


Love-Me Binders: Personal Information Collections for the Modern Soldier

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Virtual Footlocker
Project





Project Summary

In its entirety, the Virtual Footlocker Project focuses on the development of an open-source, cross-system platform system for capturing and preserving the personal communication and documentary record of the modern soldier.

Project Team





Elements of Phase Two

- Institute of Museum & Library Services Grant: \$390,706
- Advisory Board
- Focus Groups
- Analysis and Technical Mapping
- Workshop/Curriculum Development

Focus Groups

- 22 Focus Groups
 - Four per military branch (two officer/two enlisted)
 - Two focus groups for women only
- 1.5-hour sessions & \$150 compensation
- Zoom-based
- Open Coding Analysis



Participant Demographics

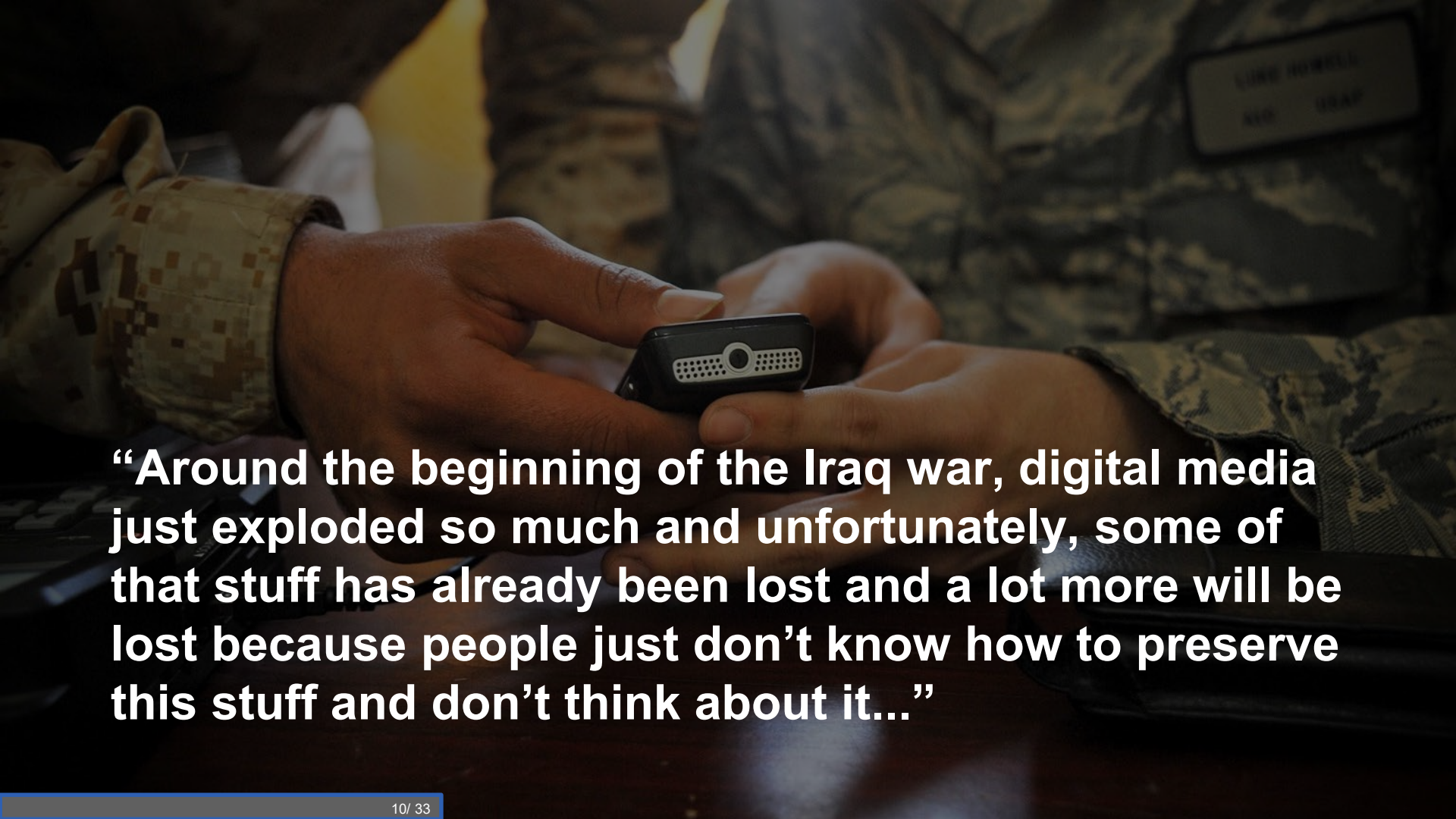
- 99 Participants
- Rank Type: 30% Officer/4% Warrant Officer/66% Enlisted
- Race: 76% White/24% Non-White
- Gender: 43% Female/56% Male/1% Other
- Branch: 26% Army, 25% Air Force, 19% Navy, 15% Marines, 15% Coast Guard

