. Like, you're, kind of, paying your own way. The GI Bill is a wonderful benefit, but certainly not a free ride. And so, the opportunity is to come to a campus and engage with other student

Veterans because we've learned through research that when you come to a college campus, the number-one predictive factor that I can find that says whether or not you're likely to reach graduation is not access to financing, is not tutoring services, is not cultural competency, is not even course sequencing, right? All those things play factors into it. But... A student that has this one thing is three times more likely to graduate than any other one thing.

TL: A community.

JL: A friend on campus!

TL: A friend—

JL: A community.

TL: on campus, okay.

JL: Exactly. And from that first friend is the next friend—

TL: Yeah.

JL: and then a community and that network. You can look at, you know, wonderful concepts that are more recently, like Sebastian Junger with *Tribe*, or—

TL: Mhmm.

JL: you know, all these concepts, I think, resonate with us. But that's your opportunity. Is to find your community of folks when you get to a campus, so that you're not doing college alone. Like, you're doing it with a group of other folks who kind of get you, your jokes are sort of funny. But it's also that great way to assimilate to your new environment. I always make the joke to a new student Veteran that, you know, a lot of us in the post-9/11 era have had the opportunity to deploy overseas. And before one deploys, no one ever sits you down and says, "Hey, brother. Hey, sister. Make sure that when you get there, you stick out like a sore thumb."

TL: [Laughter]

JL: That's not the advice that anyone's given. [Chuckles]

TL: Right?

JL: You know, it's this concept of—

TL: Make sure you wear your Oakley's—

JL: Right.

TL: and your tactical cargo pants.

JL: It's- It's—

TL: The DIGI backpack's a must.

JL: Those- those- Yeah.

TL: [Laughter]

JL: High and tight is, like, the standard-issue—

TL: Yeah.

JL: for every student Veteran, right? And that's a gender-neutral high and tight. But, no. Of course not. That's almost just silly, right?

TL: Yeah.

JL: The idea- The same advice pertains. That when you come to a new culture, you find that way to assimilate to that new culture. And there's your opportunity when engaging with a student Veteran chapter. So, take the blinders off and build that community. The opportunity is something that almost shocked me when I learned it. This is the first time in American history where 1 in 3 college students that are on a campus today state that they know a Veteran firsthand.

TL: Huh.

JL: So that means that, you know- two-thirds of them- that no one in their family served—Shoot, no one in their neighborhood served.

TL: Yeah.

JL: So, you have an opportunity, as a Veteran, when you come back to campus and you become a student Veteran to really help bridge that concept of the civilian-military divide. Because, you know, when you come to a college campus, you're surrounded primarily by civilians.

And, you know, a funny thing about civilians: guess what they don't call themselves?

TL: Civilians.

JL: Civilians, right?

TL: Yeah.

JL: And so, like, we even use some of this language. And words matter, right?

TL: Yeah.

JL: And so, when you have this opportunity to come to a campus and engage with those student Veterans, I feel you almost have an obligation to show the value of the all-volunteer force to a new generation that's coming up. Because here's the big picture: ten years from now- if you're a student Veteran on a college campus- ten years from now, who are the hiring managers ten years from now? People with a college degree or people without a college degree? It's likely to be people with a college degree. Well, that's a traditional student who's probably 19 or 20 on a college campus sitting in your classroom. And you have, I dare say, an obligation to make sure that they're not dependent on, you know, the news media, or something they saw in a movie, or maybe a stereotype of a Veteran. You know, they get to know you, personally, as a fellow student at AU. They realize, hey, maybe you got a beard now, or maybe you're a woman who was an MP, and it's like, "I don't even know what an MP is. Could I have a conversation about that?" They get to know you as a person, a fellow student, *and* a Veteran. And it really gives this wonderful opportunity. And that's where I say we have an obligation as student Veterans to help other students on campus know us as, you know, these amazing, civically-engaged, outstanding leaders on our campus, and in our communities and, really, in our nation. And that is something that, I think, as a student Veteran you have such a great opportunity and an obligation to come back and engage.

TL: One thing I really appreciated about the school communication at American University was the- It was never assumed that I was going to do the Veteran "stuff".

