

Dulin, Stephen US Navy

[00:00:16.11] STEPHEN DULIN: I was born in Everett, Washington in 1947, March 18.

[00:00:22.71] JOE GALLOWAY: Who were your family members?

[00:00:25.17] STEPHEN DULIN: Mother and father. My mother is from Norwegian immigrants and my dad is from Irish and Swiss immigrants. My grandmother was born and raised in Switzerland. My dad worked in construction. He worked with the tools for many years and then sometime I think around his mid to late 30s, his boss recognized his talents as an estimator and he began estimating the jobs for this company. He actually got the job to construct much of the plumbing and heating of the building they built the 747 in, in my hometown, which made his boss a millionaire.

[00:01:20.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. And you consider Everett your hometown? Is that where you went to school?

[00:01:28.08] STEPHEN DULIN: That's where I went to high school and that's when I-- I joined the military in Everett.

[00:01:37.28] STEPHEN DULIN: Well, when I joined the Navy, I had picked being a hospital corpsman as a profession. And I was told by my Navy recruiter that I was probably going to end up with the Marines and I had the same question, how did that happen? And he explained that the Marine Corps does not have their own medical staff.

[00:02:02.72] JOE GALLOWAY: They use the Navy. So you were a Navy corpsman?

[00:02:05.66] STEPHEN DULIN: I was a Navy hospital corpsman, yes.

[00:02:08.24] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, we love the docs.

[00:02:09.98] STEPHEN DULIN: That's what people tell me.

[00:02:11.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. The docs and the nurses.

[00:02:14.24] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, absolutely.

[00:02:16.85] JOE GALLOWAY: So you decided you're going to join the Navy to be a corpsman?

[00:02:21.44] STEPHEN DULIN: Absolutely.

[00:02:23.09] JOE GALLOWAY: But you didn't know beforehand that you were going to end up with the Marines.

[00:02:28.70] STEPHEN DULIN: No. I did.

[00:02:29.42] JOE GALLOWAY: You did?

[00:02:29.94] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, he did actually-- and when I look back, I have to give the recruiter credit because he told me, he said, you know, you could also become a dental assistant. And I don't know why it didn't sound very appealing to me. It sounded boring. But working with doctors sounded very interesting and challenging, and I knew I would learn something even if I didn't use it after I got out of the service. So for some reason, I just needed to go in that direction, and being with the Marine Corps at that time didn't bother me. But I was very young, and I didn't think anybody could hurt me.

[00:03:11.18] JOE GALLOWAY: We all were.

[00:03:12.14] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:03:14.15] JOE GALLOWAY: What was your understanding of what was going on in Vietnam?

[00:03:17.66] STEPHEN DULIN: I had a job. I was working for Boeing's in Seattle when I graduated from high school. I spent two weeks in junior college. Junior college at that time was high school with ashtrays. And for some reason, I was not thrilled with being in junior college so I got a job at Boeing's. They were hiring and so I was working at Boeing's and I was commuting. I don't remember hearing that much about Vietnam. I didn't watch TV as a kid. I was outside all the time playing or working. I did odd jobs when I was a kid to raise money to buy my car and that kind of stuff. So I really don't remember having an idea.

[00:04:01.16] One of my high school friends-- so I graduated in '65, that year his brother went to Vietnam and he was killed there. So I knew that we were losing Americans in Vietnam, but my dad was in World War II, I wasn't afraid to serve.

[00:04:19.83] STEPHEN DULIN: I entered the Navy in July of 1966.

[00:04:24.48] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did they send you for basic training?

[00:04:26.97] STEPHEN DULIN: San Diego.

[00:04:28.41] JOE GALLOWAY: To San Diego. Now did you do basic and medical training there, or-- ?

[00:04:33.96] STEPHEN DULIN: We did basic. Yes, absolutely. Balboa Hospital was the training center for the corpsmen. Yes.

[00:04:42.24] JOE GALLOWAY: Is that all the training you received before you headed to Vietnam?

[00:04:46.92] STEPHEN DULIN: So what happened was, I can't remember how many companies graduated. They were putting a lot of us through because they needed corpsmen, so I

can't remember how large the group was. But when I graduated from corpsman school, they knew we were going to Vietnam. I mean, that was kind of our destiny. So they were kind of experimenting. They were doing some things to try to figure out what was the best way to train corpsman. So the mass majority of the corpsman that graduated from school went to hospitals throughout the United States.

