

TRANSCRIPT – CHARLES MAXWELL

Interviewee: CHARLES MAXWELL

Interviewer: KIERAN W. TAYLOR

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KIERAN TAYLOR: I've turned it on, and just to start us out, could you say for the sake of the recording, your name and when and where you were born?

CHARLES MAXWELL: I'm Charles A. Maxwell, better known as Chuck, and I was born in Denver, Colorado, July 1962. That's when my father was in the Air Force, he was stationed out in Colorado, and he stayed out there until my sister was born. And I think in '64 is when he got out of the Air Force and came back home to Charleston. My mother and he just picked the family up and he got out of the Air Force, and went back home to Charleston. That's where, you know, we're natives, he's native, I'm a native Charlestonian. Although, I was born in Colorado, but Charleston is home.

KT: Tell me about the Maxwells in Charleston. What do you know about the grandparents? Are both your parents are Charlestonians?

CM: Yes, both parents are. My father's no longer living. He passed away when I was 17. My mother's still living in Ladson, South Carolina. And the Maxwell side of the family, my father's side, very proud, but both sides very proud families, but the Maxwell side had a lot of history in there because I remember my great-great -- no, no, my great-grandfather, Charles Maxwell, he was a chauffeur for a doctor or for a well-to-do business person in Charleston for a long time.

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And he always chauffeured this gentleman around, wherever he needed to go. And before the gentleman died, the gentleman gave the house, or gave a house on Coming Street to my grandfather, and my great-aunt, Aunt Laura Maxwell. She never married. Laura Maxwell, she inherited that house. I remember that house. Growing up in that house as one of the small street fronts, and then long property, the traditional Charleston house with the lawn porches and everything. I remember playing in that house, and my father, when he came back from the Air Force, he left some furniture from Colorado and put it in Laura's place. And that house is now, from what I understand, it's a historical marker. It's got a historical marker on it, or something like that.

KT: Would you remember the cross street, Coming and...?

CM: I vaguely remember Coming Street. She moved out of that house because taxes got too high. She moved to Rutledge Avenue, where she lived there and passed away on Rutledge Avenue, in a nice house on Rutledge Avenue. And so, then my father's father, he was a laborer. He worked at the paper mill in Charleston. Everyone knows the paper mill, because you can't miss it. You smell the paper mill. He worked in that area. My grandfather, my father's father, Charles Maxwell, he passed away at a young age, in his fifties or something like that, from heart conditions.

And I just remember him and Grandpa. And they had a house on Spruill Avenue, and the house was destroyed when Hugo came around. So, that part, that part is gone. And that's, as far as the -- then my mother's side, which is the Bryants, and then the Montgomerys. Those were my great-grandparents, who I was thankful to know them for quite a long time. They're from small Lake City, South Carolina, in between Florence and Kingstree. And the house that my great-grandparents grew up in, or my great-

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grandfather built, and the little piece of land he used right next to it for corn that he farmed, that's still in the family and it's been there, it's still there to this day.

KT: In Lake City.

CM: In Lake City, South Carolina. The house is still there. They were just humble black people, trying to do well in the country, and it was a segregated South.

KT: Who made the jump to the city on your mom's side?

CM: My grandmother, Elise Bryant. My grandmother came from Lake City. No, she met my grandfather in Lake City area, South Carolina. Then, they moved to Charleston, South Carolina, North Charleston at the time, Montague Avenue. And my grandfather, he worked as a porter on the railroad. Which, you can see a lot of these stories, as far as how black people lived in the south and were able to get jobs. He worked on the railroad, so I remember him, the house was just a walk away from the Amtrak train station in Charleston, so he would walk back and forth to work.

KT: Was he a Pullman porter, or was he working on the rail line somehow?

CM: No, he was a Pullman porter. He didn't ride the trains. He just handled the luggage and that kind of thing during his time at the Charleston Amtrak station.

KT: Your father would have been born about what year?

CM: My father was born in the early '40s. Then he went to -- I forget, the school was called Immaculate Conception High School, and it was one of the few black schools -- one of the few Catholic schools that allowed black children to go there. He and my sisters - I mean his sisters, my aunts, attended that school. And they always described it, they always smiled and called it the school with the swinging comb because of one's hair being good hair. If the comb didn't go through your hair smoothly, you weren't allowed

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into the school. And you had to be of a certain stature or certain image or certain breed, for lack of a better word, at that time to attend that school.

KT: So, probably an over-representation of light-skinned African Americans.

Now, was the family Catholic?

CM: I know my grandmother, his mother, I call her Mimi, she was AME, African and Methodist Episcopalian, and my father, he was in Catholic school for a bit. So was my aunt or his two sisters. And I was christened a Catholic when I was little, when I was first born, christened a Catholic. I remember - I don't remember, but they told me about that. And then father decided to become Baptist, and my mother joined a Baptist church and he joined the same church. And then I got baptized at Charity Baptist Church on Montague Avenue, which is the same street that my mother grew up on.

KT: Who do you think made the decision to send them to IC?

CM: It was probably my -- I don't know, my grandfather maybe? I don't know. I haven't any idea. That, I don't know. I remember, as far as being influential or being -- or having some stature in Charleston, my uncle, the Watsons, that's my grandmother's maiden name, the Watsons in Charleston. Theodore Watson, Teddy Watson, Uncle Teddy's my great uncle, and he was a big wig in the Shriners.

I remember going to see him in parades on East Bay Street, riding around on the back of the big fifties cars with the tail fins, and he's throwing out candy to us, and everything else, with a sword and a Shriners cap, with the little tassel hanging off of it. He'd look for us, and throw us candy when we went to the parades. From what I understand, he was a big wig in the city court system in Charleston, being a black man in Charleston. One of the stories I could tell about Uncle Teddy, he lived on Nunan Street,

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and he had -- you know, the cars were huge back then, you know, massively long cars.

And I remember my uncle Teddy, because he always had to back out of his driveway to get onto Nunan Street, and it was a two-way street with opposing traffic. And he got tired of trying to see when he couldn't see, you know, trying to back out. So, he made the street one-way, and Nunan Street is one-way because of him, so he could get out, back his car out, and go off on Nunan Street.

KT: So, he had some political pull with someone, huh?

CM: Yeah, and I don't know what the huge story -- I don't know what the big story is on that. I wish I knew more; I just remember little bits about Uncle Teddy.

KT: So, your father then, coming up and - I don't know how much of this he would have shared with you - but then he would have been about -- you said he was born in the early '40s?

CM: Right. When I was born, he was nineteen years old, my mother was eighteen.

KT: Did he go right into the military after IC?

CM: I'm pretty certain he went in right after high school, because he and my mother were dating at that time and went in after high school.

KT: So, he would have gone in circa '59 or so.

CM: Yeah. And then yeah, about that time, maybe '60 or so, maybe. Excuse me, I'm trying to figure -- about '60, '61 maybe, because about '64 is when he got out. Because my sister was born in '63, and it was right after she was born he got through with the Air Force and we came back home.

KT: Came back to Charleston. What did he do back in Charleston?

CM: He then worked at an AVCO, which was some construction company,

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manufacturing company, which is in Dorchester, off Dorchester Road. He worked at AVCO. And then he was there at AVCO for a while, working on helicopter engines. I remember that. And he got laid off. He and a whole bunch of other people got laid off at that time, and I remember that was tough for our family at that time.

My mother and father were working, and then he got laid off at AVCO. Looking back on those days, my mother and father, and there were four kids, and it was tough then. I remember him doing janitorial jobs. I remember him working as a stocker at Red and White Grocery Store on Rivers Avenue, near Midland Park Road in North Charleston, and my mother held down a job in the day. I forgot what she did during the day, but as soon as she would come home, she would go right back out a couple hours later and sell Tupperware, and then dealing with balancing four kids and us and babysitters and everything.

I grew up for the first thirteen years -- well, when we moved back to Charleston, we grew up in a trailer. My father bought a trailer. I remember when we were sitting in -- the trailer was put onto a plot of land on Midland Park Road, not far from Charleston Air Force Base. And they were tying down the trailer and all this, that and the other. And my mother was in there with us.

The land was part of the land that my uncle, his uncle, my great-uncle Teddy owned. And I grew up in that trailer with my three sisters. There wasn't a lot of room, because my sisters and I, we shared bunk beds in one room. One of my sisters and I slept in the lower bunk, and the other two slept in the top bunk.

KT: That was home until you were thirteen?

CM: Until my father got a job at -- I think he got the job at South Carolina

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Electric and Gas, and then we moved to a doublewide trailer. He bought a doublewide.

And then I had my own room for the first time in my life. I was thirteen, fourteen years old. And then an argument came up in the family that my uncle wanted the property back and we couldn't stay on the property anymore.

And we'd only been in the trailer for less than fourteen months, less than a year, a year or fourteen months. Some big brouhaha happened, and then my father found because he worked his way up in South Carolina Electric and Gas, Bushy Park, he was able to buy a house in a subdivision in College Park in Ladson. College Park Estates, in Ladson. And that's where I went from seventh grade on through high school, through The Citadel, and Mother's still there now.

KT: Your dad passed away while you were in high school?

CM: Yeah, I was seventeen. He died ten days before Christmas, December 15.

KT: At the age of about thirty-eight.

CM: Thirty-nine. And how that happened -- yeah, thirty-nine years old. He was (in) a car accident. He was coming home from work, and I ask stories about this. I vaguely remember, before my father passing away, a year or so before that time, he would say to us, the kids, and yell at my mother every once in a while, "I'm not going to be here all this time. I'm not going to be here for you all, for all your lives, so you've got to learn how to do this, you've got to learn how to do that." He pulled me and taught me how to change spark plugs in a car. "You've got to learn how to do this because I'm not going to be here. I'm not going to be on earth for your entire life."

And the stories, as I grew older, which in my thirties and forties, I started asking questions because it was only until then I felt secure in asking what was really going on.

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And he had a heart condition, plus he smoked. And he had a heart condition. He was taking medication, and we didn't find the medication. He was secretly taking medication. His cousin, who I call an uncle and consider an uncle, but his cousin told me that -- I asked him, "Well, did he kill himself?"

I remember one time, going through my parents' closet, and I saw all the insurance papers, all the insurance packages, there were six of them or so, and they were stacked up and tied up, on top of the important papers box. It wasn't in the box; it was sitting on top of it. And I began thinking, and I even thought, I said, "Did he commit suicide or what?" And my uncle said, "No, no, no. No, he just knew he was dying because the medication made him large. His heart wasn't well, and this, that, and the other. He just knew he wasn't well. He knew that his time was short." And that's what happened. He caught the heart attack while in the car, and the car veered off the road, hit a dumpster. My mother went out to look for him because he was supposed to be home on a midnight shift. And went to look, went driving to the place, and she saw the accident scene and got close, and got to the cops, and the cops finally asked what her name is.

And she said it, so they pulled her off to the side so she wouldn't see him. And then she came back in early in the morning and brought us all in the living room and just said, "Your father's dead." Of course, you know, that was a major shock. She looked at me, and she said, "You're the man of the house." And I didn't want to hear that. I went to my room and closed the door. I don't want to hear that. So, you know, here I am, right now forty-eight, and I've lived nine-plus years more than my father.

KT: (Sighs slowly).

CM: And I make sure I take care of myself because my grandfather died of heart

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issues, my father died of heart issues. So, I'm very much making sure I take care of myself the best way I can. But my father was a great man. He taught me a lot.

There was a time when we found out that we had a stepsister, who was born in Denver, Colorado, so that affair was while my mother was pregnant with me, that liaison happened with my father and my stepsister's mother. And she called up, the mother called up, and my mother got to answer the phone, dealt with the call, and hung up the phone and said, "Well, now you all know you have another sister." We're going, "Who, what, where, when? When did all this happen?"

KT: How old were you?

CM: Fourteen, fifteen, around that age. I'm still in touch with them now, even when it all, you know, when the whole, I guess, drama happened. And that's one thing I learned about my father. He was always a very -- he was a man of high integrity. And I try to carry that with me wherever I go and try to act and be as he taught me to be.

When it happened, I remember he brought all of us in the kitchen, and he told us, he said, "Yes, this is what went on. This is what happened. This is her name. This is that and the other." And then he took me out in the garage and talked to me father to son. He said, "I'm embarrassed to say this in front of you. I made a mistake." I said, "Daddy, no don't worry about it." He said, "I just wanted to let you know." That's all, he was holding back tears and I could tell that it hurt him to say that to his son, but that just showed my father's integrity, which I still hold true, or try to hold true to this day. Then that's the only thing. We weren't a very rich family. But integrity: the only thing you can take to your grave is your integrity and your character. I'm trying to keep that as intact as best as I can.

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KT: Your mom is left then, she's thirty-eight, with four children then?

CM: Yeah, thirty-eight, thirty-seven, with four kids, yeah, raising four kids.

KT: I assume extended family, were they able to step up?

CM: Some help, and then, who really stepped up was my uncle. He's actually my father's cousin, but everyone have always known him as Uncle B. And Uncle B. I didn't know at the time, but then Uncle B was gay. He came into my room when the funeral arrangements and all that was happening before the funeral, and he asked me what was I going to do with my life, and what's going on about school and all that. "Hell, if I know, I'm just trying to deal with this now."

He said, "Well, I want you to do -- during your summer, I want you to come and spend time with me in New York." He lived at 210 Central Park South, in Manhattan, which is on the sixteenth floor, apartment sixteen-A. Imagine Columbus Circle, and you've got 210 Central Park South, sixteenth floor. You've got Central Park all laid out in front of you, no obstructions and all of Central Park laid out in front of you. You can see Fifth Avenue on your right-hand side, and Central Park West going up till you get all the way up to Harlem and up to Westchester on your left-hand side, and the park laid out there.

He was an art dealer, an art collector. He had his own business, Ben Johnson Fine Arts. And his partner was Ethan Air, and Ethan Air's family came over on the Mayflower. Ethan was an author, a playwright. He wrote a book that I have tucked away somewhere, *If Love is a Leopard*. He's conducted plays, directed plays, wrote plays and that kind of thing. And Ethan lived not far from Harvard. Ethan's house was on Brattle Street in Boston, which is right across -- that was the girls' college.

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The girls' college was right across the street on the other side. Not on Brattle Street side, but on the other street. And it was a beautiful building called Stoughton House. The name of the house was called Stoughton House. It was a very important home, because the house next to him was some Supreme Court Justice. I forgot who it was. And, it was through Ethan and my uncle that I came out about my sexuality to them.

KT: So, had you ever visited them in New York before?

CM: I visited my uncle many times before. I've got relatives -- a lot of my relatives because they were part of the Black Flight, leaving the South going to the North.

KT: Your uncle would have left then, as a young man.

CM: My uncle, he was born in New York. He was born in Harlem.

KT: Had you always -- I mean, not always, but as a teenager, were you aware that he was gay?

CM: No, I just knew him as Uncle B. I didn't have any thoughts about that. The rest of the family, back in the 60s and 70s, it was one of those things you didn't discuss.

KT: But you did go up there that summer.

CM: I went up there that summer, and that's the first time I'd ever been to New York City. And here's this South Carolina boy going to New York, going to Manhattan, and to the middle of Manhattan, and just getting blown away. I mean my mind just -- and I'm glad he did that, which is what I want to do with my four nieces and nephews, not to the effect of New York, but to the extent here as in Atlanta, and just blow their minds, and say you can have a better life than growing up in South Carolina.

With all due respect to South Carolina, I'm glad I grew up in South Carolina. South Carolina taught me a lot. Sadly, in my opinion, it's the most racist state in the

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nation. That's my opinion. The latest example, you look at this Congressman [Joe Wilson] who told President Obama, "You lie." And when I saw that happen on TV, I told my partner, I said, "I bet he's from the South. And I tell you what, I'll put my next three paychecks on it, that he's from South Carolina." And my partner said, "Well, how could you say that?" I said, "You watch." I said, "My next three paychecks, I bet that he's from South Carolina." Sure enough, in the next paper, boom. I said, "See?" I know South Carolina. It's a great state. It's a beautiful state. There's a lot of pride in it, but there's a reality of South Carolina. So, you know, there we are. But I went to New York.

KT: What did you do that summer?

CM: Oh, God. Oh, man. Met Randy, who was the cowboy in the Village People.

KT: I guess this is just at the time that the Village! -- Your uncle introduces you to Randy? (Laughs).

CM: Uhuh. I met artists. I met-- we went to a nightclub. I forgot where it was. I mean, I'm looking down the balcony. I'm looking off this balcony on sixteen floors up, and that's wiggling me out because I'd never been sixteen floors up. There's nothing sixteen floors up in Charleston, at that time. I'm just mesmerized by looking at all these taxicabs, not paying attention to the lines on the road. They're just doing their own thing. And seeing all the limos, it was just-- and then we get out into the street and we'd walk -- we went walking down Fifty-Ninth Street, walking toward the Plaza Hotel, on the corner of Fifty-Ninth and Fifth Avenue. And across from the Plaza is the big Catholic church, I forgot, the main Catholic Church in New York. St. Phillip's? St. Patrick's? I can't remember.

KT: St. Patrick's Cathedral.

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CM: St. Patrick's Cathedral, right across the street from the Plaza Hotel that Trump used to own, and all this, that and the other. I met Donald Trump, one of my other few times -- this was before I graduated. Before I graduated from the Citadel, I was at the St. Moritz Hotel having drinks with one of my uncle's friends, and I just -- peripheral vision just saw the elevator doors open and I look, I said, "Holy Crap, there's Donald and Ivana Trump."

I said, "Excuse me." I got up and I went over and introduced myself to Donald and Ivana Trump. I said, "Hey, I know you wouldn't recognize me," this, that and the other. Anyway, so going back to when I first went to New York, this was 1979, 1980 because I graduated high school in 1981. We went to this nightclub, and my uncle--he always had VIP access, so we went -- they opened the ropes and we walked straight up to the VIP suite, and I'm just freaked out. Not freaked out, but it's just all this stimulus was just into me of New York, versus where I grew up in Charleston.