JL: Sure.

TL: You know, like, I'm a Communication major, doing a lot of news reporting, doing a lot of subject-matter stuff. And I was always proposed, like, the, "Hey. Do you want to cover this?" But it was never assumed that that's what I was going to do.

JL: Sure.

TL: My experience was asked for when necessary, but, like, I wasn't- You know, I didn't become the go-to on everything Veteran and military.

JL: Sure.

TL: Just how, like, you when- You know, my experience was acknowledged and respected but it didn't pigeonhole me as this one thing in the classroom.

JL: Right.

TL: And, unfortunately, I've heard different experiences of Veterans of having, you know, across campuses—

JL: Sure.

TL: nationwide on questions they get in the classroom—

JL: Absolutely.

TL: Assumptions made off their—

JL: For sure.

TL: political or religious stances, simply because they served. But it was really refreshing to be in a classroom environment where none of that was the case. And I feel like every- not even year to year- but semester to semester, I'm hearing more of *those* kinds of stories than- And I think campuses are, sort of, waking up on- I guess not waking up- but they're getting- they're becoming more experienced in having a Veteran in the classroom which is really reassuring. And it's- I think Veterans are willing to stand up for themselves in a lot more abrasive way [Chuckle] than some other people are, which I think is a really cool leadership opportunity to be, like, "No, I'm not going to let you address me like this." And I think that can even be inspiring to other students that may not be so willing to stand up for themselves if they feel like they're having the same experience in whatever, you know, life experience

they have to bring to the classroom. So, I think that's a really cool opportunity that Veterans get in the classroom, as well.

JL: I couldn't agree with you more. And when you look at it broadly, I think—You mentioned outreach earlier. And one thing that any college or university in America- I think this is not a controversial thing; I think everyone can agree on it. They look in new students, they look for the ability to bring a diversity of thought and lived experience to the classroom, and wherever that comes from. Perhaps unique experiences in high school. You're a nontraditional student. You were, perhaps, in the military before you came to school. You're a mother or a father. All of these things- Maybe you grew up in a country outside of the US and now you're on campus. The ability to have a diversity of thought and lived experience in the classroom is something that, I think, Veterans come ready-made to bring. And there are learning opportunities, etc. But we enrich the classroom *because* of our past experience. Our past experience is not the only thing that is part of our makeup. But, you know, the military is part of the, sort of, complex things that make us the people that we are. And you mentioned outreach being a thing earlier. Here's why, sometimes, I'm almost confused that universities don't recruit us- you know, kind of like your first sergeant said- don't recruit us with the same, you know, excitement and vigor that, perhaps, they do with other student populations. But we just got done studying the impact of the post-9/11 GI Bill. It's called the National Veteran Education Success Tracker. We tracked every post-9/11 GI Bill user from a period of 2009 to the middle of 2015. We cross referenced all of that data- in partnership with the VA, with the National Student Clearing House. So, this is the first of its kind. Public and private partnership between a nonprofit, SVA, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Student Clearing House to get at what's the impact of the post-9/11 GI bill. And here's what we learned, and what I think colleges and universities can use as an outreach and, dare I say, recruitment strategy for this population of students, i.e. student Veterans. Student Veterans, you know, as I mentioned earlier, you know, we come with the ability to pay for school. Whether that's at our not-for-profit public or private school, we come with the ability to pay. And even at some private schools, what the GI Bill doesn't cover, there's the Yellow Ribbon Program, etc.

TL: Yeah.

JL: But coming with the ability to pay in higher education is a unique concept. The second thing is, our population of student Veterans have a higher propensity towards STEM, business, and health-related fields.