Love Me Binders: Military Veterans' Personal Archives

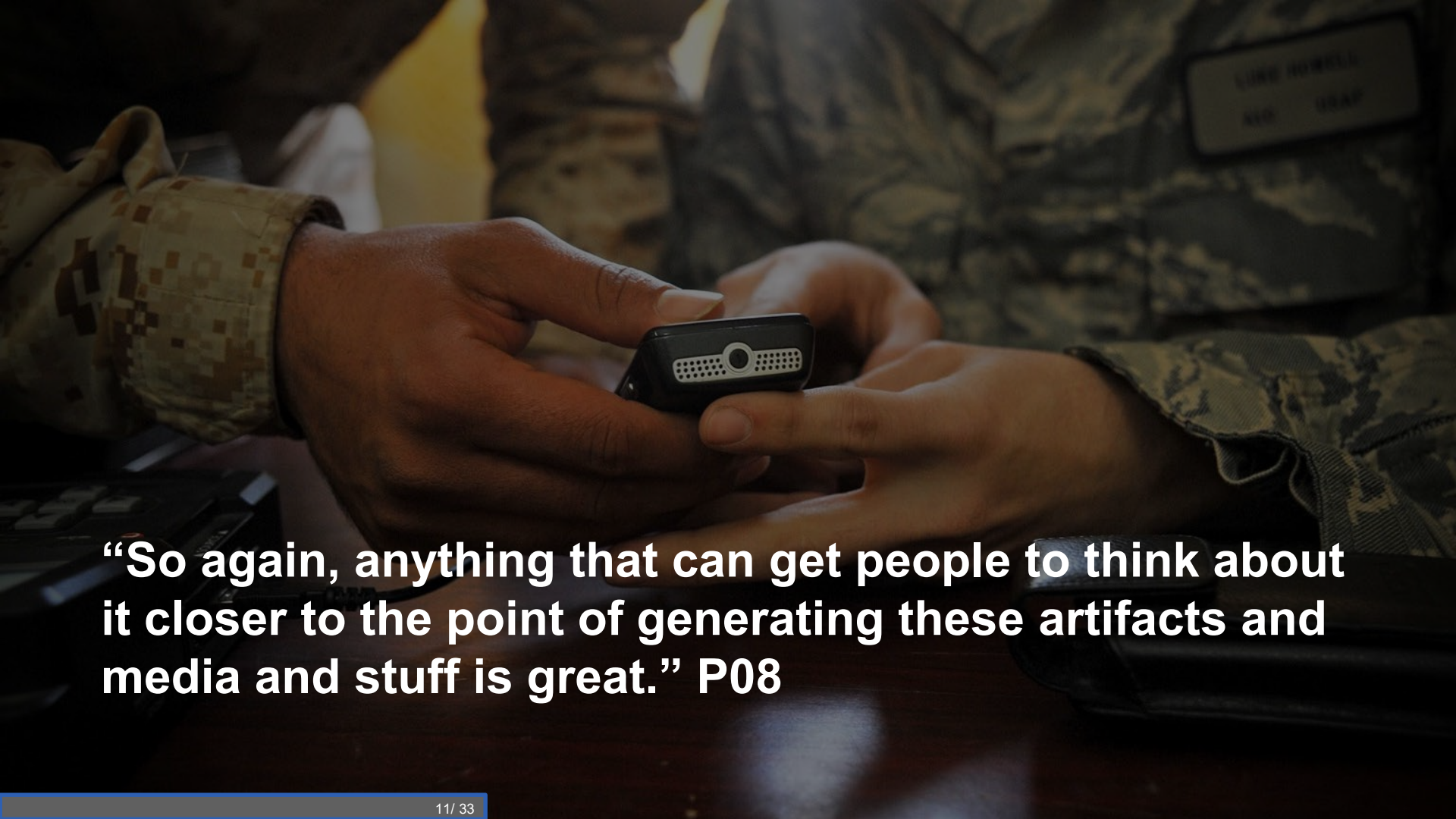


Challenge



A close-up photograph of a soldier's hands holding a small, black, flip-style mobile phone. The soldier is wearing a camouflage uniform with a name tag that reads "LANCE BOWELL" and "100 1004". The background is dark and out of focus.

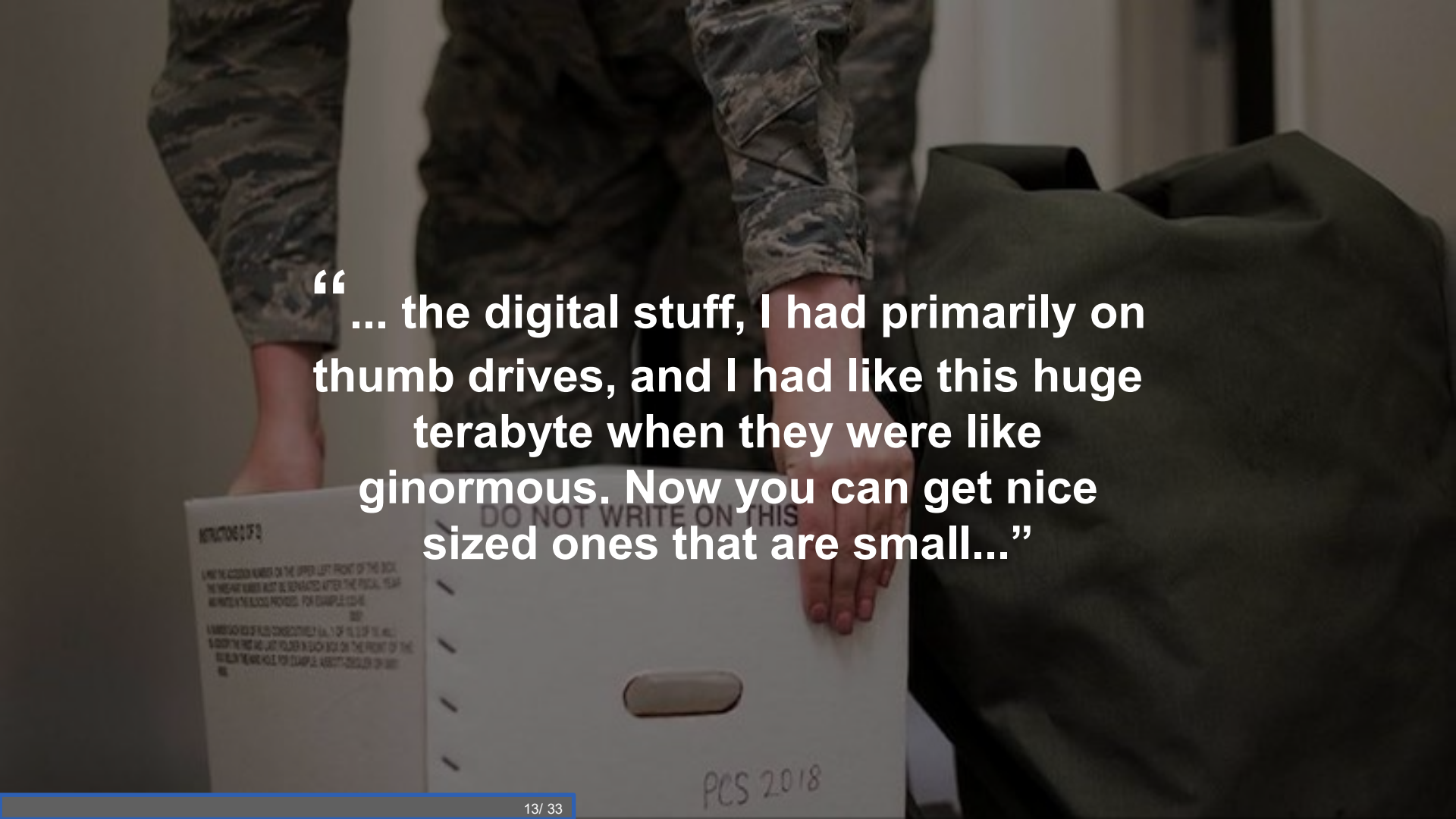
“Around the beginning of the Iraq war, digital media just exploded so much and unfortunately, some of that stuff has already been lost and a lot more will be lost because people just don’t know how to preserve this stuff and don’t think about it...”