[00:05:29.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Right. Give you some--

[00:05:31.86] STEPHEN DULIN: On hands training. The group that I was with that graduated, which was several hundred men-- like I said, I can't remember the exact number-- they went to field medical training schools for the Marines because the idea was we were all going to go to Vietnam. They took 10, they took 20 people and they split them up into two groups. They sent 10 to Hawaii and 10 to Japan to work in dispensaries. I was one of those 10 that went to Hawaii. So I didn't go to field medical training school. I went to the dispensary. And what they did instead of sending us to the hospital, they trained us in every specialty in medicine that they could. X-ray, lab, emergency medicine, I even went through pediatrics.

[00:06:24.69] JOE GALLOWAY: Good God. They were training you to do everything.

[00:06:26.31] STEPHEN DULIN: To do everything. We did minor surgery. As a matter of fact, we were so good at the minor surgery the docs left us alone. They actually said that you guys are doing a better job. I had mothers coming to me requesting me to sew up their kids when they would cut their chin or cheek because I got so good at it, just because I loved doing it so much. So that's the training we got. We got this very well-rounded training. So after I was there in Hawaii for 14, 15 months then I got my FMF orders. And then I went to field medical training school, which I can't remember how long that is, 12 or 14 months. And we trained with the Marines at Camp Pendleton.

[00:07:11.43] JOE GALLOWAY: For a year?

[00:07:12.49] STEPHEN DULIN: No, for about 12 or 14 weeks. Yes. So we have a DI. We have a drill instructor.

[00:07:26.79] JOE GALLOWAY: This is giving you the on the ground, this is what it's like with the Marines.

[00:07:32.82] STEPHEN DULIN: Exactly. Yeah. Precisely.

[00:07:40.04] STEPHEN DULIN: So we flew from I believe it was Norton Air Force Base, and our first stop was-- we flew to Anchorage, Alaska and then from there, I think that was a straight shot to Okinawa. So the Marines go to Okinawa to group.

[00:07:57.98] JOE GALLOWAY: Right.

[00:07:58.40] STEPHEN DULIN: And the interesting thing is, I thought I was there about a week but I don't really remember. It's kind of a processing. So I was there for at least several

days. So we stopped in Okinawa and then from Okinawa, we flew into Da Nang. And we flew in on civilian planes.

[00:08:16.94] JOE GALLOWAY: Right. Charters.

[00:08:18.47] STEPHEN DULIN: Yes. And there was about three planeloads of corpsman that I went there with.

[00:08:25.55] JOE GALLOWAY: Amazing.

[00:08:26.15] STEPHEN DULIN: I know. It was just amazing.

[00:08:29.48] JOE GALLOWAY: Well they were using them up.

[00:08:32.93] STEPHEN DULIN: Half of them were dead or wounded within two or three months. That's what we had heard.

[00:08:42.77] STEPHEN DULIN: When I was in Okinawa, I ran across this corpsman. He was with the 3rd Recon Battalion and he was going home. And we became fast friends. And he talked me into going with recon. And he said, you know, it's not a bad idea to be with the best, the best trained. And I'm not saying recon Marines are better than one five or one seven or one nine. JOE GALLOWAY: Better trained though. STEPHEN DULIN: They get more training, at least that was my understanding at the time and I didn't think I was coming back, so I figured I'm going to die, I'm going to die with the best. Yes.

[00:09:22.13] JOE GALLOWAY: So you volunteered for recon.

[00:09:24.57] STEPHEN DULIN: Yup.

[00:09:24.98] JOE GALLOWAY: And they gave it to you.

[00:09:27.05] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, yup. Got off the plane and there was this guy named John Henderson. I'll never forget him. He was this really, very bright, very interesting, very intelligent guy. First class. He was up there looking around, I could see him, he was looking around and anybody volunteering for recon? And he gave the big spiel and I was going, Jesus. Do I really want to do this? And I just said, OK. And I went with him. I'm your guy.

[00:10:00.57] JOE GALLOWAY: Off you went.

[00:10:01.28] STEPHEN DULIN: Off I went, yes. In the Jeep. No turning back from that.