And it accounts for over half of all student Veteran majors in the country, which colleges and universities are really trying to find folks for those majors. We have a better academic performance than our civilian counterparts. So, the national GPA right now is a respectable 3.11; for Veterans in a higher education, it's a 3.35. So, you know, our brothers and sisters in arms who are student Veterans in the classrooms right now, by the metric of academic performance of a GPA, are doing really well in the classroom. And that, as it pertains to persistence to a degree, the overall success rate for Veterans in higher education is 72%. It's higher than any other cohort of students in higher education. So, the question, for me, in higher-ed is- Should be, "How can we get more student Veterans on our campus?" Not, you know, "Are they going to have all of these issues and challenges and problems?" Because, despite any of these challenges- which I believe are more to do with the fact that we're nontraditional students- we are not only overcoming them, but we are triumphant over them and we're doing really well. And when we're doing really well, we're working better with those that we might see that are, you know, "Hey. Hey, brother. Hey, sister. Come with me." You know? And so, from, like, an outreach strategy, from a diversity of thought and lived experience in the classroom, we enrich our classrooms when we're there as student Veterans, which definitely carries over to the leadership aspects that we bring out of the campus community, but even the community at large and, really, the bigger picture is to the whole country. We're leaders, we're civic assets. And, you know, we are adding degrees to all of that experience to make us, literally, tomorrow's leaders. I mean, that's SVA: yesterday's warriors, today's scholars –

TL: Yeah.

JL: tomorrow's leaders.

TL: Something, I think, that doesn't, uh- You don't expect when you become a student Veteran is- I realize that being an adult that did adult things prior to- not that students aren't adults- but, you know, like, you're coming out of an adult life. You know—

JL: Sure.

TL: coming into the classroom, my relationship with my professors- whether they were good or bad, like, whether I viewed them as a 'good' professor or 'bad' professor, whether they liked me, didn't like me- it was still an easier relationship to maintain and manage than, I noticed, compared to my younger peers.

JL: Absolutely.

TL: To where I could approach a professor that I didn't agree with and be, like, "I don't think- Like, this, I don't agree with this," or, you know, "I know you want us to do this. I'd really rather not. Here's my proposal on what I'd rather do, instead." And, I think, a lot of that comes from the military. You're prepared to- You're prepared for confrontation, you know? Like, your superiors never want you to come with a problem unless you have a solution, right? And so, you go into the professor's office already prepared for that. And I never looked at my professors as a higher rank, per se, if we're comparing to the military.

JL: Sure.

TL: I looked at them as a peer that had a higher billet.

JL: Mhmm.

TL: You know what I mean? So, whereas, I think, traditional college students are coming out of high school, look at the teacher as, like, a higher rank. Like, they look at them as a boss—

JL: Mhmm.

TL: in some ways. Whereas I was, like, "You and I are the same age. You just have this higher billet than I do." —

JL: Sure.

TL: "So, I'm going to respect that, but we're going to talk to each other like we're both, like, 28 years old."

JL: [Laughter] Absolutely.

TL: 'Cause we are. [Laughter]

JL: Right? Well it's one of those things. So, what you're describing is nontraditional students, right?

TL: Yeah.

JL: And, I think, that that's not something whole-heartedly unique to student Veterans. I think it's to any 28-year-old student who's working

on their undergrad is going to, kind of, come at that scenario from that angle. And, I think, that the military experience prepares us- perhaps even better than some other nontraditional students- for exactly those conversations. I mean, the, 'Don't come to me with a problem without a solution'. Right? That resonates—

TL: Yeah.

JL: so strongly. You know, I know that if I could ever give advice to any student Veteran, it's: go to office hours at least once every semester with every professor you have.

TL: Yep.

JL: Because that ability to, kind of, get to know—

TL: Early on, too.

JL: you professor- Oh, yes.

TL: Yep.

JL: As soon as- At the beginning of the semester. But it's- You bring up an interesting point because, you're right. Student Veterans, I think, have a propensity to relate to folks that are closer in age to them who wind up being- whether it's our TAs, or our professors—

TL: Mhmm.

JL: or the administration, faculty, and staff- those are the people that are, just, are closer in age to us, right?

TL: Yeah.

JL: But here's one of the things where, I think, it's, kind of, a cool opportunity: the military also prepared us as leaders. I mean, you know, no one starts in the military as, like, the boss of everything, right? You know, we all start at the beginning, we build up with the unit. And then, from there- increasingly- we gain rank and responsibility, which is how we learn leadership. What I find very interesting is that an awful lot of student Veterans that are in the country right now are between the ages of 24 and 35, some a little older. Just a few semesters ago, there was a student Veteran that graduated from the University of Southern California who was a WWII Veteran. So, I mean, it's all ages.