There was this one lady - I won't forget - she had on this very skimpy bikini thing. She had a shawl on and high heels, and she (microphone interference) hoops or chains or something that went from the back of her bikini, and it came up over her shoulders, and then she had each breast through a larger hoop that poked through a larger hoop of the same chain, that held up her bikini. And she had a shawl on, and I saw that. I said, "This is too much." My uncle looked at me and said, "What?" I said, "Look at her." He just started laughing because I'm seeing New York through these eyes, and he's just having this wild time watching this little country boy flip out in New York City.

He had his ex-wife there, Gay, I forgot. Gay Wheeler, his ex-wife, but they remained friends. He lived at Central Park South and Fifty-Ninth Street, and she was just

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a walk away on Fifty-Eighth Street, in a high-rise there. She had an antique shop on Eighth Avenue, I think? It was on Eighth Avenue. She had an antique shop there, and my uncle and I would go over to Gay's antique shop, and we would take Budweiser beer, sit in the back of her antique shop and just drink while we're just talking, watching people going back and forth, coming in.

We had lunch one time, and my uncle looked at -- he'd look over at me, and I'm still doing this wide-eyed thing, soaking all this stimulus in. He said, you know, "Chuckie," that's my family name. He says, "Chuckie's been on this kaleidoscope ever since he's been here." And Gay looked and I said, "But, my God, there's always something happening around here." She said, "Well, this is New York." One night, we were coming out of his apartment to get a cab, and he said, "Let's walk for a little bit." So, we started walking.

And as we got out, and it was ten o'clock, eleven o'clock at night, but all these people were everywhere. Ten o'clock, eleven o'clock at night in Charleston, they're rolling up the streets and just saying good night. In New York, they're just starting, as you know. And I said, "What's going?" And I got scared because all this movement was happening. He said, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "Where are these people going? What's happening?" He said, "Relax, it's New York." "Where are they going?" "They're doing whatever they do." "But it's ten-something at night." "It's New York." Then he decided to play with me. He said, "Guess what?" I said, "What?" He said, "You see all these people that are up here?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "There are just as many below you." I went, "Really!" I flipped out, and he's talking about the subways, right. So, I just stood back, looking at the ground, "Where?"

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I didn't know subways. There are no subways in Charleston. When we went walking around in New York, I didn't know how to negotiate a revolving door. He went through a revolving door, and I jumped in with him. He said, "What are you doing? What are you doing in here?" I said, "This isn't what you're supposed to do?" "No." We're riding and all these people were looking. I decided -- he taught me a lot. He really taught me a lot. He really taught me a lot. My father and mother and the whole family, everybody taught me a lot of character, of faith, God, politeness, all the basic things, sadly, that a lot of kids are missing these days. But my uncle taught me about life. That's amazing. I'm sorry I went off on that major tangent.

KT: No, not at all. That's got to be a pivotal summer in terms of the rest of your life.

CM: And I kept going back, of course, going back to New York, visiting my uncle again. And when I graduated high school, and I knew I got accepted to The Citadel, and I told my uncle and said that I wanted to -- I took one month off for every year I was at The Citadel because I wanted to live. I wanted to be on my own, you know, coming out of The Citadel. I wanted to have some time before I went into the Air Force.

And I told my uncle, I asked him if I could come stay in New York for the four months before I got in the Air Force. And he said, "Well, what are you going to do when you get up here?" I said, "Well, I'll find a job and just work until it's time for me to go." And he said, "Well, okay, sure." So, I'd go up to New York. He told me a long time ago, my uncle did, he told me a long time ago to get my passport. And so, I got my passport a year or two before that. And I get there and a couple of days after I'm there, I hear him speaking Italian on the phone.

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And then one last call, and he finished, and he said, “Good, that’s taken care of.” I said, “What’s going on?” He said, “I’m going to Rome.” And I’m thinking. And he looked at me, he saw the smile start to come over my face. And he said, “And you’re not going.” I said, “Really?” He said, “What did you say you were going to do when you came here? You told me that you were going to come up here, find yourself a job, and this, that and the other. You’re going to stick to what you said. Now, if you said you wanted to come travel, you would be with me.” I’m going, “Damn!”

But he held me to what I said, and that really taught me a lot, too, because I had never been on my own. I had always been with my family or been at school. I had never been -- and even at The Citadel. And there was one seminal moment, when I knew that really, that Chuck Maxwell was on his own. I remember he -- the day before, or a couple of days before he left for Italy, we went shopping and he put food in the apartment, because he didn't cook in the apartment.

He had all the restaurants to go to in New York. We went to some wonderful swank restaurants. Jean Lafitte and oh, man, great restaurants. So he never had food there. So, he put food in the apartment. And my aunt was just a walk away. If I got into any issues, I could go talk to her, plus my college friends, one of them lived in Long Island, who knew my uncle’s name, was Pete. And Pete’s blond haired and blue eyed, and whenever I wasn’t around, he would hang out with my uncle. And people would look funny at the two of them, when Pete would say, “Uncle B, what about this?” And so, they were trying to figure out this blond haired, blue-eyed kid calling this black guy uncle.

That’s just how close Pete and I are to this day. If I was to show a picture of him, he’d say, “That’s Uncle B.” We were very close. His kids call me Uncle Chuck, which is

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fun. He left the apartment, the limo was waiting for him downstairs, and (makes a popping sound) he was gone. I remember looking in the apartment and looking over Central Park. "I'm in New York by myself. What the hell am I going to do?"

So, I went down to Wall Street looking for jobs there, and I had two offers, but I didn't follow through with them because they had lie detector tests, and I would have passed them, but there was one question on the lie detector test that said, or that I asked, because they told me what the questions would be, "Are you withholding any information from your employer that you feel is important that he or she should know?" And I'm thinking I'm just going to be here for a couple of months.

And growing up, always tell the truth. Citadel: "You will not lie, cheat, or tolerate it among us who do." That was in my head. I said I'm not going to lie. I'm not going to lie. So, I canceled both of those. My uncle got ticked off. And then he said "go over to -- I got a friend who works in a restaurant, go to this restaurant and talk with him." I went to the restaurant. I met the manager there, and they said, "No, we're not really looking for anybody, and this kind of thing." And I said, "Well, my uncle, Ben Johnson asked me to come by and see if you do, and this is his telephone number, if you happen to get an opening, I'll be there." I went back. I was dejected. I was like, "Damn. I need to get money. I need to work." I get a telephone call, and it's the manager calling back, not the owner, the manager.

The owner at that time was Jimmy Armstrong. He said, "Chuck Maxwell, please." I said, "Speaking." He said, "Chuck, are you Ben Johnson's nephew?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Get your ass over here." So, I went back, and he said, "I've heard about you." And I waited tables, which was fun because we were right across the street from

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CBS News, and you know, Dan Rather was in there, all these other people were in there.

KT: Summer of '85, basically.

CM: Yeah, summer of '85. Yeah, so I had a job. I had a place to stay: Central Park Place. I had food to eat. I'd take food from the restaurant. And then I got all these invitations from my uncle because he just knew people in his business. I kept getting his invitations and using his invitations to go to these fabulous parties in these discos all over New York. I went to Madonna's Blonde Ambition, her final night at Blonde Ambition Tour.

She did this big tour. She started and she stopped in New York. It was at the Palladium, she finished up there. I went to that. I met -- my uncle, there's a friend of his who works with a lot of recording -- Latino recording people like Rubén Blades, Willie Colón, I've met those people. I've met -- at the same practice studio, I met Linda Ronstadt. Didn't even know it was her until I went to my friend Kevin. Rubén Blades was walking back in so they could start doing their practicing, and when Kevin said, "What do you think?" And I said, "Think about what?" "You know, the girl you just met." "Oh, Linda, yeah, she's pretty cool." He said, "That's all you have to say?" I said, "Yeah, some girl named Linda." He said, "Chuck, that's Linda Ronstadt." "What?! Really? Oh, my God."

And then they got through practicing, and when she came out, I toned myself down because I acted all starry-eyed when I wasn't around her. But through all the people I've met through my uncle, I've learned how to approach people of that caliber. And I said, "Linda, I'd like to invite you and Willie, and even the band back to my uncle's place. He lives at 210 Central Park South, for cocktails." And all their eyes lit up because

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they knew the address. They said, “Well, we’ve got another gig we’ve got to do, but we’d like to take a rain check on that.” I said, “Oh, sure, whenever.” So, that was --

KT: I mean that’s incredible

CM: I’ve met Iman, the model, Iman.

KT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

CM: I met her. She came, she and a lot of her model friends came back to my uncle’s place. We had wild times.

KT: You’ve partied with Iman. (Laughs).

CM: Wild. I’ve gone to Studio 54, inside the special room at Studio 54. I won’t say what goes on there. I know we’ve got to get back. That whole thing with my uncle --

KT: Well, as tempting as it is, yeah. So, from Studio 54 to the barracks.

CM: Ha!

KT: How did you come to this decision to go to The Citadel?

CM: I wanted to. I wanted to go to an all-male military college.

KT: Graduating from Ladson?

CM: Graduating from Berkeley High School in Moncks Corner, South Carolina. I was in the Air Force ROTC then. I worked my way through the ranks, where I became Squad Commander, the top cadet, I did that. On the drill team, and I was on student council and that kind of thing. I wanted to go Air Force, and I applied to the Air Force Academy and did not make it there, only because my SAT scores weren’t high enough.

Don’t give me a standardized test. Forget it. I took it three times, and got an eight-thirty, as the highest score on a standardized test, so I didn’t get into the Air Force Academy, but scores were high enough to get me into The Citadel as an in-state student.

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And I said “Good, I’m happy.” I remember how I wanted to go -- how I was exposed to The Citadel at first, my father and I were on King Street, and it was just he and I, and I saw these guys in uniform walking around. I said, “Daddy, who are those? What are those guys?” He said, “Where?” I said, “Those guys there, those grey things.” He said, “Oh, those are cadets.” I said, “What are cadets?” And he said, “They’re Citadel cadets. They go to the military college here in Charleston.” I said, “Can I be one?” And he looked at me, and he said, “If you want to,” knowing the history of The Citadel and how many black people are allowed in there.

The Citadel, knowing that, and he said, “Yeah, if you want to.” And then I got the acceptance from The Citadel. But there was a cousin of mine, I can’t remember his last name, but cousin Clarence, I took piano lessons, my sisters and I took piano lessons from cousin Clarence, who lived on Fishburn Street. And he was on the Watson side, my father’s side of the family. And I told him I wanted to go to The Citadel, and he said, “Well, if you are going to The Citadel, you’re going to have to know some people there. And it would be good for you to have an ‘in’ there.”

So, he said, “I want to introduce you to somebody.” And I made the date and the appointment, and then he drove me onto the campus, and then we went into one of the buildings, which I don’t remember at the time. And that’s where I met Captain Coussons for the first time.

KT: He was your first Citadel contact?

CM: My first Citadel contact, Captain Coussons.

KT: So, how do you think Clarence knew Coussons?

CM: Cousin Clarence knew Captain Coussons because Captain Coussons told me

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the story. I didn't get it from cousin Clarence, I got it from Captain Coussons. And Captain Coussons looked at me and he said, "Your cousin here is very well-known at this school, and he held a very high position here at The Citadel." I said, "Well, I didn't know." He said, "Your cousin there was General Mark Clark's valet."

KT: Clarence was Mark Clark's valet.

CM: Valet. My cousin Clarence was Mark Clark's valet.

KT: Wow. And did Clarence ever tell you anything about Mark Clark?

CM: Not a thing. I didn't know all that.

KT: He must have known quite a bit about Mark Clark.

CM: Oh, yeah, I'm certain, yeah, because if he was a valet, yeah, he would have known about General Mark Clark. And that's when I found out that cousin Clarence had that close proximity and had that position on The Citadel campus, a black man. Of course, that's the jobs that black people had back in there. You know, either mowing the lawns, frying chicken, or whatever. But anyway, that's the way it was.

And that's when cousin Clarence introduced me to Captain Coussons, and he said that -- he said, "Well, I'll look for you to come here, and I'm pretty certain you'll do well." I was in a history class somewhere, when I was a knob. It was before the end of the first semester, and Captain Coussons walked in the room and our eyes met, and we had that knowing look with each other, and I didn't want to say anything. I'm a knob. I don't want to be seen. And then, Captain Coussons said, "And Mr. Maxwell," he said, "Gentlemen, you all should know that Mr. Maxwell has some pretty good lineage at this school." And I'm just sitting there, just not wanting anything. And he spoke very highly of that. Then I even, when I was a sophomore and junior, I attended some church services

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with Captain Coussons at the church. I forgot - it was an Episcopal church, I think.

KT: I think that's right.

CM: I think it was an Episcopal church.

KT: But he was very active in his church, yeah.

CM: Yeah, and I attended quite a few. I was an acolyte, and attended services with Captain Coussons quite a few times, when he was there, when I was a Cadet. So, then I get accepted to The Citadel, and of course, the first day, nervous as anything, even though knowing the school.

KT: Did anyone say, "No, you're making a mistake, this place."

CM: The only thing that I got was the words -- I would get these knowing looks, or I'd get these raised eyebrows, and things of, "Well, you know what goes on there." I remember when I had to have -- you had to have a physical to go there. I went to my family pediatrician. And [he said], "I haven't seen you in a while." This, that, and the other, and he sees the application, the physical for the application for The Citadel, he says, "You want to go here?" And he was a white doctor. I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "You know what goes on there." I said, "Yes, Sir." And he said, "It's not an easy place, especially for a black kid as you." And I said, "Yes, Sir, I know."

He said, "Be strong." And I said, "Yes, Sir." So, it was those kinds of things. So, I get to The Citadel. My mother remarried at that time. And unloading my stuff in the Third Battalion. I was assigned to Mike Company. I walked someplace that I wasn't supposed to walk, and the Sergeant -- Cadre Sergeant-- just jumped all over me, giving me all kinds of hell. And peripheral vision, saw my mother starting to walk across over. And at the same time, when she was walking over, Stanley, my stepfather, her second

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husband grabbed her and pulled her back. And I'm thinking, "Thank God." The last thing I need is for her to give some of these people any crap because I got to stay with these people.

I saw her because all she saw was somebody messing with her baby, and she was going to come out, and he pulled her back, and they went away. Thank goodness, that didn't happen because that would not have been nice. And then we started going through matriculation and everything. Then we started going and getting our uniforms. And as I'm going through the uniform lines, getting sized up and this, that and the other, and they have our nametags and everything.

And of course, the ladies in there, the people in there who are doing the sewing are black. And then I see this one lady, she looks at the nametag, she looks up at me. She looked to make sure nobody was around, she said, "This you? You Maxwell?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." "Is Ellen Maxwell your grandmother?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." And she said, "Okay." My grandmother used to be a seamstress in The Citadel. She was a seamstress at The Citadel.

As I was going through the line, I can see where the word had gotten around that Ellen Maxwell's grandson is becoming a cadet at The Citadel. Seeing a black cadet going there, somebody that they knew and all the history that they know of The Citadel being black and everything else, and now they see somebody that they know whose kid has been accepted at The Citadel. I could see this look of pride and smiles on their faces and everything else as I was going through the line. They stayed quiet because they knew not to say anything. So, Ellen Maxwell, my grandmother, was a seamstress at The Citadel. So, I've got some ties in Charleston. My family's -- I'm a Charlestonian.

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KT: Your grandmother, she'd never talked to you about The Citadel or working there.

CM: Never, no. No, they didn't, they kept a lot of that away because it's -- in all the segregation that goes on -- I remember walking on King Street when I was little, with my grandmother after church, my oldest sister and I. After church, we would walk on King Street because everything's closed on Sunday at that time, and we'd window shop. I remember drinking out of a fountain that said, "colored only", on King Street.

And we, as kids, were protected from a lot of this stuff. I remember a lot of whispers going on because they were talking about somebody being lynched, or somebody being chased, or the Klan did this, or this person did something, that kind of thing. And when we lived on Midland Park Road, and off of Rivers Avenue - at the corner of Rivers Avenue and Midland Park - I saw a live Klan rally. It was in the evening, I was nine, eight. I was between seven and nine years old, and we were driving, my mother and father and I, and the kids, we were driving home, and I saw this huge light, a fire, off of Rivers Avenue. "What is that?"

And then, I saw these hoods. I saw the cone hoods, I saw the Confederate Flag, I saw the fiery cross. And I heard all this, that and the other, "nigger" this, you know, "Watch out Nigger, the Klan's getting bigger," and all this, that and the other. I remember my father driving real fast and rushing us inside the trailer. And throughout that whole night, you could hear -- I could hear, or anyone could hear, you know, the Klan, all the hate and everything else that the Klan was doing to scare black people at that time, or to scare whoever they wanted to scare.

KT: And this was like 1970.

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CM: This is 1970, 1969, around in there. And I remember (microphone interference) ten years ago, twelve years ago maybe, it was a bar. This Klan rally was held at a little bar, and I was there, and I saw the stars and bars on the door, and I'm wondering if that place is still there. If that place is still there, I'm going to take a picture of it because that's where I saw a live Klan rally.

KT: This was just ten years ago you were saying?

CM: 1970. Well, ten years ago, ten years, maybe twelve years ago when I went back home.

KT: You saw the spot.

CM: I saw the spot, and that spot, there was this little honky-tonk bar, and it still had the Confederate Flag on the door, stars and bars on the door, and I remember as a kid, that's the location. That's where they had that Klan rally when I was a kid.

KT: So, tell me about knob year.