[00:10:05.66] JOE GALLOWAY: And you were assigned to?

[00:10:08.66] STEPHEN DULIN: I was assigned-- well, so 1st Recon Battalion has Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo Company. And then F Company would be force recon, which is a little bit different. So they assigned me to Echo Company.

[00:10:31.76] JOE GALLOWAY: And they were located where?

[00:10:33.95] STEPHEN DULIN: So we were located right below 1st Marine Division in Da Nang. So 1st Marine Division was on the hill. I think it was 327 or 325 or something like that. We were down below them, yes. So the first thing they want to do is put you through the Recon Indoctrination Program, which is kind of a climate acclimation because of the weather. I mean, you're coming from the States into that severe weather. And then they assign you a company. But I arrived there July 3rd in the afternoon and July 4th, I was checking into the battalion aid station.

[00:11:22.61] JOE GALLOWAY: This is what year?

[00:11:24.56] STEPHEN DULIN: This is '68. Yes, I went there. So I had been in the Navy exactly two years there by the time I went over there.

[00:11:33.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Of a four year-- ?

[00:11:34.76] STEPHEN DULIN: Four year hitch, yeah. So of the 10 of us that went to Hawaii, a very small percentage ended up going to Vietnam because a lot of them were two year Reservists. But a few guys did go over there, but there's only one that I knew that went over there before I did. He volunteered. He wanted to go so bad. He was from Washington also. He was from Spokane. He wanted to go so bad, he kept volunteering until they finally took him. And he was killed two months after he got there. And that was before I got there. So there was a couple of other guys that I was stationed with in Hawaii that went there, they had OR tech training so they ended up working at NSA Hospital. And I think I was, if not the only guy, I might have been the only guy that actually went with a combat unit out of those 10 guys, because almost everybody else was a two year Reservist and they just didn't have the time to go over there.

[00:12:47.99] But I was going to tell you something interesting because this is the only story I've told anybody about my experience over there in the last couple of years since I've been going to the VA. I got there July 3rd in the afternoon. July 4th, I was checking into the battalion aid station. And I was talking to this corpsman, his name is Terry. He was checking me in. And as I was talking to him, the division colonel came rushing into the battalion aid station. He had this very urgent look on his face and he said, we need a corpsman for a reactionary force response to a team that's down. And so Terry looked at me and he said, do you want some experience? And I just told him, I said, well that's what I'm here for. But I remember thinking to myself, I don't know what I'm doing. Anyhow, so he threw me a Unit One and we were down on the LZ and in a CH-46.

[00:13:48.01] JOE GALLOWAY: And you're off?

[00:13:49.07] STEPHEN DULIN: And we're off. We're off and away and we finally get to this place, I think it was Charlie Ridge, and we're circling around in this CH-46, and the F-4s are dropping bombs and strafing this area. I think they were doing two things. I think they were blowing an LZ for the team so we could land, and then they were trying to fend off the NVA, yeah. And that went on so long that the 46 ran low on fuel and we had to go to a ROK Marine--

the ROK Marines, the Koreans, we had to go to one of their bases to refuel. And then once we refueled, we're back up in the air and then we were there. We still circled for a while and we finally went down. So we went down to pick them up and as we were going down, they handed me an M16. And I had shot one before, because we did I believe in FMS, Field Medical Training School. And so they gave me the M16 and I locked and loaded the thing and when we finally landed, I looked for the team because I didn't want to shoot the guys trying to get in the helicopter and they were in front of us or alongside of us because I'm looking out one of the portholes. And I just see the tree line and there's all these flashes. And the flashes are shooting, they're shooting at us.

[00:15:22.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:15:23.93] STEPHEN DULIN: And so I locked and loaded the M16 and I went-- and it jammed on me, which was what was supposed to be famous. So I got the jam out and I loaded another magazine in there and I ran off a couple of rounds of-- a couple of magazines. And I was standing next to the guy shooting the .50 cal, and he got shot and so I ended up taking care of him. And while I was taking care of him, the team finally made its way around to the back of the helicopter. And by the time I patched him up, the team was coming up. So I went down to the launch area and started working. The lieutenant had been shot in the head and we brought him aboard and that's when we left. This whole thing felt like it lasted for eternity.