TL: That's cool.

JL: But, like, you know, you're going to find the lion's share between those ages. That means we're millennials, right? And we actually have- as a result of our military experience- we have experience leading people younger than us who are more junior and have, frankly, a closer connection to high school than they do the Marine Corps or the Navy. Right? I'm talking about the new guys and gals that show up to the command that, now, you're put in charge of. In a weird way, when you're on a college campus, you know, we find a lot of student Veterans actually feel like, "Well, shoot. I'm an NCO or a petty officer again," You know?

TL: Yeah.

JL: "And these are the new folks that I have the opportunity to, kind of, mentor and guide." And, in so doing, you might also find, "Well, shoot. We're both studying for the same chemistry exam, but, like, you're a little bit more academically in the mix of things. I've been out of academics for eight years." That becomes a good person to study with, this 20-year-old that, like—

TL: Sure.

JL: perhaps you didn't relate to the same way. And it's really interesting to wind up hearing the conversations that they have because, in some ways, they, kind of, look up to you in the same way they view their professor. And, like, "Hey. I have this life question." And you're like, "Well, hey, man. I've been through that; I can help you with that." I mean, just like you did as an NCO, or petty officer, or, you know, a junior military officer when you were on active duty- You have, really, those same opportunities, whether you're enlisted or an officer when you come back to the college environment.

TL: Sure.

JL: And that's another thing that we do. I mean, we are helping to improve our overall campus environment because you can't help still being a leader. You don't shake that off. That's with you now for life as a result of your military service, which I think is really cool.

TL: Yeah. Last question pertaining to—

JL: 'Kay.

TL: being a student Veteran: what skills, talents, disciplines, etc. did you acquire in the military that you think directly affected your success as a student Veteran?

JL: So, the first is problem solving. The second is the ability to make a decision. And the third is "don't let the great be the enemy of good, you know?"

TL: Let's focus on that second one. I've never heard that one quite before. The ability to make a decision. Why is that important as a student Veteran?

JL: So, I think that it's important because when you come to a college environment, whether you're doing a group project with, inherently, folks that are probably traditional students more so than, you know- It would be rare to find yourself in a group where, like, everyone in my group is a student Veteran, right?

TL: Yeah.

JL: And, you know, I don't think it's unique to what branch you serve in in the military, but you do have to make decisions in the military. Not always under the easiest of circumstances, not always in environments that are, you know, what folks would say are 'comfortable'. And it gives you an ability that, I think, separates you from traditional students in a positive way because you can figure out whatever the problem is and be able to get the group to a decision in a group project. You can be working as a chapter leader and realizing that, like, "Well, if we just go back and forth all the time, we're never going to get to action if we can't make a decision." You know, 80% today is better than 100% never, you know? And so, you go with the ability to make a decision to impact, whether it be change or action as it pertains to your own academic plan. As it pertains to, like, group projects that you're a part of or other clubs or groups that you'd be involved with in your campus community. And it's something that, I think- Even employers, you know, tout Veterans as, like, wonderful additions to their workforce for our ability to actually make decisions. And, I think, that's something that directly is attributed from our military service that we bring with us into our civilian lives, specifically in higher education and then, even after graduation, as we transition into a career. Being able to make a decision is, really- is, really a valuable skillset that, maybe, not everyone

in our American society has the experience doing and the comfort with doing.

TL: Sure.

JL: And that's something that's a differentiator in a big way when we're student Veterans.

TL: Sure. Last question of the interview. But one- unrelated to SVA, student Veterans- but one I really like asking people—

JL: Sure.

TL: in the Veteran space. Name me one or two Veterans inside the Veteran space, whether they're in an organization or elsewhere, that you look up to or that have you really excited right now. That you're, like, really impressed by the work they're doing.

