

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
MASTER SERGEANT TAMMY SILVERS-HALLER

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF TENNESSEANS AND WAR  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY  
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MAGRA: If you want to start by telling us your name and your rank, and then we'll talk about your story.

SILVERS-HALLER: Sure, sure. Hi, I am Tammy—Master Sergeant Tammy Silvers-Haller. I am in the United States Air Force. I've been in the Air Force since 2010, but before the Air Force I was actually starting in the military and back in 1987 in the Marine Corps, I was active duty Marines. and then in 2005, I joined the Army National Guard and we'll get into that story about why it all happened the way it did. But currently I am an E7 or a Master Sergeant.

MAGRA: Great. And let's talk about where you were born. Are you born and raised in Tennessee?

SILVERS-HALLER: Oh, no, no, no. I'm actually from upstate New York originally.

MAGRA: Yeah. I'm from Pennsylvania. So what town were you born in? And can you talk to us about that, that place?

SILVERS-HALLER: There's—I mean, it was Poughkeepsie, New York, it's just a, little town by the Hudson Valley. It was just your normal, everyday town. You know, I'm a, I guess '70s kid and I'm actually what they call a “unicorn” in military life right now because I am 53. I'm older, over the age of 50. And if you look at any statistic out there, there's not a whole lot of us in the military right now at this age, but normal kid growing up, great parents. They were married for 40 years. You know, didn't have any upheaval or anything like that, rode the bus to school.

MAGRA: Were your parents in the military?

SILVERS-HALLER: No. So that's another thing. I'm the only one in my entire family, that ever went into the military. I had a cousin who was also in the Marines, but he's a lot older and he served during Vietnam. He had a completely different experience than I did. Of course, serving in Vietnam. But I was the, I don't wanna say black sheep, but I was definitely the odd one out cause my older sister and my younger brother, neither one of them had any desire to serve. And that's fine. It's not a calling for everybody. It just was for me.

MAGRA: And did you get into the military after high school or did you go to college first and then the military?

SILVERS-HALLER: No, I was actually in the delayed entry program, so when I turned seventeen at the time the recruiters would put you in a program to where, as soon as you turn eighteen and you graduated from high school, you would be shipped off. And that's exactly what happened after I think I'm—so my birthday is in September and I wanna say it was probably maybe a week after I turned eighteen, my foot, my feet hit the footprints in Paris Island, South Carolina.

MAGRA: Wow. So you were seventeen years old ...

SILVERS-HALLER: Eighteen.

MAGRA: You were seventeen when you decided to join the military and you got in contact with this marine recruiter, who then arranged for you when you turned eighteen.

SILVERS-HALLER: Actually, even funny story. When I originally decided I wanted to go into the military. And this is going to sound bizarre, but back a long time ago there was a movie, and I'm sure you've heard of it. It was called *Private Benjamin* [A 1980 comedy in which a young woman disguises herself and joins the military]. Now, it was Goldie Hawn, it was a comedy. But it was something that actually sparked an interest in the military itself from me, even though it was a complete spoof. It made me think “wow, I can do that too”. And I originally went into an army recruiting office. I didn't get a good vibe from the Army recruiting office at the time. It wasn't something for me. So I thought, well, maybe the Air Force. And I took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test] did great on the ASVAB, I could have gotten into any of the branches I wanted to, so I had set up an appointment with an Air Force recruiter. On the day of my appointment, I set out in the hallway and I waited and waited and waited. The Air Force recruiter did not show up, but the hallway across was the Marine Corps. And the Marine recruiter came out and said “if you're waiting for the Air Force recruiter, they are not here today. However, you can come in, we can talk about a few things.” and I was really like, “no, no, no, the Marines. I've heard too much about it. They brainwash you and all this other stuff.” He just started laughing and he came in. He put me at ease. He was very good at his job. The thing that sold me on the Marine Corps was he was very honest, he said. “You will hate bootcamp. You will definitely curse me out while you're there. You're going to wonder why you even bother to do this. And then when they hand you the eagle, globe and anchor [seal of the US Marine Corps], you're gonna say ‘wow, that was amazing.’ And then you become one of the few,” especially as a woman back then in 1987. The—it just, the role of a female marine back then was completely different than it is right now. And also he said, “Well, what do you do?” Cause I didn't even know what I wanted to be like, I didn't know what career I wanted to go into. And he said, “Whaddya wanna do or what do you do?” And I started, you know, listing my