[00:16:16.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Yes.

[00:16:17.15] STEPHEN DULIN: But the helicopter was-- the pilot was having trouble getting it off the ground. We had gotten hit so bad, I could feel the rounds going by me. I mean, I could feel them going by me, but it was just weird. I was wondering why I wasn't getting shot, but these rounds were just going by me.

[00:16:33.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Through the chopper?

[00:16:34.82] STEPHEN DULIN: Through the chopper, yeah. There was 100 holes in the chopper. They counted afterwards.

[00:16:40.26] JOE GALLOWAY: Wow.

[00:16:40.70] STEPHEN DULIN: So we had been shot up so bad that he had trouble getting the helicopter off the ground. And we were on the side of a hill, so we were kind of on the top of it. And he finally got high enough off the ground to where he could just kind of get it-- I didn't really know what was going on at the time, this is kind of thinking about it afterwards. And then he just kind of took off down the hill as if he was going to probably land somewhere else just to get away from the enemy. And he was able to get enough power out of it, he got enough lift that he was able to get us to NSA Hospital. But as soon as we landed, they said, get out of it, get out of this helicopter. Because they thought it was going to blow, yeah. And I later found out that there were some people in high places that didn't think we'd ever make it back. So it was just one of those-- it would have been one of those stories where--

[00:17:36.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Welcome to Vietnam.

[00:17:36.89] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, welcome to Vietnam. Yeah. So the benefit with that was when I went back to the rear area, I already had a reputation in the field so I didn't have to prove myself. Because every Marine was nervous about a corpsman that hadn't really experienced combat because you never know what you're going to do until you're involved. And I had already gone through that so I just didn't have to prove myself. So that was the best part about the whole thing. I didn't get scared until afterwards, when we went and got a bite to eat while we were waiting for the people to pick us up at NSA Hospital. Terry and I and the other corpsman, we went and got a bite to eat. And when I started eating, I just started trembling. I couldn't believe it.

[00:18:24.67] JOE GALLOWAY: You couldn't believe that you were still alive.

[00:18:27.08] STEPHEN DULIN: I couldn't believe it, yeah. So they assigned me to a team, or actually a platoon. But usually each team has a corpsman, and if the team doesn't have a corpsman, then I trained a Marine to be a corpsman or an aid man. We call them aid men. There's only eight of us when we go out, so my principal duty is I'm a Marine with a Unit One, which is my medical pack. So I carry everything the Marines carry plus my Unit One.

[00:19:03.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Including a rifle.

[00:19:04.85] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, I carried a rifle. You have to be an E-6 to carry a .45. So if I want one, I've got to check it out.

[00:19:11.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:19:12.65] STEPHEN DULIN: But you know, when you get into a firefight and there's only eight of you, a .45 doesn't get it. JOE GALLOWAY: That doesn't cut it. STEPHEN DULIN: No.

[00:19:26.05] STEPHEN DULIN: They were incredible. I mean, we'd all die for each other.

[00:19:32.92] JOE GALLOWAY: And did.

[00:19:34.87] STEPHEN DULIN: Yup.

[00:19:38.77] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you form friendships with men from different racial and social backgrounds that you might never have had in civilian life?

[00:19:48.40] STEPHEN DULIN: I grew up primarily in Everett, Washington which was pretty much a white town. We had a few African-American families. We had-- in fact, an African-American kid that was in my high school graduating class-- there was about five of us-- he was the senior class president. I had no ill will towards anybody of a different race. We also had a significant Native American population up there and so I had no problem making friends with people of different cultures.

[00:20:31.48] JOE GALLOWAY: Because then the Marine Corps will lose everybody.

[00:20:35.71] STEPHEN DULIN: Some Marine general said that there's only one color in the Marine Corps, and it's green. And it was really true. And I think most Marines respected that and followed that doctrine.

[00:20:53.17] JOE GALLOWAY: What did you guys do for off-duty time recreation, if you had any off-duty time?

[00:20:59.75] STEPHEN DULIN: So in between patrols, we would prepare for the next one is what you ended up doing. One of my teammates and I, when we'd come off a patrol, we would head to Freedom Hill, the exchange there, and we would go there and have lunch, have a meal, and then we'd go through the PX. And that's where I bought my stereo equipment and bought my mom some stuff, my dad, my sister, and my brother. And they'd usually give us some time off to do that in between patrols. I think they gave us a day.