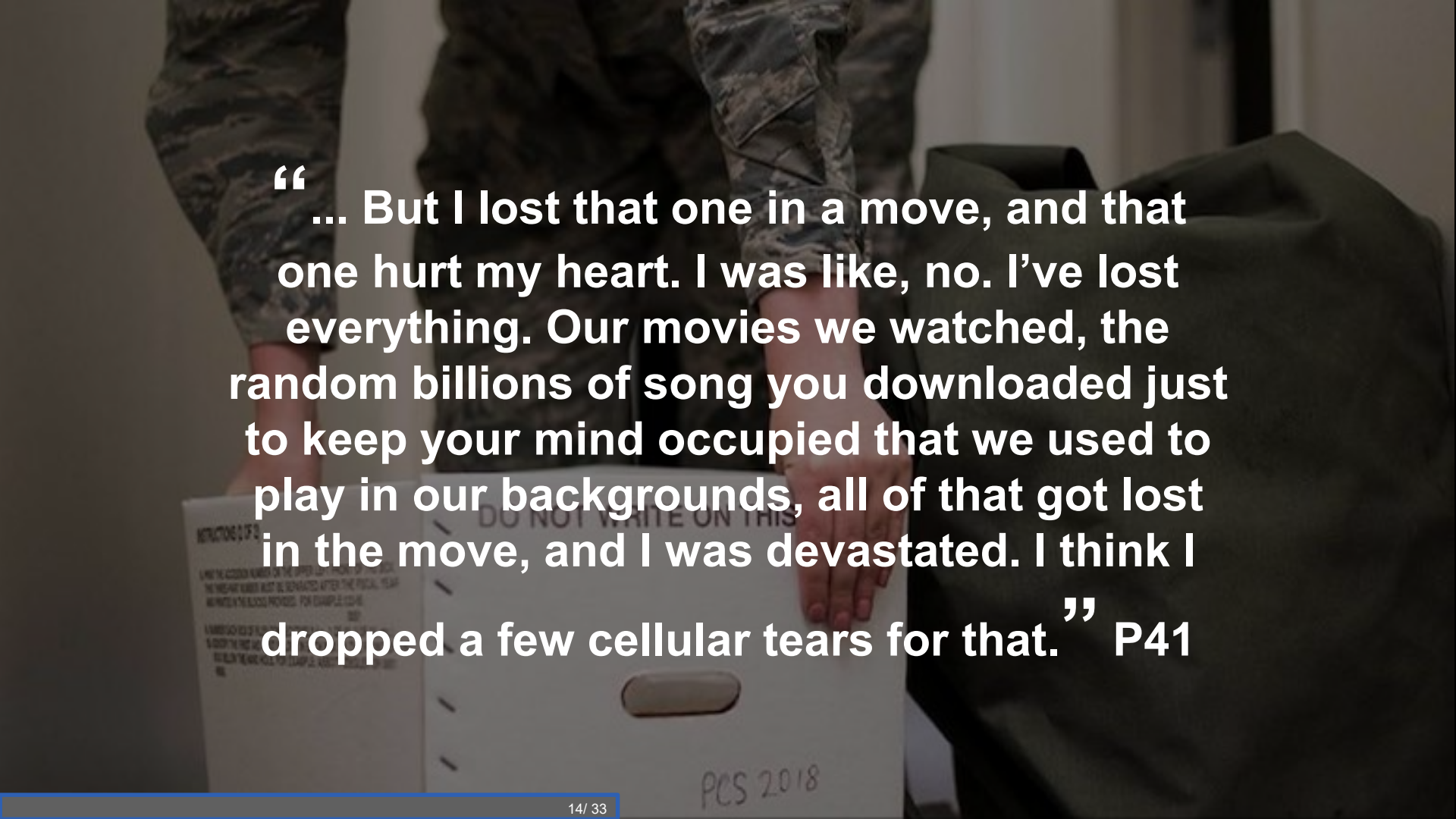
“So again, anything that can get people to think about it closer to the point of generating these artifacts and media and stuff is great.” P08



Record Loss



“ ... the digital stuff, I had primarily on thumb drives, and I had like this huge terabyte when they were like ginormous. Now you can get nice sized ones that are small...”