CM: [disheartened laughs] Shock, awe. I remember maybe the third day, or fourth day I was there, I'm looking through the window. They had the grate on there where you can't break out. I was on Second Division, Second Division in Mike Company. I told myself, "Okay, here I am; you're here now. What are you going to do? Are you going to quit or are you going to move through with this?" I remember the only time I ever doubted myself was just that one time. I decided I'm going to make it. In Mike Company knobs, there were about forty of us knobs, maybe. And there may have been three black Cadets, out of forty knobs in my company.

I got along well with all my classmates. My roommate, he was a load. I'm not going to say his name. Even the upperclassmen knew what piece of crap he was. They

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moved him out and they changed roommates with me and gave me another roommate, so even the upperclassmen knew that I was suffering because of that other guy. But anyway, Chad [Charles H.] Buehring, he's my second roommate, knob year, and I say Chad Buehring's name in memory and honor of him because he was one of the first casualties in Iraq.

He was Lieutenant Colonel. When America went into Iraq for the first time, and they took over this hotel, and then a bomb -- ordinance was targeted toward that certain part of the hotel, and the first Lieutenant Colonel that died there was my roommate, Chad Buehring, in Iraq. That was my roommate, Chad Buehring. So, that war, it hurts. Chad and I played a lot of games, a lot of little games in there with each other. He short-sheeted my bed, and I did this to him, and then he did something else to me. And it's like, "I'm going to get you back." You know those little Vicks nasal inhalers?

KT: Yeah.

CM: I grabbed some Icy Hot and I put it on the Vicks nasal inhaler stuck it back up in his medicine cabinet, and it was me and a good classmate of mine, Mike Thomas. And Chad, we were waiting in the room before we were rolling out, you know, they'd say, "Roll out, knobs," and we'd just go downstairs all at one time. They didn't want to see us straggling around. So, Second Division was the waiting area for all the knobs, and we knew we had formation. So, Chad came in from using the latrine, and he was stuffed up. And he grabbed the Vicks nasal inhaler, and Mike didn't know anything about it.

I knew it was going to happen. He grabbed it and he just took a big hit of the nasal inhaler, and he went, "Wow. This is stronger than I remember it being." And then he took it and put it in the other nostril. He goes, "Wow. What is going on?" He sniffed it. "This

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is Icy Hot! Oh, my God! I'm going to kill you!" And Mike is laughing, I'm laughing. We hear, "Roll out, knobs." We finally go downstairs, and Chad is standing there bracing in formation, and he's sniffing because all his nasal passages -- all his sinuses are red, his eyes are red, he's got tears coming out of his eyes, and this, that and the other.

The upperclassmen, they're messing with us, making sure we're bracing and this, that and the other. "Buehring, what's wrong with you?" "No excuse, Sir." "Well, stop all that." "Sir, Yes, Sir." And Buehring, he kept sniffing again. "Buehring, why are you so red? What's going on with you?" "Sir, no excuse, Sir." "Don't give me that. Sir, if you have a question, make a statement. Go ahead do it." "Sir, my roommate put Icy Hot on my Vicks nasal inhaler." And he went, "What?" And the upperclassmen said, "Maxwell, did you do that?" I said, "Sir, yes, Sir." And he went, "Good job! (claps) Good job, Maxwell!"

KT: You guys do a lot of stuff with Icy Hot, don't you?

CM: Oh, man, it's just an amazing thing, Icy Hot, Q-Tips, Heel and Sole, it's some great stuff. Knob year, I mean it was a challenge because I'd never been - I remember college classes--waiting for my first college class and taking of my first college class, it was English, Colonel Alexander, who is no longer with us. Great man, he gave me some very good advice because he saw, as me being a black cadet at the school, he was old and crotchety. He was probably from the Class of '10, I mean he - but a great man, wonderful man. He joked around with me in class every once in a while.

And here I am, the first class, okay, this is my first college class, okay, ready to go. And then he looked around, we all sat there, and he walked in the room. He said, "All of you in here aren't worth a fuck." And I went, "Wow. College, this is the way it's

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supposed to be?" Every word of profanity, you're not worth being here. There have been people that have been here, that have gone through it. It was a great history of this school, and you little rag-tag pussy-wooses, and this, that and the other, coming here." "Wow, is this college?"

So, you know, it was good. I mean it was good looking back on it. It was scary, and I remember one time in class, he was joking around with some of my classmates. They still call me that on Facebook, there's this name. I asked him a question, and then he looked over at me and said, "What do you want, Mabutu?" And I'm just -- and of course, I broke up laughing. Hey, might as well. But when I started getting rank, he really started -- he said, "I'm glad to see that on you." He was really supportive of me, Colonel Alexander, a great man.

Knob year, there was one upperclassman that he was a black -- was he a junior? He was a junior. I was a knob. We called it driving. I was driving to go out of the Battalion, and he pulled me off to the side. He said, "No, Maxwell." He was from a different company. I stopped, oh, my God, what did I do? "Get over here," so I walked over to where he was, and he pulled me into the stairwell. He said, "Break your brace." He said, "I've been hearing some good things about you." Like I say, he was from a different company, from Lima Company. He said, "I've been hearing some good things from you. I've been watching you. You're a good knob. But don't expect much from this place." I said, "Sir, what do you mean?" He said, "Look where you are. You're in The Citadel. This school started the Civil War. Don't expect to -- I mean you're good, but don't be too discouraged if you only get the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Don't expect to get," I mean Cadet Lieutenant, which is a squad leader. I mean no, a platoon leader.

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“Don’t be depressed if you only get a Cadet Lieutenant, which is only platoon leader.”

“Well, why?” I said. He said, “This place, there’s some real stuff going on around here.

I’m certain you’ve seen it.”

KT: By then, had you? Had you seen it by then?

CM: Oh, yeah, one of my, for example, at the mess, when I was at mess, and all the knobs make sure that the upperclassmen get their food first, and then we get our food, and then we have to -- what was one of the saying? We have to pop off to the mess carver, to ask permission to eat. And one of them was -- my mess carver at that time was Mr. Miller. “Sir, Mr. Miller, Sir, would you or any kind, fine, refined, otherwise defined, highly outstanding Citadel stud gentlemen care for any or all the food off my plate, Sir.” He said, “No.”

So, we’d start eating. And then this one mess carver said, “Maxwell.” So, I popped to, swallowed my food. “Sir, yes, Sir.” He said, “What does your father do for a living?” I said, “My father’s deceased, Sir.” He said, “What?” I said, “Sir, my father’s deceased, Sir.” “Oh, so he’s *dead*?” I said, “Sir, yes, Sir, my father’s dead.” “So, what did he do before he died?” I said, “Well, Sir, he was a control room operator for South Carolina Electric and Gas.” “Oh, so he wasn’t a janitor or anything like that? He didn’t sweep up floors or this, that and the other?”

I broke my brace and I looked him straight in the eye, turned left and looked at him. I said, “No, Sir, that didn’t happen since the Emancipation Proclamation.” He said, “What did you say?” I said, “Sir, that didn’t happen since the Emancipation Proclamation.” And he just hit the table with both fists, tipping over cups and everything, raised up off the table. And then she stormed out of the -- now, he’s a senior, and he

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stormed off out of the -- because they're gods at that time -- out of the mess hall. And there was one of his classmates sitting beside me, and his initials were C-O-W, and he was as big as a C-O-W, too.

And he looked over at me, and leaned over and said, "Knob, you just fucked up. You ain't going to make it through this place because I'll make sure. You don't talk that shit to my Company Commander. You ain't going to make it when I get through with you." At that time, I went to my room, scared, "Oh God, what's going to happen?" Then, the Company XO, I called him into my room, asked him to come into my room.

He said, "What do you want, Maxwell?" And I said, "Sir, I request permission to speak with you, Sir." And he opened the door. "What do you want?" And I told him the story, and he said, "Well, that's pretty ballsy of you." He said, "And you know, there's nothing I can do about that because I live with these people. You know what this school's about." He said, "You hang tough." I said, "Yes, Sir, I just wanted to let you know what's going on." He said, "Why did you do that?" I said, "Sir, my father's dead. I don't give a damn who anybody is. He talked about my dead father." I said, "He's lucky I didn't kick his ass." He looked at me and smiled. He says, "Keep your cool, move on." I said, "Yes, Sir."

There was another time where the seniors are given knobs to be their house mouse and blitz shoes and all that, shine their shoes and everything else. And then some seniors were going through saying "I want you to be this, that and the other". They looked at me and said, "No, I don't like nigger knobs." And so, he went on down. I don't care. The school fight song at that time was Dixie, and the upperclassmen, they would pull out the black knobs and make us lead the school fight song. "Oh, I wish I was born in the land of

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cotton, old times there are not forgotten, look away, look away, look away, Dixie Land,” making us lead the school fight song, at that time, which was Dixie.

KT: They would make you do that in the barracks, or at games?

CM: In the barracks, or even at the games whenever -- at the games, whenever a touchdown was scored, the whole Corps would sing Dixie, and that was when we had the stars and bars were flying around in the audience and everything else. Yes, a lot has changed. I see right now, they’ve got Big Red back, but that’s still -- you’re not fooling me. That’s the flag that flew over when you all shot upon Star of the West, to start the Civil War because you all were concerned about “states’ rights” because states’ rights, whenever southerners and I hear states’ rights, I know what it means. It means your states’ rights were denied because you didn’t -- you weren’t allowed to keep slavery. Don’t give me all that other stuff. That’s what it’s about. That’s the history, don’t change it, don’t let it be changed because when you hear they talk about states’ rights, even to this day, they’ll talk about states’ rights, in the new healthcare legislation.

KT: Healthcare, of course.

CM: All states’ rights. Bullshit.

KT: It’s so transparent.

CM: It’s nothing about states’ rights, this, that and the other, it’s about slavery, and that’s why you all are pissed off about states’ rights and using that. So, I’m not a fool. I grew up there, I know.

KT: Do you ever remember were there ever any efforts--organized efforts--on the part of black cadets to resist this?

CM: Ha! (Giggles).

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KT: Even beyond knob, there's little you can do as a knob, but later, I mean were you able -- could you talk about these things?

CM: No, you could talk about it. There was a forum called the African American Society, and I went to two meetings and I didn't go anymore because all these guys, they kept bitching and moaning about we got to sing Dixie. And I'm thinking, you're in The Citadel. That's what you do here. You're a knob, and you're supposed to do whatever you're supposed to do.

KT: But where do you draw that line?

CM: Meaning what line?

KT: Meaning what do you do, and what -- I mean they've got to push you to -- I mean just as that junior or senior pushed you on your dad, I mean there's a point where you've got to protect your safety. You've got to protect your sanity.

CM: Yeah, the thing that I did, for example, when they pulled me out to make me sing Dixie and to lead the school fight song before, because we'd get all motivated and jazzed up before the games and hyped up before the games, and we'd do that in the barracks before we'd march out and look all pretty, nice and rosy and everything else, and I asked one of the upperclassmen, "Sir, may I borrow your sword?" He said, "Why?" I said, "I just ask you to trust me, Sir."

And he said yeah, so I grabbed his sword, and I used it as a baton. "Oh, I wish I was born..." -- and I'm waving it. It's like okay, you want to play? Let's play. This is the way Chuck Maxwell plays. I was using it, you know, just using it to conduct. That's how I play, and I did that. I didn't worry about that. As far as that line, [it was] when he talked about my family. I'm very protective. That's the only thing I have. I didn't come from a

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rich family like a lot of these guys. I remember knob year, I seen guys that never knew how to use a broom. I mean that wiggled me out. I mean never used a broom in their life! And you could tell they never used one! So, I didn't come from that. I even had an upperclassman say to my first roommate, I heard him over here and said, "Is Maxwell your roommate?" "Sir, yes, Sir." "I heard black people keep rooms clean. What about that? What do you think about that?"

KT: But at some point, I mean isn't this wearing you down hearing that kind of crap, singing Dixie? At some point, do you say, "I could be at S.C., I could do ROTC there."

CM: I wanted to go to The Citadel. I wanted an all-male, military, college education. I wanted to be there.

KT: Why all male?

CM: I don't know. That's what I wanted. I just felt better in the company of men, and I don't know, maybe that is some deeper meaning of my homosexuality back then that I completely hid. People ask me, "When did you know you were gay?" "When I was five years old."

KT: How?

CM: Well, I was watching a cowboy and Indians movie, and when the Indians got shot, their loincloths went up and I got excited, so that's when I knew that I liked men.

KT: You've always known.

CM: Oh, since I was five, yeah, and I had to hide it, especially growing up black and gay because there's no such thing as a black gay now, especially in black society, no such thing. I also think about what my father told me. I'm not going to say that, but he

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gave me a quote that -- I'll say it. It's out of love, and I know he loves me. My mother found out that I was playing around with one of my cousins, male cousin, and she told my father.

And my father pulled me into the room with my mother. And he said, "What is this your mother's talking about?" And he repeated it. He said, "I tell you what, if I ever hear anything like that about you again, I'm going to take some barbed wire, wrap it around a pole, and shove it up your ass." And in my mind, I liked girls. I like girls. I like girls, I really do like girls. As far as I was concerned, I remember even asking friends when I was eight, nine years old, you know, to play around. And they're like, "What are you, some freak?" And so, I thought, "Oh, something's wrong with me." And so, of course, I had to hide all that. So, I hid everything, and it wasn't really until my uncle -- I'm pretty certain he knew that I was gay, or that I had gay inclinations. And when I went to New York for maybe the second or third time, and that's because I got used to him.

I hope you can bear with me; I'll tell you the story of how I came out to him. It was at Stoten House, the house on Brattle Street in Boston, where -- in Cambridge, that my uncle, Ethan, and a few other people from Harvard, you know, that crowd they hung around with, it was a black-tie event, and it had New Year's. It was all caviar, champagne, you know, black tie and this, that and the other. And I had gone to a second - - it was another New Year's event: the one before I was going to the Air Force, before I was going to be flown to Minot, North Dakota. And my uncle looked at me. We had always had these what I call uncle-nephew talks, and we were in his room drinking beer. He said, "It doesn't look like you enjoyed yourself as much as you usually do. What's going on?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "There's something different about you

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in this party than there was at all the other parties.”

My uncle is very smart, very astute. He said, “Was there somebody that you wanted here that didn't show up?” And I got nervous. He saw me tense up. He said, “No, just talk with me, Chuckie, talk with me, what? Was there somebody that you would like to have had there that didn't show up?” I said, “Well, yeah.” He said, “Well, who is it?” I said, “Well, it's a friend of mine, Jeff.” “Well, tell me about Jeff.” “Well, I went to high school with him and we saw each other before I came up here.” “Oh,” he said, “Okay.”

He said, “Well, is he a good friend?” I said, “Yeah, he's a good friend.” Then my uncle reached over and grabbed my wrist and squeezed it and almost caused a tourniquet. It was so tight, he squeezed my wrist, and he looked me straight in the eye. He said, “You know what I mean when I say a good friend.” I say, “Yes, Uncle B, he's a good friend.” And he said, “Well, why didn't you say anything? We could have had him up here. We could have done this.”

And then he saw me starting to close up again, and he realized that, and he stopped. He said, “Okay, forget what I said.” He said, “How about this?” He said, “You've got another what, week here?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Would you like to see him up here?” I went, “Yeah, but I don't have the money to get him up here.” He said, “Shut up. I didn't ask you that.” He said, “Would you like to see him up here?” I said, “Well, if it works out.” He said, “Look, yes or no?” I said, “Yes, Uncle B, I mean yeah.” He said, “Okay. I'll talk with Ethan in the morning and we'll see what we can do, or we can't do, whatever.”

And so, I go to my bedroom, and stories later, he got off the phone with one of his friends in New York saying, “Chuckie's crossed over to our side.” The phone wires are

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burning up. And I go down. My uncle always slept late, so I went downstairs to have breakfast, and Ethan and I were always the first two to have breakfast. And Ethan sat at the head of the table. It was a long mahogany table. I mean it was a massive house. Beautiful house. Beautiful Tudor style house.

They had a housekeeper, and she was from Ecuador. That's when I'd practice Spanish with her. And Ethan's sitting there, and off of the dining room, on the left-hand side is an arboretum, and they've all these antiques and everything. There was some picture of Oil of Christ that dates back to the 1400s or something, and all this art, and this huge fireplace behind Ethan at the head of the table. And Ethan's there, and there's three places set, and I go take my seat.

He goes, "Morning, Charles." Ethan is very formal, always called me Charles. "Morning Charles." "Morning, Ethan." And then the housekeeper, I forget her name at the time, she comes out. "Buenos Días." "Buenos Días, Señora." "Que quieres?" I said, "Huevos vueltidos y jugo de naranja, por favor" Scrambled eggs and orange juice, please. "Sí, claro." She walked back in and started preparing my breakfast. Ethan's there, and he looks over, and he says -- we make small talk, and then Ethan says, "So I understand that there's a friend of yours you'd like to see come down." I tensed up a bit. He says, "Charles, relax, relax. So, tell me about this friend."

So, I told Ethan about Jeff. He said, "Well, I'll tell you what." I saw him reach out, he gets his wallet out and he opens his wallet, and he pulls out his American Express card and he puts it on the table right next to me. He says, "Get him on the next plane up here." He looked, he said, "I'm not joking. Do it, Charles." I said, "Yes, Sir." I called up. Jeff had never been on an airplane before. I called him up and I said, "Jeff," and I told

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him if he wanted to come up and this, that, and the other. He said, "When?" I said, "On the next plane you can get up here." He said, "I'll be there tonight."

And he showed up. We went to the airport and picked him up, and we had dinner that night. The housekeeper, she cooked a chicken or a turkey or something like that, and Ethan started carving up the meat. He says, "Charles, what would you like?" First, he asked Jeff what he'd like to have. Jeff said whatever he wanted. And then Ethan says, "Charles, what would you like to have, white meat or dark meat?" And I said, "White meat, please." My uncle looks over at me, "So, I see," talking about Jeff. I threw my napkin at him across the table. And Ethan goes. "Ben, you shouldn't do that to him." My uncles laughing. He's just on the floor rolling. We spent four days there.