[00:21:36.69] JOE GALLOWAY: They gave you a day.

[00:21:37.84] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah. We'd do that and then when we came back, we would-- if I wasn't training corpsmen, I was going on MEDCAPs, which were--

[00:21:46.71] JOE GALLOWAY: Out to the villages.

[00:21:48.13] STEPHEN DULIN: out the villages, yeah. And the group of corpsmen that I was with in that battalion, we supported the Catholic orphanage that was in Da Nang. So we used to go there and check on the kids. And if any of them were sick, we'd take them to the hospital ship, Sanctuary. JOE GALLOWAY: Repose. STEPHEN DULIN. Repose. It was the Repose. I was trying to remember if it was the Sanctuary or the Repose. It was the Repose. Yeah. And there was two nuns running this Catholic orphanage. They could have 100 to 150 kids and oftentimes, half of them were babies.

[00:22:25.88] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:22:27.13] STEPHEN DULIN: It was just amazing. They had helpers, obviously. But so we would go there and if any of the kids were sick, we would take care of them.

[00:22:37.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you have specific memories of the popular culture of that time and by that, I really mean music, song?

[00:22:45.10] STEPHEN DULIN: There's only one song that I remember and it was because I was on R&R and that was Hey Jude. And that was a popular song. But when I was in Hawaii, I remember songs from Hawaii, but not in Vietnam.

[00:22:57.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Not in Vietnam?

[00:22:58.04] STEPHEN DULIN: No. I remember the JFK and Martin Luther King assassination. I remember that. The year I was in Vietnam, we had Stars and Stripes.

[00:23:11.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:23:12.25] STEPHEN DULIN: And that's about the only news we ever got. And I just don't remember getting much news about what was going on, because when I went to Vietnam, people looked pretty normal. When I came back, everybody had long hair and they were smoking marijuana. I mean, it was a total cultural shock. And I just might be one of the naive. I always considered myself a late bloomer in life, so maybe I'm just naive, but a lot of that stuff just flew over my head. Yeah, and I just wasn't aware of it.

[00:23:49.58] STEPHEN DULIN: So we ran patrols in the I Corps area, but each company-- now what I don't remember is when-- so we had two patrols. We had combat O-Ps, outposts, that we would man, and it was usually two or three teams. And then we had individual patrols, recon patrols, where we would go out and we would look for the enemy and call in artillery on them, take prisoners, or engage them. So our combat O-Ps were scattered around the Da Nang area, but they were probably more specific for our company, because every company had their own. And a lot of them were around the An Hoa area, which was that operational area which they used to refer to as Little Khe Sanh.

[00:24:47.16] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:24:48.32] STEPHEN DULIN: It was pretty brutal. JOE GALLOWAY: Nasty out there. STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, it was very nasty out there. So geographically, I probably knew at the time, but I just--

[00:24:58.40] JOE GALLOWAY: But you were mainly focused on that Da Nang quadrant.

[00:25:02.00] STEPHEN DULIN: Yes. Right.

[00:25:03.11] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't go to Phu Bai or Hue or-- ?

[00:25:06.89] STEPHEN DULIN: No, I was in Phu Bai. We flew into Phu Bai for some reason. I remember being there. Not Hue, but I remember being in Phu Bai. But I don't remember why we were there. I have these blocks of memory that I just can't-- for some reason they-- JOE GALLOWAY: Don't open for you. STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, they just they just haven't opened up.

[00:25:28.25] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe the quality of the leadership in your outfit, company, battalion, however high you could see?

[00:25:38.72] STEPHEN DULIN: Well, I didn't know the colonel very well, but I did get to know the CO and our XO. Our XO actually took us out on a patrol a couple of times. He was a Mustang, a magnificent guy. Absolutely magnificent guy. And our CO was also a really great

guy, very talented. I found all the Marines that I worked with in my company as being just the best of the best, incredibly competent and very professional.