“ ... But I lost that one in a move, and that one hurt my heart. I was like, no. I’ve lost everything. Our movies we watched, the random billions of song you downloaded just to keep your mind occupied that we used to play in our backgrounds, all of that got lost in the move, and I was devastated. I think I dropped a few cellular tears for that.” P41



1. No documenting
2. Moving
3. Misplacing
4. Losing access



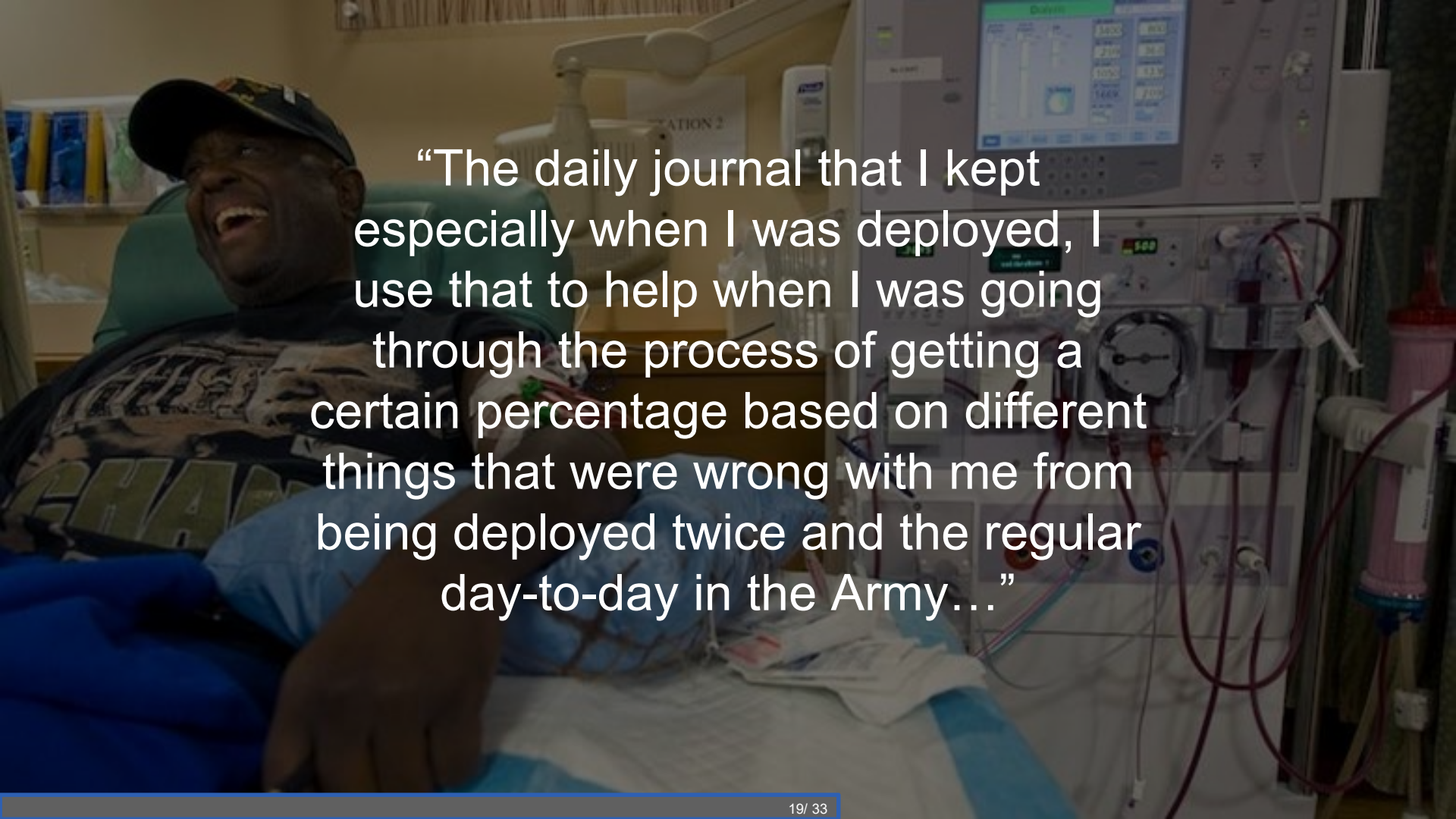
Context

1. Underrepresentation of health conditions (e.g. PTSD) (Morgan et al., 2019)
2. Proof of service required to access benefits (Moering 2011)
3. Government information is sometimes inaccurate (Frueh et al. 2015)
4. **Active-service members have been encouraged to manage their own records**