hobbies and everything. And I told him I was in the band and he perked up and he was like “you were in the band?” And I said “yeah, I'm in the band.” And he said, “Did you know that the Marines have a band?” And I did not know that. I didn't know a whole lot about what any of the military branches had to offer. And I said, “Wow, that's great!” So he basically—I'm a flute player by trade, and he said, “what we would do is we would set up an audition for you down in New York City. And if you pass the audition, then you would actually go into bootcamp slotted as a musician. And then we would send you to the [Naval] School of Music, which is in Norfolk, Virginia. You get six months of school.” They basically take a four year college music degree and they jam it down your throat in six months (Laughing). And then they send you off into your unit. And that's exactly what happened for me, and I was stationed at Quantico [Virginia] for four years as a marine musician, and it was amazing.

MAGRA: What did your parents think when you told them, “Hey, you know i'm thinking about joining the military and I'm thinking about the Marines.”

SILVERS-HALLER: My mom, of course, was—she didn't want me to do it. My dad, he was very much, I don't want you to do it, but when you're eighteen, you're your own adult and you can make your own decisions, and we're gonna support you with whatever you do. I had wonderful parents. They were very supportive, very loving and they knew I was the type of person that was going to succeed with whatever I put my mind to, and that there was not gonna be any stopping me once I made my mind up. So they were very supportive of it.

MAGRA: That's great. Is there anything else about your early life or your childhood growing up that you think, kinda of made you the person you are?

SILVERS-HALLER: So I grew up with a family of really hard working individuals, but at the same time very loving. So my mom stayed home with us. Until we were old enough for her to go to work, so my dad had two jobs to support us growing up. And we didn't see a whole lot of him because when he did come home, he was doing everything else as far as—because he was also a woodworker by trade and he would go out and he would make things in the garage and he would do the garden, he would do all these wonderful things so. Only fond memories. And my mom, she was the homemaker. She took care of us. And then when we got older, she realized, “OK, I can go out and I can work part time and I can help supplement as well.” So I had such a good foundation growing up as a child that gave me support and guidance on how to just be a great person. I think that helped when I got into the military, because all I wanted to do was give back. I wanted to serve in some form or fashion and because I'm a perfectionist, I wanted to go into the best of the best and that's why I went to the marines, so.

MAGRA: You mentioned having an extended family member who was in the Marines in Vietnam. I think you said it was a cousin?

SILVERS-HALLER: Cousin.

MAGRA: Wow, did you talk to your cousin, growing up and did they share stories with you? Did you talk to your cousin when you decided to join the Marines?

SILVERS-HALLER: So no, at the time, no. It wasn't until after I got back from the Marine bootcamp and was visiting and stuff that we really had some conversations, but the conversations weren't like you would think. He didn't want to talk about anything. And any time I would bring it up, it was always shut down immediately. A lot of Vietnam veterans have such severe PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] that just even going there is hard. So I never pressed the issue with him. He was very proud of me. He did tell me that, that he was very proud of me. But he also knew it was gonna be a different Marine Corps, when I went in versus when he was in.

MAGRA: So you're at Quantico?

SILVERS-HALLER: Mm hmm.

MAGRA: And you're—they're training you to play the flute. What did you make of that experience? You're in the military and they're training you in music and you're not just...you're in the Marine Corps and they're training you in music.

SILVERS-HALLER: Well, I already knew how to play flute. I was actually a very well accomplished flute player, when I went in. When I went to the audition, they were like, "Wow", you know, they could tell right away that I was gonna fit in. The music theory, the music ear training, all of that information on top of what I already knew was just basically more fuel for the fire from me. Because it really gave me a love and a passion for music because we learned orchestration, we learned how to write music, we learned all the ends and outs of it to really get us engaged in that. And then when you go into your unit—when I got to Quantico...

(Tape cut for technical difficulties)

SILVERS-HALLER: ... and when I got to Quantico, it was a different world because now I was dealing with other Marines that have been in for a long time or have been in longer than me, obviously, and it was not just about playing. You also had extra duties

that you had to do. You had to learn administrative tasks, you had to learn supply, you had to learn how to march in a complete formations with your instrument, while you were playing in a parade. So there is a lot more to it. But it was all like par for the course, and I knew that. I knew that it was gonna be par for the course. I wasn't prepared for the different personalities, I don't think as much. But then again, I was only, like, eighteen years old. You know, I was a baby.