JL: Yeah. Without a doubt, Jake Wood at Team Rubicon and Blayne Smith at team RWB. So, at SVA, you know, we all work together. I think that's very common with the post-9/11 organizations, from Mission Continues to the ones I just mentioned. IVA, Got Your 6, etc. We all work really well together. But Jake for a unique reason. As a social entrepreneur, Jake is an enlisted Veteran who is running a really amazing organization that's doing important work by harnessing the abilities of Veterans and focusing on the strengths that we bring home with us and into society once we take the uniforms off. And Blayne- You know, Blayne is one of these guys who- I don't know if you've ever heard one of Blayne's podcasts or—

TL: I have.

JL: or just hear Blayne speak. One of the coolest voices for radio ever.

TL: [Laughter]

JL: But Blayne is somebody that I look up to in the manner that, you know, Blayne is from small town Florida. You know, gets an appointment to West Point, goes on to serve in the Army, and then later special forces. And then, later, transitions out, goes to grad school, does the corporate gig for a while. But then, realizes that, like, the ability to help Veterans find their purpose after taking off the uniform and doing something that focuses on the positive attributes is really rather cool. So, those are

two guys that, like, you know, I consider colleagues and peers. But that, I think, are giants in this space—

TL: Yeah.

JL: and that I admire a great deal.

TL: Yeah, I've had Blayne Smith on the podcast before. And, you're right. That voice just works so well for audio.

JL: He's, like, the best at it.

TL: Yeah. And I've interviewed Jake Wood for other efforts. And what him and William McNulty have done with Team Rubicon is- It's, just, incomparable to- You know, I feel like they're just in their own lane.

JL: Absolutely.

TL: And they're, just- And they're nailing it. It's great.

JL: All day long. Yeah.

TL: Yeah. Jared, thank you so much for joining me. I know we went over a bit on the proposed time, but we had such a good time talking—

JL: I appreciate it, brother.

TL: to each other. I really appreciate it.

JL: Thank you very much.

TL: Thank you for your service, not only to our country, but to our student Veterans here at SVA. I really appreciate it.

JL: Well, and to you, the same. And as a former chapter leader and somebody that's working to engage the Veteran space broadly and Veterans, thank you. I really appreciate it, brother.

TL: Of course.

[00:57:06] Music

[00:57:11] PSA:

- Man 1:** I served in Vietnam.
- Man 2:** I served in World War II.
- Woman 1:** I served in Afghanistan.
- Man 1:** And VA serves us all.
- Man 2:** No matter when you served...
- Woman 1:** No matter if you saw combat or not...
- Man 1:** There are benefits for Veterans of every generation.
- Woman 1:** See what VA can do for you.
- Narrator:** To learn what benefits you may be eligible for, visit www.va.gov [Link to VA's website]. That's www.va.gov.

[00:57:38] Music

[00:57:40] CLOSING MONOLOGUE:

- TL:** Two things I want to highlight following Jared's interview. The first is: if you're interested in joining or starting an SVA chapter at your school, go to StudentVeterans.org [Link to SVA's website] and use their chapter directory to see who the contact is at your school. Inquire with them and get involved. The second is: www.benefits.VA.gov/GIBill [Link to VA's Education and Training page]. That is a site that has a lot of information regarding the GI Bill, including ways that you can choose a school and assistance in applying for benefits. Today's Veteran of the Day is Navy Veteran, Jeremy Holt. Jeremy served as a gunner's mate from 1999 to 2003. Jeremy deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom during his service. He was on the USS San Jacinto when he saved lives and his unit from a hydrogen sulfide leak on board by alerting officials immediately. Thank you for your service, Jeremy. To see Jeremy's full write-up [Link to Jeremy's write-up: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/35185/navy-veteran-jeremy-holt/>] and to learn how to nominate your own Veteran of the Day, visit blogs.VA.gov [Link to VA's blog page]. That wraps up Episode 18. I want

to thank you all for listening. I know there are a lot of options out there for entertainment, so I appreciate you spending your time with these Veterans and their stories. If you have any questions you'd like to have answered here on the show, please tweet them to us using #VAPodcast or email- email them to us, newmedia@VA.gov [VA media email address]. Be sure to follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/VeteransAffairs [Link to VA's Facebook page] for more stories from our community. I'm Timothy Lawson, signing off.

[00:59:07] Music

(Text transcript ends)