KT: This is when you're twenty-one, basically, twenty-two?

CM: I graduated The Citadel when I was twenty-three, yeah.

KT: At what point did your uncle come out to you? At what point did you know?

CM: He came out to me--

KT: That first summer you were up there?

CM: No, what happened, how I guess I found out or knew, there was some major basketball player, some guy who played basketball in Italy, and he was coming over to New York, and my uncle told me -- because my uncle and I, we shared the same bed. We didn't do anything. It was very platonic. He had this huge bed, it was hand-carved, ornate. Anyway, and then he said his friend was coming over, and he said -- my uncle looked at me and said, "And you're sleeping on the couch tonight." I said, "Okay."

And the two of them slept in the room, and something happened that caused me to go to the room and knock on the door, and my uncle pops out of the bed naked, and went,

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“Oh.” So, that’s what that’s all about, and I said, “Okay.” There was another time we were in Cambridge at the house, and we were in a taxicab on the way home, and he just started talking about himself. He said, “I know you’ve heard things about me from the family.” He said, “I’ve been with women, I’ve been with men. I like men better.” And he said, “So long as you’re not hurting anybody, and I know you’ve been told all that southern stuff and this, that and the other, and religiosity and everything else, you know, God loves you as who you are. You are not doing anything wrong, and this, that, and the other.”

KT: You don’t remember that bothering you? Maybe I should say, how did that affect you?

CM: I don’t know. I guess I felt at ease, I guess, or it was okay that a family member said, “You’re okay with who you are, and who you are is who you are, and be okay with that.” Plus, I’ve gotten to see him and his lifestyle, and all of his friends. (Microphone interference) Well, his friends -- this was before he came out to me, all of his friends in New York, you know, they’re gay. And I kept saying, “Where are all these faggots coming from? Is that all you know [in] New York?” Yeah, I did at that time, you know.

He says, “All these gay people, what’s going on?” This, that and the other. One of his friends was a psychiatrist and my uncle said, “Yeah, he’s gay, too.” I said, “He’s gay?” He said, “Yeah, and he’s a psychiatrist.” And I said, “Yeah.” “What’s wrong with that?” “A psychiatrist is supposed to tell people what their problems are and help them through it.” “Yeah.” “Well, how could a faggot tell me what my problems are if he’s a faggot?”

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KT: Right, right.

CM: So, it's -- and then I just went through all that and just slowly -- I mean he didn't make a big issue out of it, but there were straight friends as well, and all these people that he knew, and Ethan. He and Ethan had been together twenty-six years. They were together for twenty-six years. They met each other when my uncle had a restaurant in St. Thomas. And he met Ethan in St. Thomas, and they've been together then ever since. I mean I've gone to dinners at the Russian Tea Room, to the Algonquin Restaurant. Ethan had a room in New York. Whenever Ethan went to New York, he has his own room, which was in a hotel across the street from the Algonquin, and we would go and have dinner or lunch in the Red Room in the Algonquin Restaurant, at the hotel restaurant.

KT: Somebody's got to write up their story. I mean your uncle just sounds like he's -- just the life was --

CM: Yeah, he knew how to enjoy life. He really did, and I learned through him how to enjoy life. He helped me navigate the gay lifestyle and everything else. As far as The Citadel and being gay --

KT: Even before that, what about high school? You met Jeff in high school.

CM: I met Jeff in high school, he was a year behind me.

KT: Was he kind of -- was he your first high school boyfriend?

CM: No, he and I just knew each other. He was from a different class. He was a class behind. He was in my sister's class, and how did -- I forgot. Oh, we met in a gay bar in Charleston, called the Arcade, that's how we met. And he looked at me, he went -- there were a lot of people that had the same response. First, it was this guy, who I was in

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ROTC with, he was bartending. I said, "I'm not believing this." So, I go order a drink. He looks at me. He says, "You look familiar." I said, "Yeah, I'm Chuck Maxwell. We went to school together." He went, "Charles Maxwell! In here?" I said, "Yeah, I'm in here."

And then I ran into Jeff and he looked at me. He went, "Chuck Maxwell, in a gay bar?" But in high school, I did have a friend. He and I played around with each other. I won't get into details, but we found ways to play with each other. And then, the poor guy got hit by a car and died. And then I was thinking, "Oh, God, God's getting me. God is on me. God is punishing me for this. God killed this guy because we were playing around with each other," and this, that and the other. So, that sent me in further, pushed me further, deeper.

KT: Oh, yeah. He was killed in high school?

CM: He was killed in high school, tenth grade, eleventh grade.

KT: Oh, my gosh. So, I guess, just before your father?

CM: Yeah, before my father, yeah, before my father died.

KT: So, what -- I mean what was that like at The Citadel?

CM: Being gay?

KT: Yeah.

CM: Well, for being gay, The Citadel, for me, was easier than being black because I could hide the homosexuality. I couldn't hide my skin color. There were stories when I was a sophomore, there were upperclassmen that said things to the effect of, "Do you know that there are fags in the Corps of Cadets?" I said, "No! No way, not here." "Oh, well, yeah, there are guys, homosexuals in here." "How do you know?"

And they said, "Well, you know why these guys walk around in their underwear

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in the galleries?" I said, "Because they have no couth, they have no taste. They're just too lazy to put their darn clothes on, so they walk in their underwear." He said, "No, they're cruising each other." I said, "No!" He said, "Yeah." And so, that just opened my eyes to a different sort of lifestyle.

One classmate, when I was a senior, I had decided to act upon my homosexuality as a cadet at The Citadel, when I was a senior. And it was a classmate of mine. I snuck some alcohol in the barracks. See, Battalion Commanders aren't supposed to do that, but I did, that one time. And so, we're having drinks, and then I propositioned him--it shocked him, but he said, "That's very -- that's interesting, but I'm a good Catholic boy, and I don't do that kind of thing." I said, "Oh, okay, cool. I'm sorry I went that way with you." He said, "No, we're all right, we're still friends." And we had a couple more drinks and then he left my room.

And I began thinking, "Oh, my God, I'm going to be kicked out. He's going to tell somebody. I know I'm going to get kicked out, I just know it's going to happen." Even in the Blue Book, The Citadel Blue Book, which is the school rules, there was a part in there about homosexuality. If you get caught with homosexuality, you're expelled from the school, and this, that and the other. I was so scared about that, but he never told anybody, thank goodness. We saw each other during my latest reunion. Of course, we never -- I didn't want to approach that subject, but we had drinks and sat with each other, watched the football game and just - I learned about his family. He's doing well in his family and everything else. And he knows that I've got a partner and this, that, and the other. We're still classmates, and that's one great thing about The Citadel that I love to this day, is the bond that we have.

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KT: You're out to your classmates now?

CM: Oh, yeah, I'm out to all of them. They've accepted that, thank goodness.

There are classmates, you know, that said, "Yeah, I'm shocked, but Chuck, you wear the ring. You're one of our brothers. You're Chuck." I appreciate that. My last reunion, how I got to it, I didn't have the money to go because I'd been out of work. I got caught in this downsizing. Ever since July, 2009, I've been out of work, and just trying to find work and everything else. The reunion information started coming around and one of my classmates called me up, who was on a Sword Drill. Yeah, I can tell this. I won't say his name, but he was on a Sword Drill. And Sword Drill is -- I don't know if you've heard about Sword Drill, know what Sword Drill is.

KT: A little bit, yeah.

CM: It's, in my opinion, the most elite team to be on. There's only fourteen that perform; one hundred fifty show up, but only fourteen actually walk the stage. You even got The Citadel bond, and then you've got the Sword Drill bond, which is even more stronger. With a lot of my classmates, I'm in touch with them on Facebook, my drill mates, and they all know. I've told people, I've said, "Listen, before we become friends, I'm gay, this, that and the other." They say, "I should just slap you. I'm not worried about that. It was good to be back in touch with you, Chuck." Okay, cool, as long as we're all right with that, we're fine.

Anyway, I didn't have the money to make it, and a classmate was asking "Are you going to make it?" I said, "No, I don't have the money. I can't go." He sent me an email. He said, "My wife and I, we talked about this, and I'll give you a no-interest, long-term loan, and I'll pay for you to come to the reunion. You need to come to your 25th reunion."

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And Dwayne said, “Chuck, those are one of those things that you need to answer quick because if you wait too long, the effect -- or they begin to wonder, this, that and the other.” And I emailed him back and said, “Thank you. I’ll be happy to. I’d love to see you again.”

I hadn’t seen him since we graduated. And sure enough, he paid for my registration, he paid for my football game tickets. He paid anything that had to be paid for there, plus he gave me one hundred fifty dollars spending cash to be at that reunion. The only reason I went to my 25th year reunion at the Citadel was because of my classmate, my drill mate.

And every person that I got to talk to there, at the reunion, I told people who were not drill, I said, “I’m only here because one of our classmates paid for me to get here.” “What? Who is it?” I said, “I’m not going to tell you. I’m not telling out of respect for him.” But I’m here to tell you, and you tell everybody else that the only reason that Chuck Maxwell is here for the 25th reunion is because one of his classmates, one of our classmates, paid for me to come here. I mean it was such a great time.

KT: I mean your classmates are tolerant as alumni, but they most likely they wouldn’t have been as students. I mean what is that just, what is that?

CM: I don't know if they would have been as tolerant as students because that was the whole culture there. And this was before Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. It didn't exist. And the culture there at The Citadel, if you’re not a man, you’re a fag. If you’re a fag, we’re going to kick your ass, that kind of thing, you don’t belong here. But yet there were stories that I heard. For example, when I was in London, when I was in the Air Force, and hiding my homosexuality in the Air Force, too, that was a whole 'nother story.

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And this, again, was before Don't Ask, Don't Tell. So, if you smelled like a fag, they were on you. OSI, Office of Special Investigations, they were on you. I was in a gay bar in London. Heaven was the name of the bar, and it was heaven. It was (microphone interference) filled with gay people, and I always went -- learning from my uncle in New York, I always found a way and found connections in the VIP room, so I was always in the VIP room. And I saw Grace Jones up there a couple of times, and people pouring champagne over Grace Jones and licking it off her and everything. I was just walking around the bar, and I felt somebody grab me. I looked, and it was one of my eighty-five classmates. I was, "Oh, my God, look at you, in here, in London! Oh, my goodness!"

KT: You have your rings on?

CM: Yeah, we had our rings on. And he was there with his partner at the time, and they were stationed in Germany, so they flew into London. We just happened to meet. We hadn't seen each other since we graduated. "I didn't know you -- how -- when -- you," that kind of thing was going on.

KT: You had no idea at the time.

CM: I had no clue of anybody, whoever was gay at The Citadel because one, I suppressed it so much because I wanted to graduate. I went out with -- I dated two girls just to hide any inkling that I may be gay. Two, I had a lot of rank. You see my picture of me -- taken of me when I was Fourth Battalion Commander because as I mentioned earlier, when I was a Cadet, only six of those pictures were made every year, the Regimental Commander, the Regimental XO, and the four Battalion Commanders. And so, I had rank.

I was Commander of the Protestant Chapel Color Guard. I was voice doing a

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Sword Drill. I was Supply Sergeant Summerall Guards. I was on the religious council; I was on the Taekwondo team. I mean I was active, and people knew me there. Plus, they knew the rank. I always had rank. I was company -- I was Cadre Corporal, I was Company Clerk. Then I moved to Third Battalion staff, I was Third Battalion Clerk. Then I became Third Battalion Sergeant Major. Then I became Fourth Battalion Commander.

I always had rank and this, that and the other. And of course, people who were gay and hiding around, they didn't want anything to do with anybody with rank, which I could understand. I asked my friend, who I saw in London, and he was telling me all these stories about the gay escapades and all that was happening in certain rooms, in certain battalions, certain areas. I said, "Well, hell, why didn't you all tell me?" "No, you were Chuck Maxwell. No n-n-n-no."

KT: But there was - I mean you've become aware of, later on, a gay life--a gay scene at The Citadel, I mean, such as it was.

CM: Yeah.

KT: Where people -- I mean they threw sort of winks and nods, you kind of figure out who's who?

CM: That's what I guess. I don't know. One reason I'm smiling, there's one company. I'm sure you know the company I'm talking about, yeah.

KT: (laughs) Band Company, we can say it, we can say it.

CM: Yeah, always in Band Company, and then even, you know, whenever somebody's -- if an announcement is made, you know, the bands will call queues. And even, you know, cadet So-and-so from Band Company, and you hear everybody else go "Queue!" -- you know, echo throughout wherever. I just heard these stories about Band

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Company, but I -- and Band Company was always a joke.

Whenever a knob got to my table, and if I found out a knob was from Band Company, I'd say, "knob, are you from Band Company?" "Sir, yes, Sir." "Which one are you? Beat, blow or suck?" "Sir, I'm a beater." I'd say, "Oh, are you?" So, he goes, you know, beating their drums, blowing a horn, or sucking on a reed, so you knew people who sucked and that kind of thing. When I went to my 25th reunion, I told my classmate, the one who paid for me to get there, I told him, I said, "Listen, there's an underground gay and lesbian association at The Citadel." He said, "Really?" I said, "I know you wouldn't know that because you're straight, but there is one and I want to be active in it, and I want to do it to help cadets. To help cadets and alumni.

So, there's a party at this house near the football stadium, and I'm going to go there, and I'd like for you to pick me up." He said, "Yeah, sure, don't worry, don't worry." And so, I went to the house, this house party and met other Cadets, and a lot of the guys were from Band Company.

KT: So, there's something to this.

CM: There's truth to everything that I heard when I was in The Citadel. And I kept hearing these stories. They had a parade, and then the football game happened, and then these guys were talking to each other and one guy said, "Did you hear the trombones? The trombones were really rocking it." "No, no, the trumpets are doing this, that and the other." I'm going, "What company were you guys in?" "We were in band." "Oh, okay." and then another guy was telling the story about when he was a knob and we had knob runners.

The runners had to -- that was before email and all that stuff. The knobs would go

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to the Company Clerk's room, and "Take this to Mr. so-and-so, he's on Third Division."

So, the knobs would go run and take whatever paperwork or whatever to the other cadet.

And this guy, he said he was from Band Company, he walked into so-and-so's room,

popped off. Well, first he popped off, "Get in here, knob." He walks in and he sees a guy

there beating off. And I said, "What?" He said, "Yes." "He didn't stop?" He said, "No."

"What did you do?" "Stand there." I'm a knob, what am I supposed to do? He looked at

me, he said, "What do you expect? It's Band Company." I went, "My God, so it's true!"

He said, "Yeah, where were you?" "I just thought it was just a rumor. I didn't know." So,

that was my awakening, twenty-five years later finding out what the scene was then at the time.

KT: Now they have the internet to figure out who's who.

CM: Exactly, and there are some -- there's a couple of knobs that have gotten into the group through the internet and asking for help in dealing with their sexuality and everything else. And especially at the Citadel, where all this machismo and everything is.

And I've told Kevin that -- I said, "I'm your wingman." I said, "Well, I mean I'm your wing girl, but I'm your wingman, and if you need me to help, I'm here." And I said, "I'm a native Charlestonian, and I have nothing in Charleston that's holding me back. I don't have to remain in the closet for anybody. I'm not afraid. I've seen a damn Klan rally, so I'm not afraid."

So, what are they going to do if they stand out, if they're going to charge me, oh, you don't like black people? Don't let them get the Charleston NAACP on you. So, where you going to go? And I do want to give back to the school in many ways, and one is being supportive of any cadet, who feels marginalized in that institution, any cadet, I

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don't care who or what they are. They can be purple; I don't care because that's what I want to give back to that school because that school's given me a lot. And the school, the South, the US, the world, has to start waking up, that there are people who are people as they are, and have to accept people in that way.

So, if these people are so-called children of God, then you need to act as a child of God, which means love. It doesn't mean hate, it doesn't mean ignorance, it doesn't mean intolerance, it means forgiveness, love, acceptance. That's what it means. As Chuck Maxwell, being a double minority, I know both sides of the coin and I've been on both sides. And I still get whatever, either razzed for being gay or razzed for being black. Like General Rosa and any President of The Citadel after him, and any alumni who is able to hear my voice, alumni past, present or future, whoever, you need to accept these cadets as they are because they are still cadets. They still wear the ring. They still bust their ass to go to that school. They didn't go to CofC, or they didn't go to a quote/unquote, regular civilian college. They went to The Citadel.

And also, I'm happy to hear that Don't Ask, Don't Tell is on its way out. My heart did somersaults when Bob Gates, the Secretary of Defense, said that he spoke out against it. Admiral Mullen, I almost fell out of my chair when he said that it should happen. He said when you go into the military, we expect integrity, but the first thing that we asking these people to do who are gay and lesbian, to lie, but we want integrity out of the military. I said, "There it is, there's the damn hypocrisy." And that's what needs to stop.

When I left the Air Force, I admitted to homosexual behavior with another airman, and I went to OSI. Well, the airman got flipped out by what happened, and I broke my rule. Never mess with anybody or date anybody in the military, and I broke that

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rule because I was stupid.

KT: So, you did an Air Force contract.

CM: Yeah, I did five years.

KT: You went basically right in after a couple months.

CM: After the Citadel. Yeah, a couple months.

KT: Tell me, what did you do in the Air Force?

CM: I was a Security Police Officer. How butch is that? How butch is that, you know, tough. Only gay people would understand that. How butch is that, being a cop. But of them are going, "Oh, I like it." But anyway, I remember when -- my first station was Minot, North Dakota, and yeah, exactly. And people thought -- I was the laughingstock of my class.

KT: Did they have it in for you from the get-go?