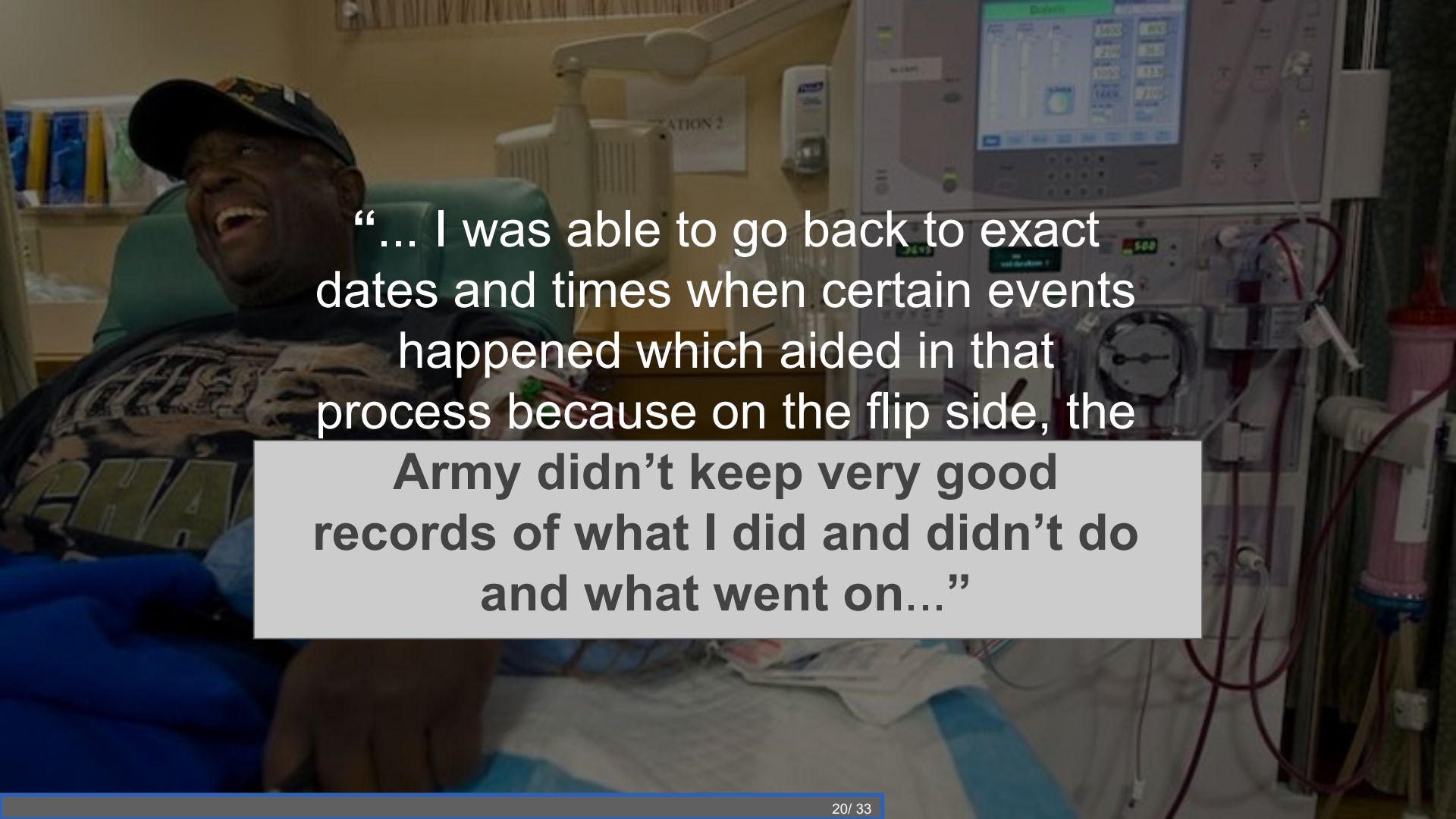


A woman in military camouflage uniform is engaged in a conversation with several veterans outdoors. She is looking down at her hands, which are clasped together. The veterans are wearing caps, some with military-related insignia like 'KORE' and 'VE'. The background is a blurred green landscape.