MAGRA: Were there any other women in your cohort at Quantico?

SILVERS-HALLER: Very few, but yes. There were a few other women. It was mostly male dominated. At one time, I was the only flute player, and so I played all of the parades, all of the mess nights, all of the graduations, change of commands, everything. I was working 60 hour weeks, weekends, holidays, you name it. We were working 'em.

MAGRA: Did you talk to the other women at all, or did you kinda encourage each other in this male dominated world?

SILVERS-HALLER: You would think ...

(Tape cut for technical difficulties)

SILVERS-HALLER: ... when you think about personalities, right, and you think about female personalities. We didn't have the female empowerment movement back then where it was about raising each other up. It was dog-eat-dog and it didn't matter if you're male or female, it was: the cream's gonna rise to the top. And did I have female friends? Absolutely. Did we hang out together? Yes. We're most of my—friends male? Yep. Because there was more males. And also a lot of the females that I was with had drama and I did not like drama. I didn't wanna deal with drama. And so I just hung around the males because there was no drama. And it was definitely a different world. I learned a lot over the years. I learned how to be more supportive of other females, and not worry about comparing myself. Cause comparison, it's horrible, if you compare yourself to another person, you're just doing yourself an injustice.

MAGRA: You mentioned the Marine recruiter was encouraging. Did you face a lot or any opposition as a woman joining the Marines? And what year was it when you turned eighteen?

SILVERS-HALLER: 87.

MAGRA: 1987. OK. So we're talking about the end of the Cold War here ...

SILVERS-HALLER: Peacetime!

MAGRA: ... still, not many, many women in the military and still, debates about women in frontline, in combat situations. Did you face any opposition or did you, did you feel any in those early years when you just got in the military?

SILVERS-HALLER: Not from the recruiter because the recruiters had quotas, right? But in the unit itself, yes. I was constantly told that—we had one particular other marine who adamantly felt that the Marines were no place for the women, but it was our job to educate. The reason why we were there and I do have to say while I was in bootcamp, they explained that perfectly to us. And just to educate the listeners here, a female Marines role was not to be on the front lines. And when you think about it, a male's instinct is to protect a female and the whole logic behind not having a female downrange on the front lines in a foxhole was because they were saying a male had that instinct to protect the female and they wouldn't be paying attention to the enemy coming. Ok. And then they also said a female's instinct is to protect the young. Or the elderly, and therefore, while I was in bootcamp, I was trained basically how to be a woman killer to protect the home front. And because we went through the same training we did, the same rifle expert training everybody else did, we were in there for a month was. It was twelve weeks. They didn't do anything different for us. The only difference was they taught us how to be a lady. By the third month in, they made us wear makeup every day. Our grooming standards had to be perfect. We had etiquette lessons and I know that seems really foreign right now, but it's so that we could function, highly function in society, knowing all well that if the attack were to come to the home front, we could protect it because the males were downrange. And so who is going to protect the home front? That was the mindset. And as long as we were OK with that, we knew that we could function in the male society and it worked for a really long time in my brain anyway.

MAGRA: You mentioned them, kind of instructing you and makeup. Had you worn a lot of makeup before then? My daughter's a girly girl and she likes lip gloss and things like that. Had you grown up as a girly girl or were you more of a tomboy or and was makeup foreign to you? How did you feel about makeup?

SILVERS-HALLER: Well, ironically enough. So in my household, I wasn't allowed to wear makeup until I was sixteen. But I did. You know, I wore a little mascara, you know, a little eye shadow or whatever. I never [wore] anything enormous. So I wasn't foreign to it at all. But the makeup that they were trying to have us wear was horrendous. It was like the blue eye shadow and the blush and the—it was just horrible and nothing like

today's standards at all. So I thought that part of it was a little weird that they had us doing that, but it was what it was. Yeah.

MAGRA: So let's talk about music and how that's integrated into your military service. Was this something that you did throughout your career?