CM: I guess they did. I was the laughingstock of my class, Class of '85, because Chuck Maxwell, all that, everything I mentioned earlier. And you know, distinguished Air Force Cadet, I mean all that, all that stuff. They said, "Man, you're going to get a great assignment. You should get a great assignment because this, that and the other." Captain Shepherd--it was that time of year when the assignments were being given out. It was that time of year, and Captain Shepherd walks in with a smile on his face and says, "Mr. Maxwell, your assignment came in." "Really, really." He said, "Yeah, why don't you go ahead, go down to the Air Force office and see what it is, and sign your paperwork." I said, "Okay, thank you, Sir."

So, I leave the classroom. I take two steps out the door, and hear this roaring laughter coming from the class. I mean the whole class just broke up laughing at one

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time. I went walking back in. I opened the door and said, "What happened?" My classmates said, "Chuck, go; just go, Chuck." So, I'm thinking what the hell? So, I walked into the Air Force office and there are the other Air Force personnel there, Sergeants. And they looked at me, and they said -- they're looking at me, said, "Oh, Mr. Maxwell, you here for your assignment?" I said, "Yeah."

And they got this smirk on their face. Looking back now, I see the smirks. I didn't think anything about it then. And I looked at the paper, "Minot, North Dakota. Damn! Of all the bases, Minot, North Dakota, Jesus!" And so, you know, I walked back into the room. I'm dejected, back in the class. Captain Shepherd looks at me. He said, "You all right?" I said, "No, Sir." He said, "Just sit there." You know, Minot is not a good place to be. And that's where I came out to myself, when I was twenty-five years old, twenty-four, twenty-five years old.

I said, "This is my life. I'm going to live my life. I'm not dependent on my parents. I'm not dependent on anybody else. I'm living -- I'm making my own money. This is my life; I'm going to be who I am. If I'm gay, this is who I am and I need to hide it, and I've got to stick this out through the Air Force." And then one day, I found through the base network, that there was this gay party, a gay party going on at a non-Air Force member's house, off base, in the City of Minot. And so, people were going to go there.

KT: When you say non-Air Force, so a civilian's house, who had some connections to the base--

CM: Connections to the base, gay people, gay people in Minot. There are some.

KT: Right, the scene.

CM: Yeah, the scene, right. And so, the word got out, and I found out through this

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other guy. I can't remember, who was a civilian, and my being an officer and a cop, I didn't want anybody to know anything about me, so I went to this party. And I saw pictures, you know, people had taken pictures, guys kissing each other, dancing. It's a gay party, so what? I'm thinking, "God, look at this, this is great. Maybe I've found a place I can just get away and not be Lieutenant Maxwell, Security Police. I could be Chuck and be myself. Maybe I've found a place, plus it's off base."

Okay, that's great, okay, it's safe, all right, this and everything else. Three weeks later, a dragnet happens. What had happened, OSI, the Office of Special Investigations, got word of this party, flew in two investigators. Now, this is your tax dollars at work. And this is when -- who I was supposed to be fighting, the Russians? I was supposed to be afraid of the Russians, but OSI, US OSI agents were flown in. How I knew about this, being a cop, I got the inside track on how it all happened, and how it all played out.

And OSI agents were young enough and everything else, and they went to this party, took pictures, and the people in the pictures were identified. As soon as they were identified, the dragnet came, went out, brought them all in, kicked them all out. And again, this is before Don't Ask, Don't Tell. So, their careers are completely screwed up. I mean people just had their lives--they were raked through the coals. It was put in the base paper; I mean it was all kinds of stuff. Me, I'm just glad that my face wasn't -- I made sure I didn't want anybody taking pictures of me, and I stayed really low-key.

And I said, "Damn, I missed that bullet." I dodged that bullet really quick. I met a couple of gay people in Minot, and I stayed away from anybody military. If I smelled military on you, I didn't want to talk to you. Then another dragnet happened. The base was showing *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, at the base theater.

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KT: As a setup?

CM: Yep. They advertised it, “Come on out, dress as your favorite *Rocky Horror Picture* character”. Of course, people got dressed up, Dr. Frankenfurter, da, da, da, and everybody else. A lot of characters in *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, big lights were there, I remember, and a video camera was there, I remember. And there were some guys that got dressed up as Frankenfurter, whoever, and they’d got into character and they went past the camera and everything. “Do that again.” Went past the camera again and did that. Three weeks or so later, dragnet got those people, brought them in, kicked them out.

KT: I mean that could easily pick up tons of straights. I think of all that kind of acting out at The Citadel, that the cadets do. Straight or gay, I mean they’re always clowning about.

CM: Yeah, at The Citadel, one of the last things -- well, to know that you’re a senior and know that you are on your way out from being a Cadet, you’re graduating, is the last day that we wear the winter wools. And the tradition of that, where all the guys -- because back then, it was all guys. It was one night on a Saturday night or Friday night or something, and it was at ten thirty, and all the battalions, it was all choreographed, all timed and everything else. And as soon as ten thirty hits, you hear the bugle, which ended ESP, evening study period. And then all the seniors were running to the middle of the quad, tearing off their -- tearing everybody’s grey winter wools off because they’re not going to wear -- that’s the last time. We’re never going to wear those anymore. And so, we were running out there, and I got stripped down naked. I stripped some of my other classmates down naked, and we’re just -- then Colonel Dick, and that’s his name, Colonel Harvey M. Dick. I love Colonel Dick. I love him. I got to see him at my 25th reunion.

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And so, he was walking around the barracks on the outside, and all these guys are naked, looking in front of, "Harvey, Harvey," you know, and waving. Colonel Dick, he's shaking his head and walking on by. We're just having fun. So, I just said that to substantiate that was just some of the crazy stuff we did. And the Air Force, then that happened. Then I got stationed in England, and that was -- I enjoyed that. It was a hard base, but I --

KT: Which one were you on?

CM: RAF Upper Heyford, which is no longer active right now. It's deactivated. And [I met] through friends of my uncle, they lived in London, nice parts of London, Holland Park, in London, I hung out with them. I went to the bars and everything else, the gay bars, the gay scene, and I was able to be me. And I met other people, and still friends that I have to this day in London. One of the members of my flight, they were saying, "Sir, you know, we don't see you around the base, or we don't even see you around town or anything else around here."

We had -- we worked six days on and three days off. I told them, I said, "I tell you what, if I see any one of you, I go to London. I'll let you know where I go. I go to London. When we get on our break, when we get our time off, I'm in London, I will tell you that. And if I see any one of you in London, I will buy you drinks and I will get you drunk, if you and I run into each other in London." And I'm thinking they're not going to be anywhere I go, and they didn't. They didn't show up any places I went.

Then that gets back to the time because when I got promoted to Captain, I was given regular status, and I didn't know what that meant, and my good friend of mine, Steve (Bowie), he said, "Chuck, that's great. What does that mean?" He said, "Man,

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they're grooming you for General Officer." I said, "What?" He said, "Very few people get promoted Captain and regular on the first promotion in the Air Force. That hardly happens." I'm thinking, "Okay, great." I don't know what the hell it is, but it's great.

Then I went and talked to one of my other friends, he was enlisted, then he went to OCS, and he's the same rank as I was, but he had twelve, thirteen years in the military. Jim Stroud, good people, good people. That was when Heyford was fun. We all really helped each other out at that time. Then it changed. But anyway, and Jim Stroud says, "Congratulations on making Captain," and he got up from behind the desk, "Oh, hell, yeah." And his eyes got big, Jim Stroud eyes. "Oh, hell yeah!", and he shook my hand. "Congratu-fucking-lations also on making regular!" I said, "Jim, what does that mean?" He said, "They're grooming you for General."

I said, "I heard somebody else say that." He said, "Chuck, getting regular and Captain on the first promotion," he said, "it probably happened because you went to The Citadel." And I did other great things on that base too. I was in charge of a Security Police team. All the US bases had a Security Police Team, for Peacekeeper Challenge, and. It was running the obstacle course, who could shoot the best and that kind of thing, which base could say we have the best cops.

And the first year I did it, we got our asses handed to us. I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know the competition. I didn't know, it was my first year. And then my Commander at that time, who didn't like me - and how I know he didn't like me, because in a staff meeting, he was talking about inspectors coming in and being good guys and bad - country boys versus the city boys, city slickers. And he patted my friend Steve Bowie on the back. "Now don't -- just look at the inspectors as good old country boys.

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Look at them like that. But watch out for the city slickers.”

He looked right at me. “Watch out for those city slickers. Don’t trust them.” He looks right at me and says that. I looked at my friend, Steve. I said, “Steve, you’ve made it, man.” He said, “What do you mean?” “You’ve got an in with him, he likes you.” I said, “No, I grew up in the South, I know that look.” Anyway, I stayed away from him. But that same Commander, he wanted to -- when I heard that he wanted to give the -- commit to lead Peacekeeper Challenge, he wanted to give it to my friend Steve because he always tried to compete the two of us.

Steve and I met each other in Minot, and we got stationed in Heyford together. And Steve had his mindset on the career and things he liked to do, and I had mine, and we didn't deviate from that. We're very good friends. And Steve found out about it, he said, “Man, I don’t want to do that stuff. Obstacle courses and all that, that’s not me.” And I went to the Commander’s office, and I was talking with him, when it was unannounced. He said, “What is it, Lieutenant?” I said, “Sir, I want to lead Peacekeeper Challenge again this year.” He looked at me. He walked behind his desk and he picked up his pipe. And it was always a story about that officer. I forgot his name, but I knew he didn't like me. The story is that if he ever picked up his pipe, that means you’re about to get read the riot act on something. And the final point is--we call it when your shit is cooked-- if he ever pointed the stem at you, you’re done. So, he went behind his desk, he grabbed his pipe and I looked at him, and I stared him straight in the eyes. He said, “So, why do you think you should be Peacekeeper Challenge Commander again this year?” “Sir, I’ve been there, I’ve done it. I know the games. I’ve gone through this. I know how to prepare these guys. I’m physically fit. I know how to make this thing win, and I will

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bring back the championship.”

He puts his pipe back down on the desk. He said, “All right. I’ll let you have it this time.” I said, “Fine, Sir.” I saluted him and I walked out. We came back first place. And then we got a new Commander in, and Peacekeeper Challenge came around again. “Captain Maxwell, you want to?” I said, “I’m going to do this.” My team, they all came back and we all got ourselves back together. We went back to the base, we won it a second year in a row.

We were the only base to win it two years in a row, in the entire history of Peacekeeper Challenge. We were the only base to do it two years in a row. I led both of those teams and were written up in the base paper and everything else. Then it came around that time, as I said, you know, people said they’re grooming you for General. And I’m thinking, one, I’m not staying in the military. Two, in order for me to become a General, I’d have to get married. Three, there is no such thing as an openly gay, four-star General in the United States military. It’s not going to happen for me. It’s not. And as I said, this was before Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.

I said it’s not going to happen for me. Plus, I knew -- I already had it in my head to stay in the Air Force for four years. And I saw myself maybe as a Major, but I saw myself as a Captain, but no, because I’m gay, it isn’t going to happen. And I put my resignation papers in, signed it and everything because I couldn’t extend anymore, and it was time for me to get out. I didn’t want to leave, I wanted to stay in England. I wanted to stay in the Air Force, but I didn’t; I’m gay.

Gay people don’t get promoted in the Air Force, so after all the examples and everything else I’ve seen -- I remember the Sergeant, he said, “So, you’re ready to call it

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quits, huh?" I said, "Yeah, I've done my time here." And the administrative Sergeant-- when I was going to sign my paperwork and everything. "Yeah, I'm ready to call it quits." He said, "Well, Sir, we've got an option here, if you like, you can sign up to be reserves. You can be Air Force Reserves when you get back home, stateside." I said, "Let me put it to you this way."

The room was filled with other Sergeants and admin people typing. I said, "I don't want to see you, him, her, her, or anybody that looks like any of you all, wearing any of the clothes that you're wearing right now, when I leave the US Military." They all started laughing. I said, "Did I make myself clear?" "Yes, Sir." "That's cool. Are we understood?" He said, "Yes, Sir." "Fine, I'm done. That's it." And then a week, three weeks later, I don't know, I get a phone call at home, when I was in England -- I forgot the lady's name. "Captain Maxwell?" I said, "Yes." "Hi, this is Miss So-and-so, the Wing Commander's Secretary." I'm going, "Oh, hell, what happened?"

The Wing Commander, he just could have got promoted to General, one star, a Brigadier General, and his secretary's calling me, and I'm thinking, "Which one of my guys messed up? Who shot who? What's going on? Why is she calling me?" I said, "Yes." "The Wing Commander would like to see you on a day and a time that's convenient to you." "Well, Ma'am, you tell me what time to be there." "No, no, no, he wants to set up a time for you, whenever is convenient with you." I said, "Is everything okay?" She said, "Yes, things are fine." I said, "Okay, this date, this time."

And I get off, what the hell is this all about? I went to his office. I didn't dress in my dress blues because whenever you see the Commander, you're supposed to go in your dress blues. And my mindset was, well, this is my time, this is my date, my free time, so I

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got dressed up in a suit and tie. I mean I was dressed to the nines, business-like. I walked into his office, and said, "Hello, Sir." He looked at me and he said, "Like the suit." I said, "Thank you, Sir." "Have a seat there, Captain." "Alright." He closes the door.

He said, "How been, son?" "Doing alright, wondering what this is all about?" He said, "Yeah, don't worry, you're alright." He said, "I'll give it to you this way. The Air Force needs officers like you. I understand you put in your resignation papers." I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "Why?" "I've done my time, Sir. It's time to move on." He said, "The Air Force is filled with too many cowboys. We need good officers like you." I said, "Well, thank you." He said, "You've done a lot of things on this base, and you've gotten noticed. Plus, you got regular, too, didn't you?" I said, "Yes, Sir."

He said, long story short, he said, "If you wish to reconsider, just let me know and I can make things happen." "Thank you." We shook hands, left. I'm going, "Damn." And then another couple of weeks later, I'm on the flight line, on one of my midnight shifts, working with my troops and that kind of thing. I get a call on my radio, "Security two, command seven," that was my call. I said, "Command seven." Said, "Sir, go to two."

So, I switch over. I said, "What's up?" He said, "Sir, Colonel (Coleen) wants to see you." I said, "Where is he?" He said, "He's in the office quarters." "What the hell's going on?" He said, "Sir, I don't know." I said, "Did somebody fuck up over there?" "No, Sir." I said, "All right. Tell him I've got to turn in my weapon, and I'll go to see him." And I walked inside there, and I walk in. I said, "Is this a joke?" He said, "No, Sir, Colonel (Coleen) wants to see you." Colonel (Coleen) is the top cop for all of the cops in England.

KT: All of the eight bases or so?

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CM: Yeah, all of the bases in England, he's the top Colonel, and he's a Security Officer and he was the top cop, we called him, you know, in charge of all the cops, the Commander who didn't like me, that's his boss, so that kind of thing. And what's going on? Walked into his room. He said, "You still on duty there, Captain?" I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "Well, I'd offer you a drink." I said, "I'd like to take one, but I'm still on duty." He said, "Alright. I'll get to the point. I understand you spoke with the Wing Commander." I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "Well, I understand this is a hard base, it's been a tough base. And plus, Minot was no picnic either." I said, "No, Sir, it wasn't."

He said, "And given what's going on, and what you've done here, I can guarantee you your next assignment will be Ramstein." I said, "Sir, where did you say?" He said, "You heard me, Ramstein, Headquarters of the US Air Forces in Europe." That's like somebody telling me right now that I'm going to be at the White House and working there. I said, "Ramstein?" He said, "Yeah." We talked about that. He said, "Think about it." I said, "Yes, Sir, I will." Then I let my ego get me. Here I am, I had a one-star General tell me he wants me. I had the top cop of USAFE say - I mean of Eighth Air Force tell me he can give me an assignment in USAFE at Ramstein.

I'm thinking, "Well, damn, I'm good. I'm really good." And then I broke my rule. My ego got me. I had that liaison with that Air Force member. He went and told OSI, and I already had two run-ins with OSI before. One of them was an Air Force airman, the armorer, who I would get my weapon to. He got caught for homosexual acts. The OSI searched his room on barracks, and his barracks on base, and went into his diary. And he wrote things in there, you know, Captain Maxwell's a really good-looking guy. I wish I could go to bed with Captain Maxwell, and all this other stuff. I didn't know all this.

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I went into OSI, they read me my rights. I waived my rights. I said, "What do you guys want?" "Do you know Airman so-and-so?" "Yeah." "How do you know Airman so-and-so?" "I get my weapon from him every day." "What kind of contact do you have with him?" "Reaching through the damn bars of the armory, getting my weapon and pulling it back, and when I come off duty, reaching through the bars and giving him back the damn weapon. What is going on?" "Oh no, nothing, Captain, no, that's alright." I said, "Is there anything else?" He said, "No, we're done." And then I get called in another time, and they said, "Sir, we understand you walk around the barracks in the evening." And then they read me my rights, and I waived my rights. I'm thinking -- because they were on the hunt for me.

KT: Yeah, after the diary incident. That raised suspicion.

CM: Yeah, and then this other little thing came up. And I know I'm bouncing around. I'm telling you, there are two instances with OSI before the third and final. So, the second time, I was at the barracks, or they brought me in, questioning me about being in barracks. I said, "That's what we're supposed to do." "Why is that, Sir?" "Because I'm told by my Colonel, my Commander Colonel -- I forgot his name -- that all shift Commanders, as part of their shift will, once a week, go through the barracks of their troops, checking on their rooms. What? What is wrong with that?" "Oh, nothing, Sir. We just wanted to check things out. We were getting some stories and this, that." I said, "Are you guys through?" He said, "Yeah, we're through." And then now, comes the final thing where I said I felt my quote-unquote, shit didn't stink. I thought I was everything.

KT: So, the incident occurred after they had been lobbying you.