Love Me Binders

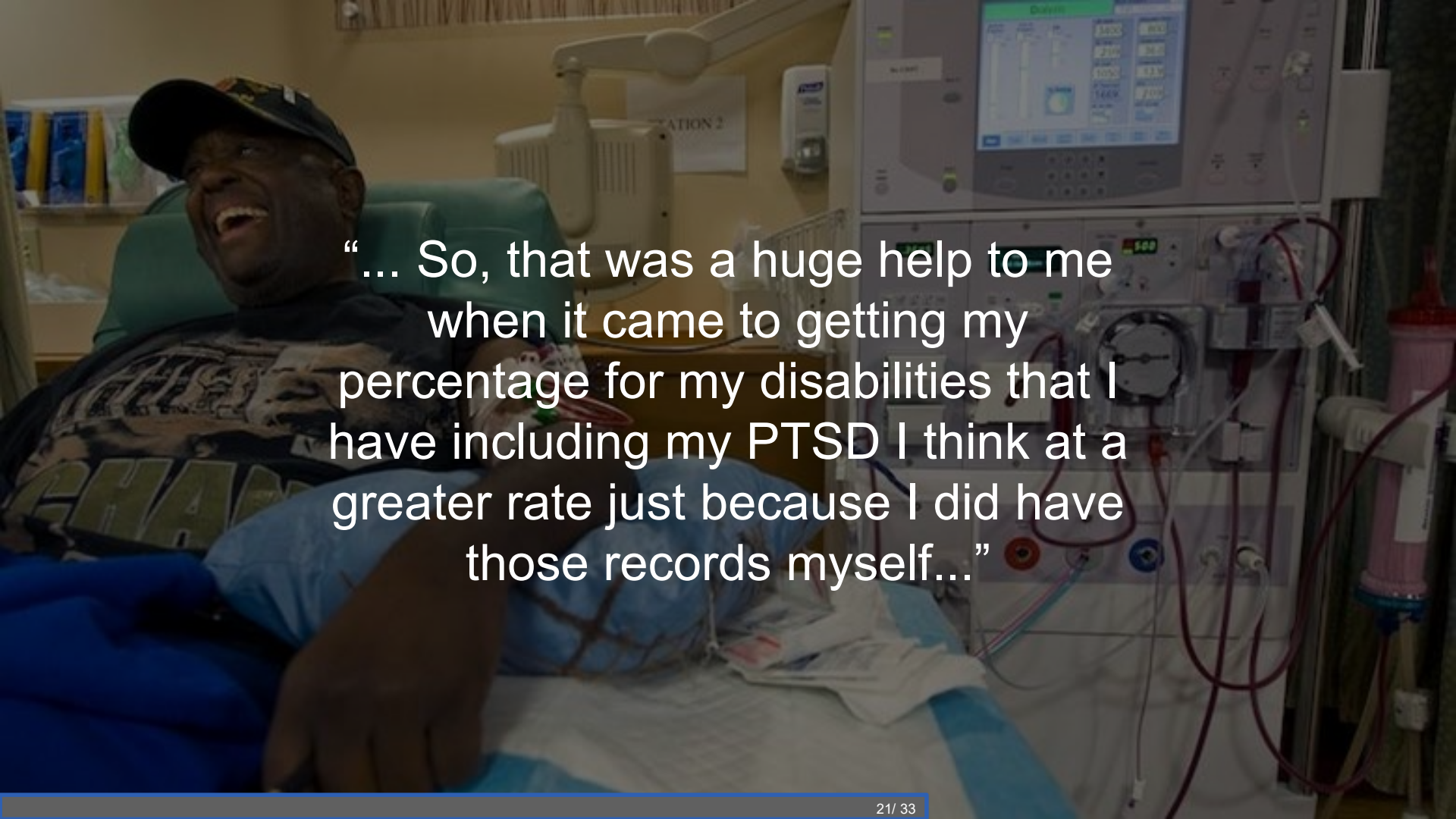
A man wearing a dark baseball cap and a dark t-shirt is lying in a hospital bed. He is looking upwards and to the right with a pained or distressed expression. The bed has blue and white linens. To the right of the man is a large piece of medical equipment, likely a dialysis machine, with a screen displaying various data points and several red tubes connected to it. The background shows a hospital room setting with a white wall and a light fixture.

“The daily journal that I kept especially when I was deployed, I use that to help when I was going through the process of getting a certain percentage based on different things that were wrong with me from being deployed twice and the regular day-to-day in the Army...”