SILVERS-HALLER: Yes. So I love music. Music is a part of me. I do believe that we're all born with specific gifts and talents. For me, mine is anything musical. I think I came out of the womb dancing, you know, was dancing at five and always had a sense of rhythm and beat. So for me, going into the band was just extremely natural, didn't have a problem adjusting, didn't have problem memorizing music, marching, all of it was just super easy for me. Because I was born to do it. When I got out of the Marines, I went to college. And I actually was originally going to be a flute performance major and then realized: A, flute players are a dime a dozen and B, there's nothing that's gonna come from that other than me just being a really good flute player and so I wanted to find a career that dealt with music, but gave back in some form or fashion, 'cause I was again, all about serving others. So I ended up getting a degree in Music Therapy. And I was a music therapist and it was wonderful. I worked with, actually, I did my internship at the VA [Veterans Affairs] hospital down in Texas when I lived in Texas and worked with the veterans there. And I really enjoyed that a lot. I also worked with drug and alcohol abusers, juveniles in the prison system, womens' prison system, and what ended up happening is. On the emotional side of things, working with those juveniles that were imprisoned for drug abuse and alcohol abuse, it wanted me to make a difference, before they got there, and so I pursued my Music Education degree. So I became a music educator and I was a music teacher for ten years and then I went—of course, 9/11 happened right? 9/11 happened. I said, "I have to go back in. I have to continue to serve." I didn't want to get out of the Marines. I was pretty much convinced that, that was the right course of action. My ex-husband at the time said, "hey, let's get out. Let's start a family, go to college and all that good stuff," which I don't regret, because, you know, I had a, a good, a career but—became a music teacher, went back in the guard, in the band, Army National Guard Band in New York. And that's where we're living at the time. Transferred back to Texas, and then I went into the the Air National Guard band. So total twelve years in the band field. That's a long time. Twelve years and then—so I got to see three different branches, all band, traveled all over the country. Got my fill of it and knew there was something else out there for me, but I didn't want to get out of the military. So I went into the Chapel Corps. I was a chaplain assistant. And transferred into that and the Air Force, and I was guard. You know the difference between guard and active duty right?

(Magra nods yes)



SILVERS-HALLER: OK, perfect. I was guard when—chaplain assistant for three years. And they picked me up after that for a first Sergeant. They wanted me to be a first Sergeant again. It all had to do with how much more can I make of an impact? How much more can I help other people? And after three years of being a First Sergeant, I decided I wanted to make an impact on our future leaders and applied for this position here at McGhee Tyson [Airport in Knoxville, Tennessee]. And now I'm an instructor for leadership and development for NCOA [Non-Commissioned Officer School].

MAGRA: Well that's great, Tammy. I didn't want to stop you, but there's a lot to unpack there. Can we start with you getting married in the military? Yeah, I'm guessing you were in the Marines and you met a fellow marine and got married ...

SILVERS-HALLER: Correct

MAGRA: ... OK, and do you remember what year it was when you got married?

SILVERS-HALLER: 1990.

MAGRA: OK, and how long were you in the Marines total?

SILVERS-HALLER: I was in the Marines for my full four year tour.

MAGRA: For four years. And then when the four year tour was up, your husband kinda of convinced you it's time to to do something else.

SILVERS-HALLER: Right. Just because he didn't like it.

MAGRA: He didn't like it, OK ... (Magra laughs)

SILVERS-HALLER: I loved it. I was on—I was doing great, like I was on the path to like, make it all the way up the—but at the time, you know, when you're young and in love, well, you think you're in love. You just don't make the right decisions. If I were to tell my younger self now. I would say, “Hey, don't listen to him. Stay on your path” because I took a thirteen year break in service and so now instead of already being retired, which I could already be retired and even though I have over twenty years in service total between the Marines and Army and now the Air Force, it's not the same because now I'm a fifty-three year old trying to make it in a twenty-three year old world and it's a lot harder at this rate.

MAGRA: Yeah. Did your husband want to have children? Was that his reason for getting out of the Marines? Or, or did you have children?

SILVERS-HALLER: No we, I mean, we pretty much got married at the end of our tour and then started our family and everything. We waited eight years to have kids. So we went to college, both of us went to college. Wanted to basically see what else was out there besides the military, is the way it was put.

MAGRA: The chaplain thing came out of nowhere for me, I was kind of waiting for you to talk about in your childhood, that you went to church or there was some church your family was affiliated with. How did the chaplain thing all come about ... just as a desire to serve?