CM: Yeah, the two times before -- they called me in twice before.

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KT: Right, but after they had been lobbying you to stay on, and promising you great things, it was after that, that you had this liaison.

CM: Correct.

KT: It wasn't an incident that happened before.

CM: No, it was after everyone was telling me that --

KT: You're looking at what, a matter of weeks, and you're out, right?

CM: I'm looking at six months and I'm gone.

KT: Six months, okay.

CM: Six months and I'm out, I'm back stateside. I'm thinking, you know, hey -- and then I broke my rule. He told OSI, and OSI called me in again. "Okay," I said, "This isn't good." I knew something wasn't right. They sat me down and then he read me my rights, and I waived my right to an attorney. He said, "Sir, we understand you do know Airman so-and-so." I said, "Yes, I do." "We understand that you and Airman so-and-so went out on a certain date." I said, "Yeah." "What happened?" I said, "Well, what do you guys want to know?" "We want to know what happened that night, Sir." I was thinking to myself, "Okay, this is it."

I looked at both of the investigators, and I said, "I need you guys to leave the room." They said, "Why?" "I need to pray." And so, they left, and I prayed.

I was wearing my ring. And then everything that I was brought up [to believe], and I told you earlier in this interview, about integrity from my father, integrity that I grew up with, telling the truth, having the truth beat into you, or beat into me, ever since I was a kid. Junior ROTC. "Cadets will not lie, cheat, or steal, tolerate anyone among us who do." The Citadel, and I'm wearing this ring, and I need to hold true to that. And I

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prayed and then I -- you know, "the truth will set you free" came to me, and the investigators walked back in. They said, "You ready to talk?" I said, "Yeah." And I told them everything that happened that night. The only thing they had on me was a matchbook. That was the only evidence--after I said everything, that was the only thing they had on me was a matchbook.

But I didn't know that, I just knew that Chuck needed to tell the truth. I knew I did something wrong, and I thought well, if I tell the truth, they know I'm going to be leaving, they know I'm getting out. I thought you know, let's kick him out and get him gone. No, they went through full court martial. A full court martial. *Full* court martial.

KT: As a show of --

CM: Whatever they wanted to do, why they did that. And it was a packed courtroom, and every instance and every incident and every microsecond of that evening was played out in court.

KT: Good God.

CM: And I got up there to speak -- the attorney -- I hired a civilian attorney because Air Force attorneys, please, no good. And I mean they're no good because somebody in the Air Force writes their report and they're going to do for whoever writes their report. (Microphone interference) I was allowed to go on the stand, and I apologized to the Air Force.

I apologized to my troops, my Commander. "I'm sorry I put you all through this," and everything else. I said, "One thing I'd like for you to notice, Your Honor, is that as everything was played in front of me tonight, or today, and my wrongdoings, when we all die and go to heaven, the same thing's going to happen to each one of us and before God,

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everything that we've done in our lives is going to be played out in front of God, and that's where he will have his judgment. I told the truth, so that's all I have to say."

They found me guilty, which I knew they would, guilty of conduct unbecoming -- they tried to get me for sodomy, they tried to get me for rape and all this other stuff. Those were my charges.

KT: Good God.

CM: But they got me [for] conduct unbecoming an Air Force officer, that kind of thing. I was dismissed -- dismissal from the Air Force, \$1000.00 fine, and sixty days in jail. And I was not believing it when they said sixty days in jail. That's when my world just went blank. And I remember saying, "I'm not going home." I was dating a guy in England at that time, and if it wasn't for him, I would have killed myself because I already had a plan, when all this was going out, before I got to the court martial.

They stripped me of my beret, they stripped me of my badge, they stripped me of my top-secret clearance. I wasn't a cop anymore, which is what I wanted to be. And everybody on the base knew what was going on. It was in the base paper. And my world just came crumbling down. I'm just thinking, there's no reason for me -- I embarrassed my family, and the proud existence they eked out in segregated South Carolina.

I screwed all that up. I don't need to live. And I thought out a way to kill myself by having a car accident because in England, you drive on the left side of the road, it's easy for an American to forget. And I had the intersection picked out, I had the day picked out. And I remember starting to turn the car toward the right to go into the wrong lane. And I thought of Ian, the guy who I was dating then, who we're still very good friends to this day. And I thought of him, and I said I can't do that. And I pulled my

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vehicle back inside the lane.

And then I went on with the rest of the stuff. They handcuffed me, took me to jail, strip-searched me, took my bars and everything else, threw all that stuff, everything. I became a prisoner. And it just -- I went through a lot of reflection in there, and it was hard. It was really hard. I went through a major state of depression after those years, and trying to find a job and everything else. I couldn't tell people that--as far as how I got out of the Air Force, and everything else.

And it took me a while -- it took a lot of faith and belief in the basic stuff that I grew up with. And friends, you know, telling me I can do it, I'm all right. I'm good as who I am. I'm a good person. There was a friend of mine who was a Jesuit priest, that I met in Cambridge, through my uncle, he got stationed -- he got transferred to a church in England -- in London, a Jesuit church in London, and I told him everything that was going on with me. He said, "Well, come to London." I took a week off and I went, and I stayed in their monastery in London for a week, and just got away from the world, for that whole time.

But anyway, before I did that -- I did that, and then there was another time I invited Gregory out to Ian's house in Oxfordshire. And I was just talking with him. This was before I went to jail. And I was saying, you know, "Greg, what's wrong with me?" He said, "What do you mean?" "Is it wrong to be gay?" He said, "Is it wrong to like the color red?" "No. It's your preference." He said, "Well, there you are." I said, "Well, I'm still going to be going to hell, aren't I?" He said, "Why would you do that? Why would that happen to you? You're a great person."

So, I mean I'm getting really a good counsel from Gregory because he knew me

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from the days hanging out with my uncle and everything, and then about this. And then when I was in jail, he came in a couple of times. He wore his collar and everything else, and all the guards went, “Whoa. This is a real preacher. He knows prisoner Maxwell whoa.” They started this, that and the other. And then, because the guards mostly were black--they really had it out for me--plus they knew I was an officer and being black, and they gave me even more crap because of that.

The first night I woke up in jail, the first morning I woke up in jail, he looked at me and he said, “You’re not supposed to be in here.” He gave me the meanest look, it was a guard, a black guard. Then there was a black Sergeant, who didn't like me at all. He abused me in the jail cell. He threw me around a couple of times, grabbed me by my clothes, threw me around, threw me on the floor, that kind of thing. He said, “Who are they going to believe if you tell anybody anything?” I just looked at him, and I said, “I’ll be alright.”

Then one day, I was in my cell, he came in, I popped to attention. And he said, “I hear you’re even--” because I wasn't getting letters during and before the court martial, I was getting all kinds of letters of support from friends and everybody else, and Ian coordinated a letter to be written by Douglas Hurd, who was the British Home Secretary. Douglas Hurd wrote a letter in support of me and asking for leniency, given my court martial and everything else.

The British Foreign Secretary asked that to the Air Force. And so, he, the Sergeant, who was in charge of the jail, he said, “I hear you’re even connected all the way up there to Douglas Hurd.” I said, “I got a letter from him. I’ve met him. Yes, Sergeant.” He said, “What do you think about that?” I said, “I’m still in here with you,

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aren't I?" He looked at me, he walked out and left the room.

KT: So, you hadn't anticipated that jail would be a possibility.

CM: No. Well, I've heard that it could be, but I was thinking jail, why jail? I didn't think that. I mean court martial, yeah, dismissal, yeah. I only had six months left in, why go through all this and then keep me in even longer? I got out -- I did fifty days in jail because I had ten days of good behavior. I only had sixty days; I'm not going to screw up. I'm getting the hell out of here. But even in jail--again [like] at The Citadel--I turned something bad into something good. I led exercises each morning. Whenever we went on runs, I sang jodies into PT runs. I helped other people out. There was another guy in there who was an officer, that got caught in a homosexual sting.

KT: So, basically, they just put all the gays in jail together?

CM: If they find a fag, they'll do --

KT: Was anyone else in there for any other crime?

CM: Oh, I mean drunk and disorderly, cursing out their officer.

KT: Ten days, twenty days or something.

CM: No, sometimes a year, two years.

KT: For drunk and disorderly?

CM: Yeah, it depends, if you hit a cop. But they were in there for other things, but you know, this guy, this other officer, he was a Lieutenant or Captain, I can't remember. They could tell he was weak. The other guys could tell he was weak, and they started screwing around with him, you know, pushing him around and everything else, and then they knew me. They knew that I'm gay and knew why I was in there. And one guy, who thought he was Mr. Toughshit, and he was younger than I.

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He may have been twenty, I don't know. He started testing me, and then a lot of other -- and all the other prisoners were near. And I just looked at him. I said, "Listen, yes, I know I'm a prisoner here just like you. And you know why I'm in here, too. Now, if you want to go ahead and let's get into a fight, let's do it. But when I kick your ass, it's going to be mighty embarrassing when find out that your ass got kicked by a faggot." And he just backed off after that, and we became friends. We just kept it cool. I said, "I only have sixty days in here." So, there you go.

KT: So, being a knob was good training.

CM: Being a knob helped me get through it. Being in Sword Drill because Sword Drill, that was a complete mental exercise for a year. And the fourteen nights, being in the armory, another mental -- there are periods of time I don't remember the armory because it was just so intense physically, plus I was the only black person on drill. Of course, I stood out. I couldn't hide. There was one upperclassman on Eighty-Four Drill -- Eighty-Four Drill trained me -- trained us, trained Eighty-Five Drill. And their little thing -- we were called roaches before we go to drill.

We're called roaches, and during one part of roaching, an upperclassman is going to ask for, I want a pizza this night, or I want a soda this night, and I want this kind of soda. I want popcorn. I don't want any air bullshit popcorn, I want it popped it oil, and I want lots and lots of parmesan cheese on it, and I want it by my room at this time. We're spending money by doing all these things for these guys. My sword needs to be shined at this time, and this, that and the other. We roached. We were just little peons, little roaches.

But there was this one guy in Eighty-Four Drill, and he did not want to see a black

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person on drill. And he gave me an order to be in his room with a Diet 7-Up and something else, and M&Ms or something. And I couldn't find a diet - I got him a Diet Pepsi or a 7-UP, I didn't get him what he wanted, and reported to his room along with three others of my roach mates. We had to report to his room. That's when they allowed us to go to the rooms.

We were in rooms for an hour. The first thirty minutes is physical exercise, and the last thirty minutes is sword manual. But the first thirty minutes is getting our asses beat. But anyway, I didn't get him what he wanted. I was in one of his drill mate's rooms, and they called up saying, "Your roach didn't get you what you asked for." Myself and my three roach mates, we got into the room, he hung up the phone. He said, "What do you have for me, roach?" I showed him.

He slapped it out of my hands, said, "I didn't ask for any of that shit." He said, "Why didn't you get it?" I said, "Sir, they didn't have any of this on campus." "You're supposed to take your ass off campus and do it." I'm thinking, I'm not going off campus, no. No, I'm not going off campus. He just grabbed me, and then it was just -- it was hell. He threw me around, he slapped me, threw me under the bed, and I started doing pushups under the bed. He pulled me from underneath there and bounced me off the full press, threw me on the floor, jumped on my back and started doing pushups with him on my back. And my roach mates were standing there. I didn't expect them to help. I didn't expect it because that's -- they can't do that.

KT: And you've got to just take it.

CM: I took it. I got beat. I busted my lip right here. I had a scar on my forehead, and my uniform was just torn all to shreds, and all the stuff was just all over the place,

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and I just went blank. And then I became conscious. I mean I don't think I was knocked out, but I became aware, when he grabbed me and he pulled me up from the floor, and he threw me on the bed, and I felt the bar hit me in the back, the bed hit me in the back. He said, "You fucking understand me? You're never going to make drill as long as I'm here."

I was just looking -- he was right in my face saying that. He threw me on the floor, right in front of my roach mates. "Get him out of here." They picked up my sword, brass and all, everything else. I remember them dragging me to another classmate's room, and they washed me up, and I got my uniform and everything all together. Then I walked -- no, I ran back to my room. My roommate saw me come in. "What the hell happened to you?" I said, "Don't worry about it. Just let me just get myself together."

Then I got phone calls from the other guys. "Chuck, I heard what happened. What's going on? You all right? That's bullshit, that's bullshit. Are you going to quit?" I said, "I'm not quitting. I'm not going to quit." I went to another room one day. I was doing pushups with my roach mate, in one room, with two other drill members. One of the drill members looked down at me while I'm doing pushups. He said, "Maxwell, you're not joining the Sword Drill, just so you can be the only black person on drill, are you?"

I stopped pushups, I looked him in the eye. I said, "Sir, no, Sir." He said, "Good because you won't make it if you are." Black had nothing to do with that. Then it goes to the other side, where black cadets -- I mean I had black friends, but there were only a few of us there. And the one guy who usually cut my hair, he asked me, he said, "Chuck, are you white or are you black?" I go, "What? What made you ask that question?" He said,

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“What are you, white or black?” I said, “I’ll tell you who I am. I’m Chuck Maxwell.

Third, I’m a man, three, I’m a battalion (microphone interference) commander, do you hear my race come in here anywhere?” “No,” he said, “What’s going on?” I said, “Listen, you tell -- you ask the same question you asked me, I know that you and all the other black cadets in this Corps have been asking, and I’m giving this to you, you tell them.”

Being black or whatever, or who the hell I am--I’m here to be an example for the Corps, for the Corps Cadets. If there are black kids that see me, and know that they can get as high as I can, or higher, then I want to be that example. Now, look at you guys. You guys are joining all these fraternities off campus, Q-Sci-Fi and everything else. And the Qs, you all call yourselves dogs and you’re all barking on campus and everything else. You see all these white people looking at you, how does that look? How does that look to me?

You guys are barking like a bunch of damn fools, and I’m trying to be a good example, not be a good, quote-unquote, nigger, but be a good cadet, but you guys are barking like a bunch of damn fools.” I said, “I tell you what, how many black Battalion Sergeant Majors have there been in this Corps?” “One.” I said, “Who was that?” “You.” “How many black people were on Junior Sword Drill?” “One.” “Who is that?” “You.” “How many black people were on Summerall Guards?” “One.” “Who is that?” “You.” “How many black people are both a member of Junior Sword Drill and Summerall Guards?” And he said, “You.”

And I said, “That’s right. I’m the only one out of the entire class of 1985 to be both a member of Junior Sword Drill and the Summerall Guards. I didn’t do it because of my damn race. That had nothing to do with it. I’m Chuck Maxwell, is who the hell I am,

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so you go on out there doing all that, and I don't see anybody else doing all this. I forgot; how many black Battalion Commanders are there right now? You're battalion staff, but you're just a staff member, you're not in command." "You." "Why is that? Why aren't you a damn Battalion Commander? Y'all fucking around, and you're bitching about everything. Yeah, this place sucks, yeah, we get called nigger, yeah, this is that and the other. But you know, if you're going to sit there and let all that dictate who you are right now, imagine what's going to happen out there in the real world." I said, "You better get yourself together now, bud." He said, "Chuck, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." "No, no, no, you tell everybody else what I told you, if they've got any questions, you heard it from me because I'm done with it. And the people I hung around with, they had rank. Oh, my God, they're all white. People I hung around with, they're well known on the campus. Oh, my God, they're all white, they're not black. So, hey, there we are."

And I left his room. And then as becoming Battalion Commander, two stores I'd like to go to. One is when I went from my Regimental Commander Board, it was junior year, you fill out this rank sheet and all the things that you've done. And you put the top three ranks that you want to be for next year senior. I put Regimental Commander, Battalion Commander, and Platoon Leader, which was a Cadet Lieutenant. And I went to my Regimental Commander Board, and there were at least ten people--in Jenkins Hall, inside the Board Room in Jenkins Hall--ten people there, and one of them was a white Air Force -- one of my white Air Force instructors. And I say that for a reason. He was over there on the Board as well, asking questions and everything else.

KT: Who were you talking to? You say ten people?

CM: Oh, ten people. One is, at that time, Colonel Braden, the Commandant of

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Cadets, the Assistant Commandant of Cadets, that was Colonel Dick at the time. Colonel Legare, Public Relations of The Citadel.

KT: Why would the PR guy be there? Okay, yeah, yeah, right. I know, I've worked there long enough. (laughs)

CM: And I can't remember who else, but those are the main people that I remember. I'd say there were at least ten of them that were in the room. Somebody from Navy, Marine ROTC, that kind of thing. And they asked me, "So, we understand you want to be Regimental Commander." "Yes, Sir, I do." "Why? Who will you be responsible to, say if you are chosen as Regimental Commander?" "I'll be responsible to the Corps."

And I looked at everybody, "To the Corps, to the Corps of Cadets, and my job is to represent the Corps of Cadets and build leadership within the Corps of Cadets." "How would you do that?" "Well for one, the thing that I would do is that I would -- any cadet, because there are senior Privates, or any cadet that has a contract, because they've got Senior Privates who have gotten Air Force, or got ROTC contracts and are going to the military, and they're stuck as Senior Privates, and they're sitting in the formation, they're not getting any leadership training."

I said, "It would be once a month or once a week, or sometime, where I would put every Senior Private, they would have to lead a platoon, or they would have to do something, and to show their leadership qualities because they're going into the military. They've got a contract going in." And he said, "Any Senior Private?" I said, "Yes, Sir." "What if they're on tour?" I said, "Any Senior Private because they won't be on tours when they're sitting out there shooting a gun, wherever they're going to go." I said a few

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other things that I don't remember.

Oh, and I remember Colonel Braden, I gave an answer to something, he humphed up -- he was the Commandant of Cadets -- out of his chair real quick, and he went into a room off the side. I looked at him and then I looked back at whoever was asking me a question, and I continued on. And he came back in and sat down. They said, "Well, Mr. Maxwell, we appreciate your time, and thank you, this, that and the other."