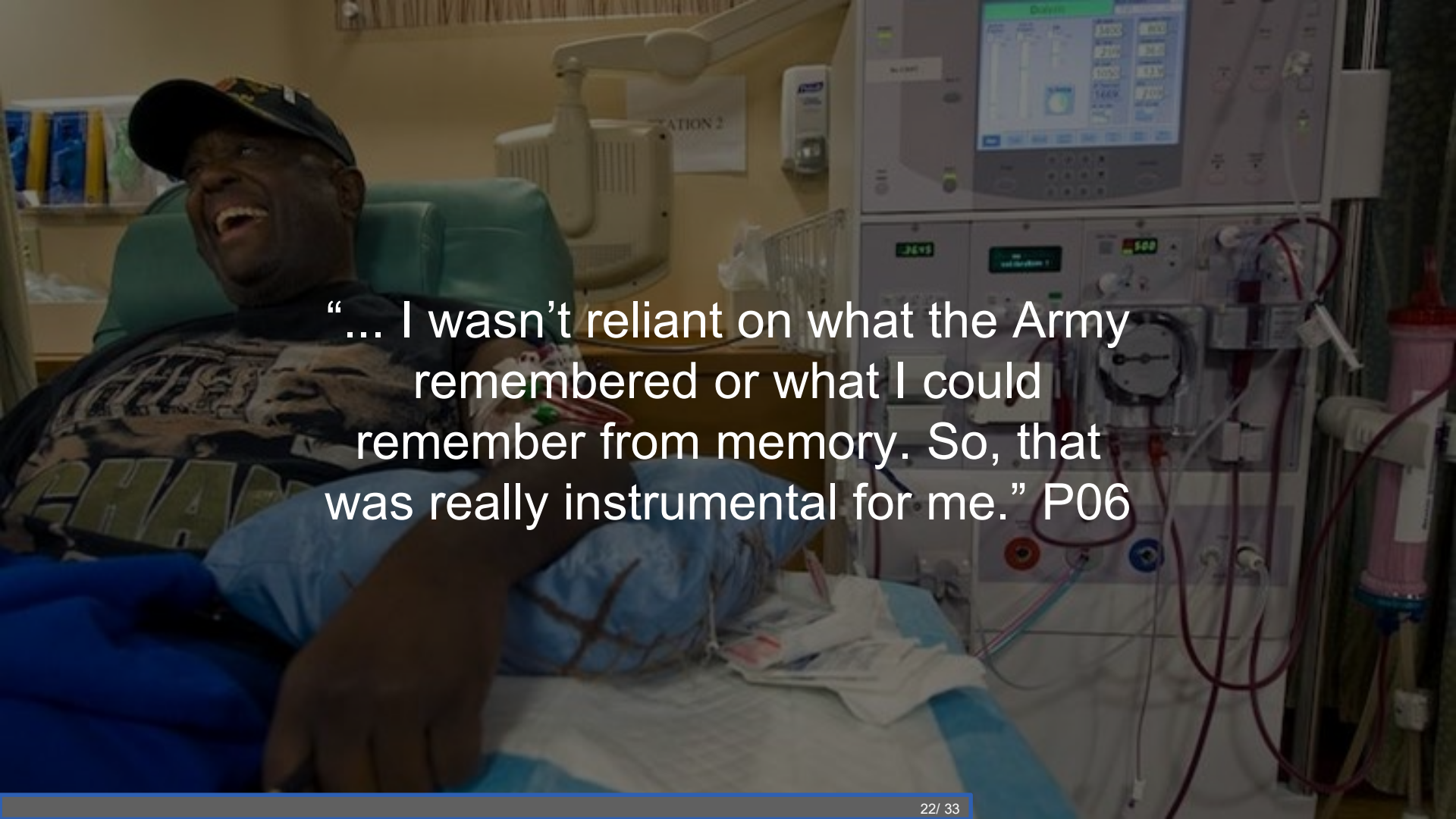


“... I was able to go back to exact dates and times when certain events happened which aided in that process because on the flip side, the

Army didn't keep very good records of what I did and didn't do and what went on...”

A man wearing a dark baseball cap and a dark t-shirt is lying in a hospital bed. He is smiling broadly, showing his teeth. The bed has blue and white linens. To the right of the man is a large piece of medical equipment, likely a dialysis machine, with a screen displaying various numbers and graphs. There are several tubes and wires connected to the machine. The background shows a hospital room with a light fixture and a sign that says "STATION 2".

“... So, that was a huge help to me when it came to getting my percentage for my disabilities that I have including my PTSD I think at a greater rate just because I did have those records myself...”

A man wearing a dark baseball cap and a t-shirt is lying in a hospital bed. He is looking upwards and to the right with a pained or distressed expression. The bed has blue and white linens. To the right of the bed is a large piece of medical equipment, likely a dialysis machine, with a screen displaying various numbers and graphs. The background shows a hospital room with a light fixture and a wall-mounted device.

“... I wasn’t reliant on what the Army remembered or what I could remember from memory. So, that was really instrumental for me.” P06