SILVERS-HALLER: No, I've always been spiritual. I was born and raised Catholic. Yeah, no, I've, I've always been very spiritual, very religious. Very strong person of faith. And I would attend the chapel services every Sunday and one Sunday, they needed a—this was when I was in the Air Force. They needed some—a group to come and play for a specific event, and I actually put together a worship group in my unit. And there was probably about, because I also, as a music therapist, one of the benefits of it is you learn how to play guitar, you learn how to play piano, you have to have vocal skills. So not only can I play flute, I can sing, I can play guitar, I can play piano. All things that benefited me, right? So that's why I don't regret any of it. But I was able to put together a worship group where we would go and we would end up playing for Sunday service when we had drill every month and it just made me think, "OK, I really like this. How can I help?" And they were looking—they needed a chaplain assistant. An opening came up. I said "hey, would you consider me?" They already knew me from coming every month and playing, and they absolutely wanted to have me on their team. And that's how I became a chaplain assistant.

MAGRA: Well, that's fantastic. Was your worship group non-denominational, was it other Catholics? Any Protestants, any Baptists or Presbyterians in there?

SILVERS-HALLER: So the way, the way that the group works itself, well, the way that the Chapel Corps. works, the pastor or the priest themselves, the priests are strictly for Catholics. OK, our particular unit that we had in Fort Worth, in Texas, we did not have a Catholic priest in the Chapel Corps. OK, it was basically, we had a Lutheran, Methodist and a Baptist, pastor and as a chaplain assistant, you can have your own personal beliefs and your own personal religion, but your role in that world is to stay very neutral. And so I guess in a sense a non-denominational and when we came and played, we kept it non-denominational, so we just did different hymns, we did different worship

music, we did contemporary stuff, but it was all based on, it was all Christian based. It wasn't Muslim based or Jewish based. It was all Christian based.

MAGRA: Can you talk a little bit about how your faith played a role in your military service, did it? Do you think it had any role in your desire to serve? Do you think that it sustained you at all, at any time during basic training especially?

SILVERS-HALLER: Absolutely. Of course, you know, growing up you know when you—I was the, I was the one that at twelve years old when I first started playing flute, back in middle school, twelve years old, I wanted to be part of the folk group in church and I actually reached out to my aunt at the time who was going to church regularly, every Sunday. My parents didn't attend church. They attended on Sundays—or on Easter and Christmas. And, you know, the occasional, because my dad grew up in Catholic school. So he did not have the best memories of what it was like, cause back for him, it was a lot harder. And—but I wanted to know God a little bit more. And so I reached out to my aunt, who I knew was going to church every Sunday. She started bringing me. I saw them playing music up there. And that's when I literally got involved with the church. I joined the folk group. I started playing flute with the folk group. And the next thing I knew, I was in the Catholic Youth Organization. I was going on retreats with them. I was with like minded individuals who believed in something bigger than themselves. And the whole idea of giving back. And you know, paying it forward definitely played a role in me wanting to give back on a bigger scale. So yeah, I can answer that, as with an affirmative, yes.

MAGRA: Tammy, I just wanna make sure for our listeners that they understand your timeline. You were eighteen years old and you enlisted in the Marines, and you were in the Marines for four years. And then honorable discharge, and I think you said eight years or thirteen in between.

SILVERS-HALLER: Thirteen year break.

MAGRA: Thirteen year break and that was from 1990 to 2003?

SILVERS-HALLER: Yeah, well, I might have gotten, like, when I—might have been 2005. 'Cause I joined the army when I was thirty-five. Big difference, right?. Thirty-five years old when I joined the army and then when I joined the Air Force, I was forty. Big difference.

MAGRA: Yeah. And can you talk about that? Can you talk about going back into the military and the challenges of doing that after having already served?

SILVERS-HALLER: I was excited. The—as far as the physical stuff goes, by the time I got into the army I had already had two, I had two children. They were both very small, but I've always been the type of person that keeps myself physically active and physically fit, so I didn't have too many issues on the physical side of things. Thank God. (Laughs) I did have an issue with the army only because their way of thinking is completely different. And also going from active duty to a guard unit is very different. The mindset I went from being called my last name for the past four years, on and off duty, to they were calling people by their first names. There's a lot of adjustment period there. And I didn't know really how to take it. But luckily, my first Army National Guard unit I had up in New York had a group of wonderful individuals in it, that I was able to get along with really well. When I transferred to the Oklahoma unit, it was a little different. The mindset was completely different there too, and it didn't work for me as well. I had to drive four hours every month to go to drill. It was a lot of driving. And their work ethic wasn't as strong as what I preferred. So when I had the opportunity to, audition for the Air Force Band, which was local for me and forty-five minute drive versus a four hour drive, I jumped on the opportunity, to join the Air Force Band instead.