I leave the room, then rank is announced, and Regimental Commander, I'm sitting there, and they said Charlie Roperson at that time, yeah, Charlie Roperson. Shoot, I didn't get it, maybe XO. And they said Ralph Engler, Regimental XO. So, well, there are four Battalions, let's see what goes there. First Battalion Commander, somebody else; Second Battalion Commander, somebody else, then the XO and the XO. Third Battalion Commander, somebody else and the XO. Fourth Battalion Commander, Chuck Maxwell. "Oh, God, holy crap, I got a Battalion." And my XO was my roommate from sophomore year, so we know each other. I said, "Okay, this is a good thing. All right, this is a good thing." I'm going to make sure I do a happy ending instead of a sad ending.

So, Battalion Commander, and my Tack Officer was Colonel Wellbrook, Lieutenant Colonel Wellbrook. I found out last week that he passed away recently, and that hurt because I wanted to get back in touch with him. He taught me a lot, not just about military leadership, but leadership in general, and management of people, and people's psyche. I mean I learned a lot from that Marine, a lot. He tried to get me to change to Marines for a long time.

No, I'm not changing to Marines, I'm Air Force. "Why is that, Mr. Maxwell?" "Well, Sir, I don't plan on making the Air Force a career, and for one, I'm not a Marine.

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You all earn that uniform. You earn to put that uniform on. I don't have it in my heart to be a Marine. And I know you all have tried to get me to change. I appreciate that, but I'm planning on going into business after I do my Air Force stint. And the Air Force, out of all the branches of the military, the Air Force is more business-oriented." And he said, "That makes sense." Well, there we are.

And Colonel Wellbrook just taught me a lot. I'd just go in his office and just chat with him, and you'd learn great things, a lot of things from him. And then it came down to maybe a week before graduation because I had the worst Battalion. I had Fourth Battalion, the zoo, they called me the zookeeper. It was a mess. I saw some crazy stuff going on in there. And I asked Colonel Wellbrook, because I didn't take a lot of the crap that went on in there. I came from Third Battalion. We're military, we get our stuff together.

But I also knew when to allow leeway in there. And I asked Colonel Wellbrook, I said, "Sir, you've got to tell me, how did I do? No one's told me how I did as Battalion Commander." He sat in his chair, put out a cigarette, and I said, "Sir?" He said, "No, I'm thinking here." I said, "About what?" I said, "Thinking about how to tell you this so your head doesn't grow." He said, "You did a damn good job." He said, "You made a difference in the Battalion." I said, "You sure?" He said, "Yes, son, I'm sure." "Thank you, Colonel, thank you. That's all I wanted to know, if I made a difference."

And then at that time, after -- I'm bouncing around. I talked with Colonel Wellbrook, and I was at the end of my senior year, almost graduated. After the Regimental Commander Boards--I kept getting these signals from my Air Force instructors. One of them was on Sword Drill, so we had a bond immediately. He looked

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at me. I went into his office one day and he said, because rank was announced, and he says, "Well, Mr. Maxwell, I guess they're not ready for a black reggie veggie."

I didn't think anything about it. He said, "You'll do well in Fourth." I said, "Thank you." And then I went to the white Air Force officer. He pulled me off to the side, we had a meeting, or he called me into his office, and he said, "Close the door." He said, "I want to tell you something, son, you're good. This school didn't make you." He said, "You could have gone to Yale, you could have gone to College of Charleston, you could have gone to Clemson, and done still exceptional and been an exceptional student. Just remember the school didn't make you, you made yourself. And don't let anybody tell you you're substandard here. You understand what I'm talking about?" I said, "Yes, Sir," and I'm thinking, "What the hell is he talking about? I don't know."

Then Captain Shepherd, he was the black Air Force instructor, the one that told me, "Go get your assignment." And he approached me, and it was a few -- maybe a month or so before graduation, or a while before graduation. He said, "Mr. Maxwell, when you graduate, I want to talk with you." I said, "Really? What is it, Captain Shepherd?" He said, "No, I want to talk with you." I said, "Well, why can't you talk with me now?" He said, "No, after you graduate." "Okay."

Graduated, got my Air Force -- went to Minot, went to Heyford. I had to go to Ramstein on temporary duty for something, and Captain Shepherd and his wife, who I met and hung out with them when they were in Charleston, and their daughter Alex, who I'm certain is a married lady by now. I wish I could find Captain Shepherd. I met up with him at his house and we started drinking Scotch. I said, "Okay, I'm out. What's this thing you had to talk to me about?" He said, "What do you think of your Regimental

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Commander Board?" I said, "Well, it went all right, best as I could figure out."

And this story came from the white Air Force instructor of mine. I can't remember his name; I can see him. And then I'm certain that the news spread throughout the other officers in there, and Captain Shepherd being black, (microphone interference) came to me and was speaking to me about this. I wrote a letter to the previous President of the Citadel before Rosa because I found out -- he did something that impressed me, and I wrote him and thanked him for it. And I told him the story that I'm about to tell you.

And he wrote back, "No, this didn't happen," and this, that and the other. The school is going to protect itself. Any institution is going to protect itself. Now why would I lie when I tell this story, and why would these other people tell me all these other things? Looking back in retrospective, why would they tell me these things if it weren't true? And at first, also let me say, before I continue, I love my school. You see I'm wearing my ring. You heard one of my classmates paid for me to go there. I love my school. I want this for posterity and for people to know, whatever, if it inspires some people or stops crap, I want it to be used for that. I want it to be used for good.

Captain Shepherd said, "Well, the feedback that I got on there, because you know who was on your board." I said, "Yeah, Captain -- the white Air Force Captain I can't think of -- yeah, he was on there." "Well, he and I spoke, and long story short," he said, "Well, remember when Colonel Braden jumped up out of his seat?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You know, that didn't faze you." I said, "No, it didn't." He said, "No, that was a test because it freaked out other people that were inside there, when they went for their Boards. He just did that just to do it and see your reaction." He said, "You didn't move."

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“No, that was his issue, I don’t know what it was.” He said, “No, that was just a test to see what you’d do, and you stayed on track.” He said, “Chuck, you were selected as Regimental Commander.” “What?” He said, “Yeah.” “How the fuck did I get a Battalion and the worst damn Battalion in the Corps at that, how did that happen?!” He said, “Calm down.” He said, “You see why I waited for you to graduate to tell you this?” I said, “I’m confused, why?”

He said, “Well, let me tell you this. You had a plan. You had a vision. You were the only one who had some goals in there, of all the people that wanted to be Regimental Commander. You had your stuff together in there. And when it came down to the decision, they said that yes, you know, let’s make Chuck Maxwell Regimental Commander. The school Public Relations Officer, Colonel Legare, spoke up and said, “I’m worried about the PR angle. A black cadet being in charge of a Corps of Cadets that started the Civil War, the Citadel and the South and da.” I said, “I’m not believing this.” He said, “And that knocked you out from being Regimental Commander.”

And he said, “Remember what you’ve done there, none of that can be taken away.” And I just -- I took a big swig of whiskey. He said, “You want some more?” I said, “Yeah.” I sat in shock. And then it was all the crap growing up black in the South. When I was in first grade, which was 1968, the school, in Midland Park Road, when we had the trailer, the school that I went to, that I attended, was Midland Park Elementary. And that was the very first year that school was integrated. And *Brown v. Board of Education* was when, in 1957?

KT: Fifty-four.

CM: And you see how progressive the South was, getting to adhering to that. That

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was the first time that school had been integrated. I asked people, friends of mine, and a lot of other people, I say, “Do you remember your first day of school ever, of elementary school?” Like, “Well, yeah, yeah. Do you remember your first day?” I say, “Do you remember your second day?” “No.” I say, “I remember my second day.” “Why is that?” “Well, I was walking home, and this white girl was giving me all kinds of crap, “nigger” this, spitting on me, knocking my books out of my hand, kicking me in the ass, pushing me in the dirt. And I had to walk two blocks home *with* that. And then one time, when I started fighting back, she pushed me into the street off the sidewalk, and I almost got hit by a car. Thank God, it swerved out of the way. And neighbors came running out, and my mother came running out, and went to grab that girl and was going to give her a thing or two, and the neighbors pulled her away. And they were like, ‘Why did you do that?’ And the girl said, ‘My Momma said niggers don’t walk on the sidewalk.’”

That was my second day in school. As I said, all the things that I told you before, and then all that, and I was listening to Captain Shepherd talk about it, and I was sitting in shock. And he said, “Chuck, you did well there. You did damn good there, despite what all this other stuff that went on.” He said, “You’re a Captain in the Air Force now. You wear the ring. People are going to respect you because of what you’ve done there. You were known in that campus, all around the campus. So, keep onto that. Don’t let this dictate you in the future.” And that’s when people ask me about the racism at The Citadel, but I didn’t go looking for it. I knew it was there. I didn’t go looking for it. When I saw it, I moved on.

KT: Why did he tell you that?

CM: He told me that -- I don’t know, I guess to let me know that I shot for the

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highest, I got there, but because I'm black, I didn't make it. He knew, or a lot of people knew I wanted to be Regimental Commander. They knew I had all the things to do to be Regimental Commander. He told me the story, and that came from him, from the officer-- the white officer on the Regimental Commander's Board--and the school sent me a letter denying -- "according to your allegation that this happened, this, that and the other."

They're going to protect themselves, but given what I've told you about my integrity, about OSI questioning me, not asking for a lawyer, knowing I did wrong, standing up and telling the truth, why would I lie about that? I have no reason to. Again, I just want the stuff to be known, I want it to be out there, so that no other injustice is done to any cadet. If the school stands for integrity, honesty, honor, God and country, then damn it, do it. Don't hide behind a fucking smoke screen of bullshit and smoke and mirrors. If you're going to do it, do it, do it right, have some integrity yourself, Citadel.

But anyway, when I found out I got Fourth Battalion Commander, and my motivation -- I had one motivation, to be Fourth Battalion Commander, or to be -- I had one motivation to get -- well, first, that I saw the three diamonds on the Regimental Commander's beret -- I mean on his cap. He came from Mike Company, and Mike Company's always known for military people, we're the company, we're Military Mike. Leadership comes out of Mike, that's what we're known for.

And the Regimental Commander, when I was a knob, he came from Mike Company, and I saw those three diamonds on his hat. I want those. And when I was a knob, we came in from one of these hot parades, being eaten by the gnats on the parade ground and everything else, sweating all over the place, and I'm bracing. And I'm watching the -- my Battalion Commander (Shutak), he dismisses his staff, and I'm

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bracing, but I'm looking at him and my eyes are following him, and he walked up to Third Division where his room is. And I saw him walk into his room. He goes into his room and closes the door. And there's this air conditioner. At that time, at The Citadel, there were only five rooms that had an air conditioner, the Regimental Commander's room, and the four Battalion Commanders. Only five rooms in the Citadel had an air conditioner, and it was hot. He walked into his room, and I looked, and I saw the water dropping off the air conditioner. I told myself as a knob, right then and there, I said, "When I'm a senior, I'm going to have an air-conditioned room." I got my damn air-conditioned room.

KT: (laughs) Were you the first black Battalion Commander?

CM: No. It'll hit me when I'm speaking. No, I'm the second. I was the first black Fourth Battalion Commander. I forgot the guy's name. When I was Battalion Sergeant Major, he was my Commander. He was the first black Battalion Commander.

KT: But that would have been eighty-four, eighty-three.

CM: It was eighty-four, 1984, Class of Eighty-Four. And don't get me wrong - not to take anything away from him - the school at that time, was trying to get jocks more involved in command structure. He was a football -- Eric Manson, Eric Manson. A good guy, I loved working with him. I'm not trying to take anything away from -- off of Eric. Not at all. And the school wanted to get jocks more involved, and Eric, he was more doing the football thing, and he was actually leading the Battalion. And, you know, that's how that worked out. I'm not taking anything away from Eric at all. I love Eric.

I learned a lot from him. I was happy to be his Sergeant Major. I was the first black Fourth Battalion Commander, and there were people in that Battalion that didn't

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like to see a black Fourth Battalion Commander, in Fourth Battalion because the Citadel's in the South. You've got a lot of southern boys out there that still believe that the South should be the way the South should be.

KT: How did being gay shape your leadership style?

CM: (pause) Not acting like a faggot, I guess, knowing I had to be better. I had to set the example, and if somebody found out I was gay, or that I am gay, "Well, wow, but he did this, he did that. Well, darn, if he's gay, can do it, then I can do it". As far as a leadership style, it also -- I became tolerant -- not tolerant, forgiving of people, or I wasn't an asshole to everybody. I had understanding.

Right now, they call it emotional intelligence, EQ. I guess I got exposed to EQ back then, knowing that being black and gay, I'm a double minority, I'm a double target. And I have no right to judge anybody, except if they're a knob. (laughs) Knobs are knobs. But I wanted to -- I went to that school because I wanted to do well, plus, you know, I said I grew up in Charleston, and I knew all about -- a lot about that school. And family members having put their footprint on that school, that I spoke of earlier.

I'm glad I went there. I hope to do well -- I mean I hope to do more good at that school, especially with gay and lesbian cadets, black cadets. When I went for my reunion, I found any black cadet that I could get my hands on, and it was a guy and a girl the first time, and they were walking into Bond Hall, which is across from now Fifth Battalion, but it used to be Fourth Battalion, my Battalion. And I saw them walking, and I said, "Hey, can I talk to you all?" I said, "Listen, I'm an 85 grad, I'm an alumni, I'm here," this, that and the other, and I got up close to them, and I said, "Listen, you all see that I'm black, too, and I know what kind of shit you get from this school. I know what you do. I

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know what you go through because I've done it, I've been there. You see that Battalion across there? I was in charge of that Battalion."

They looked at me and their eyes, they said, "Really?" I said, "Yes, I was Fourth Battalion Commander twenty-five years ago, so if this little boy from South Carolina can graduate from the Citadel, the two of you have no excuse, and you can graduate, so don't let it get to you. Keep your goal, keep your focus, and get that sheepskin and get the ring, and get going." And I told the same thing to another cadet that I saw in Mark Clark Hall. I said, "Listen, if anything," and I told it to any other black cadet that I've spoken to, except for those two I spoke of earlier. One's here at the Citadel Alumni Association. They have a function where the knobs who are the pre-knobs--the high school kids that are going to The Citadel. We have a little thing for them, and we give them crap, they're going to be knobs. But anyway, there was one black cadet there.

KT: From the Atlanta area.

CM: From the Atlanta area, and his family. Of course, everyone else there is white, and you know they're feeling uneasy. I went there and I made them feel comfortable, and I started talking with them. I spoke with the mother and the father and the son. And then I said, "I want you all to listen to me when I talk with him."

And I looked at him, "You're going to hear the word nigger. You're going to hear it being thrown at you. You're going to hear everything else; all kinds of stuff being thrown at you while you're there." The mother started, you know, "Oh, God." I said, "Mommy, the worst thing you can do is try to protect him because he's got to grow up sometime. And you see me, you see how it's easy for me to walk in this room of quote-unquote, white people." I put it in a different language and context, into the black

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language, in context. “You see that most of the people in here are white, but you see how easy I talk with anybody in here? Because I’m a grad. They can’t take that away from me. And just like you, if you want to be in The Citadel, do it. You want to graduate? Do it.”

And I said, “If anything, get involved with everything in The Citadel.” And I said, “Don’t, whatever you do, and you may get ticked off by me saying this to you,” and I said it to the other cadet, the black cadet that I saw at my reunion, I said the same thing.

I said, “Don’t crowd around and just only hang out with the black cadets. Don’t segregate yourself like that because you are segregating yourself. The school’s not causing you to be segregated. They’re not singling you out, you are doing it. Now, if you just want to hang with all the black people, good. That’s all right, but don’t come bitching and moaning when life doesn’t turn out right for you, and you don’t get this certain rank and this, that and the other, because I’m here to tell you, I didn’t hang around with just all the black cadets. I’ve got black friends there, yeah, but the people that I wanted to be associated with, they had rank and were motivated in doing things, sadly, they were white, that’s where I went.”

And I said, “If you want to learn anything outside of this little world of being black, hang with people and associate with people who don’t look like you, who don’t speak like you, who didn’t grow up in the same surroundings that you did, that’s the only way you’re going to grow in this world. If you just hang around in that little box, that’s all you’re going to know, and I’m here to tell you, you’re missing out on life. So get out there and know some people because, also, these same people are going to be CEOs of companies and everything else, and you want to do business with, when you open your

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own business. But you're not going to make it if you're just hanging in that little box of black people."

KT: I want you to tell me about your partner.

CM: Duane. He's a lifesaver. We met in the bar. It was a gay bar here in Atlanta.

KT: Here in town.

CM: Burkhart's. How that happened, I was in a previous relationship for six years, and then that one went south really quick. It was hard, it was bad, it wasn't nice, it wasn't pretty. And I moved out of the house that we both had together, paid mortgage on, and everything else, and went and moved into an apartment. And then people at work knew what was going on. I worked at Leslie Woods Hospital here.

And thank goodness, out of the twist of the universe and God's divine intervention, my boss was gay, so he knew what was happening with me. My work performance went down because he knew I was going through all that crap, and he understood what I was going through. If I didn't have him, I probably would have been fired. And so, friends of mine at work said, "Come on, meet us out at the Burkhart's." "I don't want to go to a bar." "Come on." "Alright, I'll be there."

So, I get to Burkhart's, I get there early, and before my friends get there, I walk upstairs, get a beer. I turn around and see Duane standing over there, and then I move to a part of the bar on the second floor, and I stand in a corner because I don't want to be there. And as I'm standing there drinking a beer, I see Duane turn around and look at me, and I'm going, "Oh, God, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no! No, I hate men. Men are dogs. No, no! No, I don't need this. Where the hell are my friends? Damn it, get here." (KT laughs) And he looks back, and I mean all my switches were off. I did not want to be

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there. He turns around and he comes back and he starts talking.