Format

- Three ring binder
- Filing Cabinet
- Footlocker





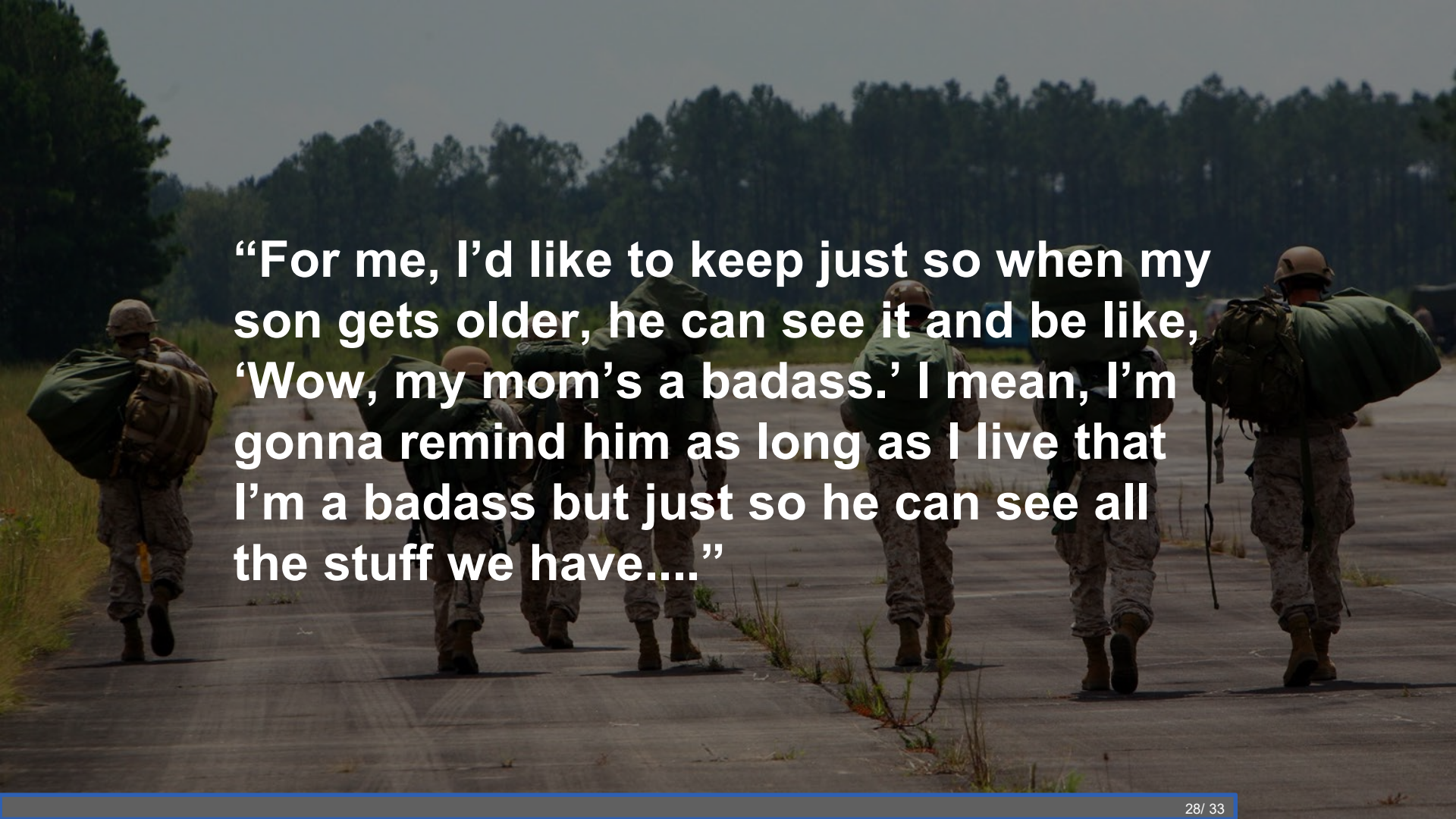
Records



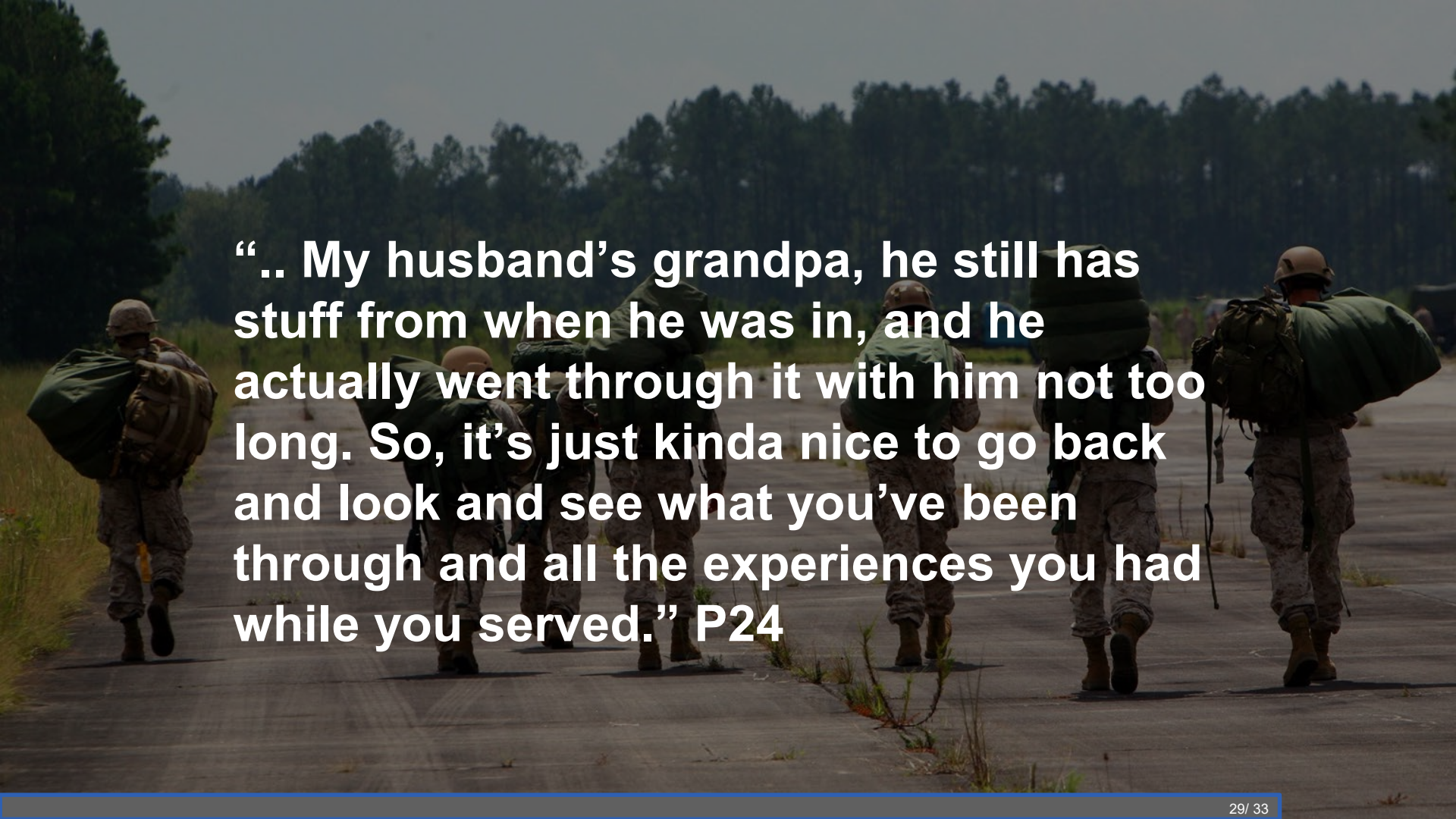
- Discharge papers
- DD 214
- School Certificates
- Awards
- Annual Reviews
- Travel Orders
- PCS orders



Uses



“For me, I’d like to keep just so when my son gets older, he can see it and be like, ‘Wow, my mom’s a badass.’ I mean, I’m gonna remind him as long as I live that I’m a badass but just so he can see all the stuff we have....”



“.. My husband’s grandpa, he still has stuff from when he was in, and he actually went through it with him not too long. So, it’s just kinda nice to go back and look and see what you’ve been through and all the experiences you had while you served.” P24

- Accessing benefits
- Reminiscing
- Legacy



Moving Forward

- Curriculum Development
 - For archivists
 - For active duty & veterans
- Curriculum Deployment
- External Promotion
- Conferences & Publications
- Data-banking





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References

1

Moering, Robert G. "Military service records: Searching for the truth." *Psychological Injury and Law* 4.3 (2011): 217-234.

2

Morgan, Maria A., et al. "Discrepancies in diagnostic records of military service members with self-reported PTSD: Healthcare use and longitudinal symptom outcomes." *General hospital psychiatry* 58 (2019): 33-38.

3

Frueh, B. Christopher, et al. "Documented combat exposure of US veterans seeking treatment for combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 186.6 (2005): 467-472.