MAGRA: What did your children think when you decided to go back in the military? You mentioned you had two, two children?

SILVERS-HALLER: I have three now. They were babies. They had no clue. My kids have only known, in fact—so my oldest is twenty—she'll be twenty-four next month. My second oldest will be twenty three next month, and my youngest will be fourteen in May. My fourteen year old. He's only ever known mom as, me, as in the military, he knows nothing else.

MAGRA: How tough was it to manage going into the military with two babies?

SILVERS-HALLER: It was hard. It was hard. We had help, my sister and at the time, my mom and dad were still alive, so they would take my kids, 'cause my ex-husband was also in the unit with me. He was a musician as well. So we both joined.

MAGRA: You're going back, but going back in, your ex-husband was with you?

SILVERS-HALLER: Yeah, he joined as well. We both joined the Army National Guard Band.

MAGRA: And you got divorced somewhere in between the Marines and ...

SILVERS-HALLER: No, we were married for 28 years.

MAGRA: OK, so you are married and you had kids and you both made the decision to get back into it.

SILVERS-HALLER: Yeah.

MAGRA: How did you talk him back into the military?

SILVERS-HALLER: He always had a sense that he wanted to go back in. The thing with him is, he wanted to do—he didn't wanna go in as a musician anymore, so he lasted for like a year and then he commissioned, he went officer. Thinking that he was gonna have more opportunities as an officer, To deploy and everything, 'cause he really just wanted to deploy. He never deployed, he still has yet to deploy, I have deployed. So it just goes to show that like you just have to be patient and make the right moves and do the right thing for the right reasons and then everything will fall into place the way it's supposed to be. You just have to wait for it.

MAGRA: Can you talk about your deployments?

SILVERS-HALLER: Yeah, it was great. I was deployed back in 2017. As a—this was when I was in the Chapel, Chapel assistant. I was the Superintendent of chapels at the time. They needed—they requested me by name. I guess word had gotten out that, 'cause I had backfilled on a tour for a year over in Wichita Falls in Texas because they needed somebody to backfill and and help, run the Chapel and I had volunteered for that, and I guess I did a really good job because after that they knew me by name up at headquarters in DC. So when the deployment came around, they needed one more person and they reached out to me individually and asked me if I would consider going. And I did. I jumped on it because I've always wanted to go and see what it was like to be in another country, to work with the troops overseas in that type of thing. So I got the opportunity to be stationed in Jordan. I went to Jordan for six months, actually close to seven months by the time we got back, 'cause January till the end of July in 2017. It was an experience that I would never forget. Because you make the biggest impact when you're in that environment, for sure.

MAGRA: And what did your family think about your deployment?

SILVERS-HALLER: It was hard on my kids, because they were in that awkward teenage years. And my youngest, all he knew was mom was gone, 'cause I think my son was like six or something or seven. He was really young. My other two were older

teenagers. I missed my daughter's senior graduation. That was hard on her. They didn't have a really great relationship with their dad. And he also made it difficult because in—this is hard to talk about it, but he was very envious that I was the one that got to deploy and he didn't. And so there was that angst. And then there was always that. “Well, I'm back here taking care of the kids and you're off there basically on vacation.” There was a lot of blame. So relationship wise it was a toll on the relationship. It is ultimately what ended up, ended our marriage, because it was on deployment that I realized that I was being held back for a really long time of what I was supposed to be doing and he was not a supporter. And so when we got back from deployment, we tried, we worked for a little bit like a year. We went to counseling and everything and. We realized that the marriage actually had ended about ten years ago, and we were just kind of going through the motions and that we were better off on our own. And that's why it ended.

MAGRA: And that service in Jordan? The kinds of the, kinds of things you did, the kind of work you did. In hindsight, do you think it was worth it? The toll it took on your relationship and your family?

SILVERS-HALLER: Yes, I think it's saved me. I think I would have ended up in a relationship of—I was, mentally abused without realizing it. I'd gone through a lot and I just sucked it up. And just kept cause—Marines don't quit, right? So I put up with a lot of. mental abuse over the years and my kids saw it. My kids saw the tension, in fact, it was my daughter that convinced me to file for divorce because she could see the toll it was taking on me. When I was deployed, I was the person I used to be. I was the outgoing, getting things done, loving everybody around me, helping everybody around me and it just, that's the person that I was always supposed to be. And then the fear of being put back in my box when I got back was the pivotal point that basically gave me that, um, strength, to say “enough is enough. I need to get away from this, for not only for my own sake, but for my children's sake” and since. Since the divorce, that, we got divorced back in 2019. I met my now husband. My children are flourishing. They love my husband that I have now. They are proud to call him their stepdad. They see the difference in me and I see a difference in them because of the decision that I finally made to say, OK, enough is enough.