He started walking towards me, and I said, "Oh, God, what does this queen want?" I said, "I'll be nice. I'm not going to be rude. I'll be nice." We started talking to each other, and then he asked me a question I'd never heard asked in a bar. He said, "What's your favorite time period in American history?" Whoa. A thoughtful question, one that has substance. I said, "I like the Art Deco, Art Nouveau Period, 1910s, you know, 1920s." "Oh, my house is decorated that way." "Yeah, yeah, sure, right, yeah, whatever."

And then we meet up another time, and he picks me up in Stella, the 1950 Buick you saw. He picked me up in her. I thought, "Whoa, check this out." And we started dating and it was a year before I said, "I love you," to him because I wanted to be certain. About him, God walked him into my life because he'd left work, and he went to the bar to have only one beer, and that was it, he was going home. So, the time that I walked in, he was on that one beer.

KT: And he was obviously smitten by you, though. I mean he pursued you halfway around the bar.

CM: He said he saw me walking up the stairs, he saw me come in the door, he saw me walking. He said he followed me the entire way there, and he said, "Yeah, I wanted him, I wanted him." I'm thinking, "I didn't want you." That's the thing, it happens when you don't look for it. I was not looking for that. Really, God walked him into my life because I didn't move. I was not moving. He walked right to me.

And March 20th was thirteen years. We've been together thirteen years, and it's been a thirteen-year party. It feels like thirteen months. He's helped me get through this

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Air Force stuff, and this depression that I've been fighting, which now, I'm managing well, being out of a job. But I've got some leads that are very good that are coming through. And he's just been there for me. He's always smiling, always whistling in the bathroom and the shower. He's always optimistic, and he has unshakable faith.

If I had just a tenth of the faith he had, I'd be a better person and I'm learning from him. It's great. My family loves him, his family loves me. We've, for example, we just got an invitation to a Bar Mitzvah. We've been to Bar Mitzvahs together. Duane's Jewish. Family functions, every year, we go down to his sister's house in Albany, Georgia for Thanksgiving, and then we spend Christmas with my family because he doesn't celebrate Christmas, he's Jewish, so that works out well.

My grandmother, my eighty-seven-year-old grandmother--who grew up in the segregated South, told me all kinds of stories of how she was treated by white people--adores the ground he walks on. She always asks about him whenever I call up, and I let the two of them talk, and the two of them are on the phone talking, my eighty-seven-year-old grandmother. And then I hear people talk about that gay people are less than this, you're going to go to hell, this, that and the other, and everything else. And then I get it from black people, what are you doing with this white guy? You're not supposed to be homosexual.

I get it from white people, you know, straight people, this, that and the other. And there's a picture of my grandmother and me, and I look at that picture, and I'll tell people -- some people, if I show them that picture, or if I think of that picture, I say, "Listen, my eighty-seven-year-old grandmother loves that man, and she grew up in the segregated South, and she's a very religious lady, so that teaches me about God right there. About

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forgiving and love, and everything else that God -- we're supposed to be here doing

"Your will on Earth as it is in Heaven."

If you actually believe that, if you are actually a person of God, you wouldn't be saying all these things to me. Obviously, you don't live in the light of God, you live in darkness and fear. You have a God that you fear. I don't have a God I fear. I have a God that loves me and I love my God, and I live in his light, so hopefully, I'm putting his light upon you, to show you to come out of the darkness of fear, and ignorance and bigotry and everything else, and enjoy life because you're only here a short time. You make this trip only once. Life is too damn short."

He's wonderful. He's a blessing. A true blessing. I'm blessed. And that's how I've gotten this far with him, I mean things are great. I couldn't ask for more. I kid around with him, halfway joke around with him, but it's nothing he can control. I told him, I said, "Listen, you're not to leave this earth before I do." He said, "Why is that?" I said, "Because I don't want to miss you." He says, "Well, I can't control that." "Well, you better do something. Don't you Jews have a direct connection to God? You don't have to go through Jesus like a Christian does?" We bat that off of each other. I'm fortunate.

KT: Is there anything that we may have touched on earlier that you wanted to elaborate upon, or something maybe that -- a question I didn't ask, or something about yourself that important for people to know?

CM: The only thing that I'd like people to know--I've gone and listened to all these stories and everything, just reflecting as I was telling you all these stories, and I'm thinking I've bounced through a lot of things in my life, and I've made it this far, intact.

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But I also look at there are people I worse condition than I am, who have come from broken homes, or families -- abuse, sexual abuse from family members.

I grew up in the South and had the Southern mother, so I got my butt beat with a switch many times, but I mean that kind of thing. I just want to try and be an example for people to keep pushing on. That's hard in any life. Also, I can speak from my point of view being black and gay, and fighting through both of those marks as society puts upon me and boxes they try to put me in. I just keep fighting through it, and I lean on my friends, and find true friends, and follow their example. I see something that I want to go for, I keep pushing for it, even though I may get kicked out because -- or knocked off because I'm black, I could going to knocked off because I'm gay, or I'm too motivated. I've got two master's degrees. I'm a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, and I've also got a -- I'm also a Project Management Professional. I've got a PMP Certification.

I speak three languages other than English. I speak Spanish, Italian, and Mandarin Chinese. I'm this black kid from South Carolina that grew up in a very humble family. I didn't grow up in a rich family, period. I grew up in a family that was a good work ethic, and you stayed true to your integrity and character. And I'm just, you know, as I say this, I'm hoping to still live to that, and hold up that truth in character and in integrity, in spite of all -- anything that I feel is maybe a shortcoming, and still shoot for what I want to do, which is really build a -- Duane and I have two acres of lakefront property--it's paid for, and we want to put our retirement home on.

And I want to live out the rest of my days laughing with him and having family members come over and friends come over and laugh and have a good time and enjoy life. And also, to spread God's light, you know, what love really is and what this world

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can be. As Martin Luther King quoted, during the last speech he gave before he was assassinated. He said, "I'm just trying to do God's will." That's how I feel about myself, just really trying to do God's will. And I want to do it at the Citadel, too, because I want to give back to that school. That's really about it. I love that school.

Yeah, you know, there's some issues there, even to this day, but I feel that hopefully, the right people, the right person will listen to my story and the other stories, and somebody will get inspired, or God's light will hit them and say, "We need to adjust. We really need to live as we say we live in all the literature, in all the stories, and this, that and the other." The Citadel needs to stand up. I want to be there to stand up. I don't want to tear it down. I know the stories I've told don't put it in a good light, but I tell it so that doesn't happen to anybody else, and so that they can make this forward progress.

KT: Thank you very much.

CM: Thank you for your time. I appreciate it. I know I kept you here a long time.

KT: I mean it flew by. This was terrific, it was fascinating.

CM: I appreciate it, Kerry, thank you.

KT: Felt like, I mean, you know, we could keep going.

CM: There could be. I can tell you more stories about New York, but I don't want you to get those recorded. I've just led -- been put in these positions. There's a friend of mine, and I only say this because -- and I don't mean to embarrass anybody or anything. He's a very good friend of mine. He has been there for me when I was going through my crap in the Air Force, and when I met him, I didn't know who he was, or I didn't know his status in life or anything, I just knew him as a good person, until one day he revealed to me who he is. And his name is Prince Jonathan Doria Pamphilj.

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And you heard me correct, Prince, that's his title. His lineage goes back to Andrea Doria, the explorer, and when Andrea Doria was helping Napoleon in the Napoleonic Wars, Napoleon gave Andrea Doria this huge amount of wealth and land, and this, that and the other. And then the Doria family married into the Pamphilj family, which is a wealthy family in Italy. Pope Innocent X is from the Pamphilj family, and that's my friend's Jonathan -- his family is descendent from Pope Innocent the Tenth, and from the Doria Pamphiljs in Rome. He's currently the Prince. I've met his mother, Donna Orietta Pamphilj, and his father, before they passed away -- oh, God, I forgot his -- I addressed him as Don.

His mother Donna Orieta Pamphilj, she helped save the Pamphilj family art and riches and everything from Mussolini, and she stood up to Mussolini, and essentially told Mussolini to go fuck himself. She was a very strong lady and I met her. I'm glad I had the opportunity to meet her. I met Jonathan in London, through my uncle, who went to a party in New York, and I was in England. Jonathan, my uncle calls me up at some ungodly hour, my time in England.

He just came from some party, and he said, "There's someone here who lives in England, and live in London and I want the two of you all to meet." And Jonathan gets on the phone, "Hi, this is Jonathan." I said, "Hi, this is Chuck." "I understand you live in Banbury." I said, "Yeah." I said, "You live in London?" He said, "Yes, well, I'm going to be home in a couple of weeks, and I'll give you a call when I get there." "Fine." You know, it's a friend of my uncle, some guy my age. And when I meet him, I meet him in the Portabella Road area, Holland Park area of London.

KT: Antiques.

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CM: And he's in a -- he's living in a three-story walk-up flight with his partner, Eduardo. Eduardo is from Brazil. And I hung out with them, to get away from being Captain Maxwell, to being Chuck. And I slept on a futon. I didn't care. Then one day, Jonathan, he moved to Venezuela, Margarita Island Venezuela, he and Eduardo moved there. And then their relationship broke off, but they are still very good friends to this day, and they still keep in touch with one another. And then Jonathan went back to Rome, and I was in another relationship, a previous relationship.

And I asked -- and Jonathan calls me up. He said, "You've got to come to Rome. You must come to Rome." And I know it's his home. I said, "Well, do you have room there for me to stay, for me and my partner?" "Oh, yeah, I've got room here for you, no problem." "Okay." Finally get to Rome and we go to this building, and it's a small elevator. Packed in this tiny elevator, going upstairs. And we get to his flat, which is a two-bedroom flat, and an office, and a nice large living room, dining room area, small, tiny kitchen. And so, the first thing we do, we started drinking champagne.

We got there at nine in the morning from the plane, so we're just sucking down champagne. Jonathan says to me, he says, "Charles," he said, "I want to -- (microphone interference) I want to show you around my house." I said, "Show me around your house. Here we are here." He said, "I want to show you the rest of it." "Well, alright." So, the three of us, we walk out that building, we walk another half city block, and then we come to this fenced gate, this ornate wrought iron gate, and Jonathan rings this bell, and out comes this little Italian guy, he looks at me and he doesn't recognize me, and he sees Jonathan. "(speaks Italian) *Oh prinicie! Sì signore, sì signore.*"

What is this? And we walk into this huge courtyard area, and I'm thinking okay,

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this is the museum. Jonathan lives in Rome; he's showing us the museum or whatever.

And we walk up this staircase, this marble staircase, and at the top of this marble staircase is this huge marble sculpture of a lady, and that is one of Jonathan's ancestors, who actually got the Doria and Pamphilj families to marry. She was a very powerful lady. She got her brother, Pope Innocent X elected Pope. (KT laughs) She got her brother, Pope Innocent X elected Pope.

I'm looking at this, and then we get into this huge (microphone interference) ornate room with art, I mean huge room. I don't know, eighty by a hundred, I don't know, I mean it was massive! Fifteen-foot-tall ceilings, columns, art from floor to ceiling, oriental rug, gold guild -- I'm going, "Where are we?" He said, "You're in our home." I went, "What are you? Jonathan, who are you?" He said, "No one told you about me?" "No. What are they supposed to tell me?" He said, "'Well, let's go walk around here a little bit more.'" And I'm looking at this and he says, "That's the throne room where the Pope sits."

KT: The throne room. (laughs)

CM: This art piece here is by Bellini. Here's a piece by Caravaggio. Here's another, you know. And we walked into this hall of mirrors.

KT: Oh my God...

CM: And then we -- and so we go back to his apartment, and I'm thinking -- and he looks at me, he says, "You need anything?" I said, "Yeah, a drink." And then he said to us, "No one told you about me?" I said, "What are they supposed to tell me, Jonathan?" "Well, I'm a prince." "Really?" And he told me the lineage and he showed me the lineage and everything else.

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KT: That's crazy.

CM: And whenever I go to Rome, I've been to Rome so many times, I've lost count. I quit counting. I lost count at five, in 1989. And so -- and I'm blessed. And I say all that, and whenever I go to Rome, I go there. I stay there, Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, with my friend, Jonathan. He does other great things for me. He gives me a lot of -- he's not stuck up about anything. He and his partner, they have two children -- I'm reaching -- I'm moving over here to get a card.

These are their kids, Don Filippo and Emily. They had surrogate -- they sent their sperm to surrogate mothers here in the United States, and the kids were born in the United States through surrogate mothers, and when they were born, at different -- I think a year apart, a year and a half apart, they've gone -- they live in Rome, they live in London. Well, they live in England. They've got a home in England and they've got two palaces in Italy. They've got a palace in Rome and another palace in Genoa, in the northern part of Italy. This is a loving family. Look at it. It's a beautiful family. They're loved. And to the secular world, or to the quote, supposed religious world, that's a sin.

KT: Right.

CM: You know, and it's just stupid in my opinion. But another reason I told this story, and I don't tell a lot of people about Jonathan because I don't want people to think I've got this massive big head, or I have this ego or anything else. I already learned about the ego. I spent sixty days in jail. I got my ego out there. I learned about having an ego.

But I say it to -- don't judge people or come out of your box that you live in, whatever box it is. Come out of that darn box, and learn and associate and love other people that don't look like you, because if I grew up, of all the segregation and all the

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crap that I went through in the South, all the things that quote-unquote white people did to me, I wouldn't have met him. I would never have met Jonathan.

If I had that hate for something else in my heart, if I didn't have God's love and God's light and keeping my eyes open to the real things in the world, which is love and learning, and coming out of whatever box or whatever environment that you grew up in, or whatever is like the institution.

If you want to stay -- I feel The Citadel, any institution that doesn't grow or diversify itself, it will fall, it will die. Rome, hello. Sadly, look at this nation. This nation is so insular right now, it needs to come out of its insular box, and become more diversified, and to survive. Any business knows you've got to -- look at GE, they're diversified. Look how they're thriving, so why not apply that to your life and to everything else, instead of living in these small boxes.

So, that's what I want -- that's the only reason why I tell that story about Jonathan, is that if I had just been -- stayed ignorant and stayed hateful, and wanted to get back at people because they are a certain color and they did this to me, if I didn't have that forgiving heart - which I'm still working on - if I didn't have a forgiving heart, I wouldn't be exposed to him and all the things he's shown me. I mean I've gone to places in Rome that no tourist has ever been to. I've been to parts of the Vatican that not many people have been to. I had a New Year's party, bringing in 1999 to 2000, and that's when I proposed to Duane. I did that at his palace. Duane didn't know about all this stuff. It blew his mind.

KT: So, you guys had a commitment ceremony?

CM: No, we didn't have a commitment ceremony. It was the first time Duane had

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ever been to Rome--he's traveled, but he'd never been to Rome. And I kept it real low key who Jonathan is and all this, that, and the other. We had a New Year's party, bringing in the new millennium, 1999 to 2000, and I told Jonathan about this when Jonathan and I met in St. Thomas with my uncle - it was the last trip my uncle and I had together before he passed away. And I told Jonathan, I said, "Jonathan, we've got to have a New Year's party." He said, 'My God, Charles, that's a year ahead of time.' I said, "We got to think about it, we got to do it." I called him up six months before, "You're right, we've got to get it planned." He said, "What should it be? What should the dress be? Oh, black tie of course." "Yeah, of course, black tie, but it's got to be something. A millennium only happens every thousand years, so we got to do this right." He said, "I know what. Black tie and wigs." I said, "Fabulous!" (KT laughs)

He had friends of his fly in from New York, we came in from Atlanta. (Elson Edeno) Braga, his partner, they were just starting to date at that time. Some of his friends came from Brazil, and I had Duane put on a Shirley Temple wig he had. I had this other red-haired wig on, and one of his friends had this big Pippi Longstocking orange wig on. Everybody had wigs. And then as the party went, people's wigs started changing. There were people wearing everybody else's different wigs.

And then we went on -- we walked out and we went up to the terraces to the terraces of Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, and we had this full unobstructed view of Rome on the terraces. Plus, there was champagne up there. We had magnums of champagne because it was cold, we just left them up there to cool. And we had champagne up there.

And we were just having a great time, and then I saw a spark go up, and I looked over in the direction of Piazza Venezia I looked over there, and I saw another firework go

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up, and then something bright caught me in my peripheral vision back behind me. I turned around; the Vatican was just lit up. I mean it was just in glorious form. I said, "All right, we're in the New Year's, the New Year is happening right now."

And I went over to Duane, and I pulled him off to the side. He's all in awe at being together and seeing all this. I pulled him off and I said, "Listen, I know for the past two months, I've been giving you a lot of grief." I really was pushing him on asking him, because I really wanted to spend my life with him, and I wanted to make sure -- I was always testing him, and he got ticked off with me quite a few times, rightly so. I said, "I know I gave you a lot of grief over the past two months. Ever since you walked in my life, you've been wonderful, and I just hope I've given you something back in your life. But what I'd like to do now," and I reached inside my vest pocket, and I got on my knee, and I opened the box with a diamond ring.

I said, "Will you commit yourself to me?" His eyes popped out; his mouth dropped open. "Oh, yes." We both hugged each other, we were crying. Our friends took pictures of us, and this is the millennium. We started the millennium like that. Everybody else knew what was going on except him. And then we went back downstairs, back into Jonathan's -- back in his apartment, and this is before he took over the family - before his parents passed away. He had just that apartment in there. But now, he lives in the palace proper, and everything else. And I'm blessed. And who am I? Chuck Maxwell. South Carolina boy grew up in a trailer. Graduated from The Citadel.

KT: Thank you again.

CM: I'll stop on that story there. Thank you for your time.

KT: I appreciate it.

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End of recording.

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