[00:26:10.25] I mean, we had our moments when we did stupid things like the one night that-- I can't remember if it was after a patrol, where maybe we weren't supposed to come back. We were just giddy about being back and we all got drunk and we raised hell. And I was the corpsman so the Marines couldn't buy hard liquor, but I was a corpsman. I was Navy so I had a liquor card so I could buy liquor. So I used to buy liquor for the Marines and we would have parties. But we raised hell and our first sergeant, who was a magnificent man, he waited until we went to sleep. And after about two hours, he woke us all up and took us on a run, which I just remember it was a long run. JOE GALLOWAY: It was a vomit patrol. STEPHEN DULIN: It was. Yeah. And so I'll never forget that. That was amazing.

[00:27:20.87] But even at that time, we were all hungover, a couple of guys were really sick, and the guys that weren't making it, we carried them. I mean, it was just amazing. You just didn't even think twice about grabbing one arm while somebody grabbed the other arm and, in fact, dragging them along. It was just amazing. But that was something else.

[00:27:48.66] STEPHEN DULIN: I don't know if I really had a best day. I mean, I was never one to mark off the days, how many days I have left, I just never did the calendar. I've never done the calendar. No matter where I've been, I just kind of live day to day. A friend of mine, one of the corpsmen, was trying to adopt one of the children at the orphanage. And he started adoption papers, which was very difficult. The US military really discouraged it. He started the adoption papers on one of the kids and the kid died. So I couldn't get him to make rounds with me. And finally, I said Jack, you're going with me on this round because I need your help. It needs to be two people going this time. So I got him going and I got him to go with me. We got there and there were these two fresh twins and that was all it took. So he started the adoption papers on these two kids again and he got them. And he got to take them home. That was--

[00:29:05.31] JOE GALLOWAY: A real good day.

[00:29:05.85] STEPHEN DULIN: --a real triumph. Yeah, it was a good day. It took him a long time. It took him a couple of months. He had to go to Saigon to push the paperwork, but he got it done and he took them home.

[00:29:24.18] STEPHEN DULIN: It was August 1st, Hill 200 had gotten overrun and we lost five guys. There were 19 on the hill and the rest of them were wounded. That was the worst day.

[00:29:36.63] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you go in?

[00:29:38.31] STEPHEN DULIN: So at about 1 o'clock in the morning, they woke us up and said that Hill 200 was being overrun. It was our company's hill and we had this reactionary force. The CO had been training us for a reactionary force. If one of our teams was in trouble, whether it was a hill or a recon team, the people that were left-- because everybody was out on patrols usually--

[00:30:08.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Somebody had to go get them.

[00:30:10.38] STEPHEN DULIN: Somebody had to go get them and so we put it together and we were in the air by 0400, but we couldn't get there during the worst part of the fight because it was dark. And there was 19 guys on the hill and there was 200 men attacking them. And the NVA were incredible fighters. Always well-- JOE GALLOWAY: They were good. STEPHEN DULIN: Oh, good. They were just amazing. I had so much respect for the Vietnamese people when I was over there. I really liked them. I'm not saying I liked the enemy, but I sure liked the Vietnamese people. I just thought that their determination to survive-- that's kind of what they were doing when they were living was surviving-- was just pretty unbelievable.

[00:30:56.73] So finally, at 0400 we were flying over the hill and we can see them in the firefight. And just as daylight broke, I believe I was on the first bird. I think there was two birds full of Marines. I'm pretty sure I was on the first bird and they dropped us. And as soon as we left the bird, we were taking incoming. They were shooting at us. They were still there. And my first casualty I got to was a hospital corpsman, on the hill. He had gotten shot.

[00:31:36.21] JOE GALLOWAY: One of your friends?

[00:31:37.92] STEPHEN DULIN: I didn't know him. No, I didn't know him. Part of the problem is that you're out on patrol so much, It's hard to get to know the other guys. Because the company is 100-120 people and they're kind of scattered everywhere. And you're out on patrol, and when you come back-- there's several teams out, and then they come back and you got your business to do. So there's not a lot of time for socializing at all. You get to know your team really well, but you don't get to know the other guys too well. I knew the corpsman that was in my platoon, the other corpsman that was in my platoon, and I knew the head corpsman. We had a head corpsman and I knew who he was. And I knew some of the corpsman in other companies that I had run across.

[00:32:27.42] JOE GALLOWAY: You just didn't know this guy.