MAGRA: Is your new husband in the military?

SILVERS-HALLER: He is not. He is not military, but he has the highest respect, for all military members. For me, he's completely supportive and I could not have asked for a better support system.

MAGRA: So where do you go from here, Tammy, what is, what are your plans for the future? Do you see yourself staying in the military for a few more years? And then what?

SILVERS-HALLER: I do! So because right now I'm on a tour. It's a stat [Statutory] tour, so I'm basically active duty right now, right. I'm gonna try and do this until they kick me out. I always love to be in the military. I never wanted to get out and for me this is just an opportunity. That was another thing that happened from the divorce. I was able to get back in and do things like this because I was always held back and told "Well, you know, we can't go active duty now because if you go active duty, then what's gonna happen and we're gonna move all around." And there was always an excuse why I couldn't go active duty. But now there's no restraints, right? I have 100% support from my family, my husband and my kids. And if the military wants to keep me on after this tour and move me on up to a different path where I'm helping even more people. I'm ready to go. Let me go. Until I can't go no more!

MAGRA: That's that's great. Do you ever look back on your life and think, what would have happened if I didn't join the military? Would you have become a flute instructor? Or gotten into a church and contributed that way? You ever think about that?

SILVERS-HALLER: Not so much of what if I hadn't joined the military. I don't know, I think I was born to join the military. But now that you pose that question, yes, probably. I probably would have went and become some sort of instructor. I've always been an instructor in some form or fashion. I had my own studio where and to this day I still teach. I teach dance and Zumba and all that good stuff and so I was born to teach. I was born to instruct in some form or fashion. The military was the catalyst that helped spring that on. Paid for my education, right? That was just the benefit on the outside of it, going Guard. So you figure I have about ten years, almost ten years active duty and then another ten years Guard. So within that ten year guard period, I did all the civilian things, right, got the degree, worked the civilian jobs, was a teacher in the outside world. So I kind of know where my path would have went, had I not been in the military. So when I get out of the military, well, first of all, when I get out of the military, I really just want to be one of those people that can just retire and do whatever she wants to do. If I can't, I know I have skill sets that are gonna help me be able to get jobs on the outside and I work at Chili's part-time. So you know, I'm a server, on the part-time.

MAGRA: Can you talk a little bit, just in closing about, the sort of work you do right now. And then, looking back, what you think of military service in all that you've accomplished over your life?

SILVERS-HALLER: So currently I think I have the best job in the military. It is the biggest honor to be able, to have someone tell you I want you to be a trainer or an instructor for our leaders out there. So I have the opportunity to instruct our leaders on how to be better leaders, how to be better supervisors, how to make an impact and a difference in their units. How I am as an instructor has a direct link into how they end up being. I won't affect everybody cause you know, some people will take it and they'll, they'll take it with a grain of salt. But others really do get impacted by it. So it's extremely important job. And I'm so honored to be able to get this opportunity to do it 'cause not a lot of people get this opportunity. I see so many NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers] that come through and when they tell me the jobs that they do out there, I'm in awe. And I'm grateful that we have such talented men and women out there that are willing to lay their lives down on the line to make sure that we're good to go, that we wake up in the morning, right?. We're extremely blessed country to have what we have, and when you look at the other countries and how their militaries are run. There's no comparison. There's absolutely no comparison. I would not trade it for the world. Does it have things that are wrong with it? Of course it does, but everybody has issues that they work through. I don't regret any of my decisions. I think they all led me to here. Had I stayed in the Marines, maybe I would not have been that on this path, right? So to me, I'm one of those people that just takes the situation that I'm in. And you have to, as Matthew McConaughey says in his book, *Greenlight[s]*, "you have to find a green light," because if you find red lights all the time, you're never going to progress, you have to find an opportunity to grow from whatever experience that you're given.

MAGRA: That's great, Tammy. Thank you for sharing your story with us. Really appreciate it. I'm gonna stop the record now.

–END OF INTERVIEW–