[00:32:28.32] STEPHEN DULIN: I didn't know this guy. I didn't recognize him when I saw him and I just remembered he was hurt really bad. And I remember he was angry that he couldn't help anybody. I mean, he was just so angry. But I don't know if he survived. I think he did. I think he survived, but we had 10 dead bodies. I'm sorry, we had five dead bodies and everybody else was wounded. Everybody else was wounded, yeah.

[00:33:01.47] JOE GALLOWAY: So your hands were full.

[00:33:03.30] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, we were really busy. It was just a massacre.

[00:33:08.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you immediately start evacuating these guys or were you going to treat them and stabilize them first?

[00:33:15.84] STEPHEN DULIN: No, we were evacuating them.

[00:33:17.95] JOE GALLOWAY: Get them out of there.

[00:33:18.90] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah. I found myself-- we had two Marines-- so when we were loading the Marines into the helicopter, I saw these two Marines laying on the-- each CH-46 has kind of a bench seat type of thing on each side. And there were these two Marines, one on each side and they were shooting RPGs and a lot of satchel charges, which is a bag of explosives that they would throw at you. JOE GALLOWAY: Throw at you in a bunker. STEPHEN DULIN: Yes, exactly. And these guys had multiple fractures of their legs.

[00:34:04.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:34:05.12] STEPHEN DULIN: They were just all broken up and I could tell they were dehydrated. And so I was trying to start, I think we had Ringer's lactate, if I'm not mistaken. Yes, I was trying to hydrate them because I had a real hard time getting an IV. These were young guys. They were actually African-American young guys who should have had gigantic veins and I had a hell of a time finding veins on them. So I spent a lot of time on them and by the time I'd got done with them, the helicopter took off. And so I ended up leaving after that. It was shortly after that the other helicopter left.

[00:34:54.14] JOE GALLOWAY: That was pulling everybody out.

[00:34:57.08] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, right. Yeah. I can't remember how many people. We had more than half the guys on that bird. It was a horrible thing. Unfortunately, one of the guys that was killed was a really good friend of mine. 18 years old. He was 18.

[00:35:30.26] STEPHEN DULIN: None.

[00:35:30.90] JOE GALLOWAY: None?

[00:35:32.12] STEPHEN DULIN: We had a team that had *Chieu Hois*. We never did. They were Viet Cong or North Vietnamese that come to our side and they usually run point for the recon, the ones we had. And we had some problems with them. But there was never one on my team. So I saw them in the rear area, but I never had any contact with them.

[00:36:03.82] STEPHEN DULIN: So the military Vietnamese, the ARVNs, I didn't have any real contact with them. I had some contact with the civilians because we had civilians working on the base.

[00:36:17.15] JOE GALLOWAY: And you were doing MEDCAPs out to the--

[00:36:19.47] STEPHEN DULIN: And we were doing MEDCAPs, yes. And I just enjoyed being around them. I felt very comfortable with them. And we had interpreters, people that could speak Vietnamese. And sometimes, when you're doing medical stuff, you don't really have to talk to them if you're helping them with a wound. A lot of it was wounds. And I was at one MEDCAP and we had gone through a long line of folks that were trying to get help and we ran out of equipment. And there was only a few people left in the line and there was this older woman, she

really got upset. And I was trying to explain to her that we ran out of supplies. And so I gave her the box and she just perked up.

[00:37:10.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Gave her what?

[00:37:11.72] STEPHEN DULIN: I gave her the box that we had our supply-- one of the boxes we had our supplies in. It was an empty box. I gave the box to her and she just perked up. She was so happy to get something, but I didn't know what to do. JOE GALLOWAY: An empty box is worth something. STEPHEN DULIN: It was worth something. It was just amazing. But I just really liked them a lot, I really did.

[00:37:34.22] JOE GALLOWAY: They were remarkable people.

[00:37:35.51] STEPHEN DULIN: Yes, absolutely. Like I say, we had some young girls that worked in the EM club and they were fabulous. They were just so much fun to be around. We had a little shop there on base where it was kind of a place where you could take your clothes and get them cleaned, and they would take your picture if you wanted, and they had some things that you could buy, stuff that Marines could use, just knickknacks. And they were super, super nice. They were a family from the north. They came down when--

[00:38:12.53] JOE GALLOWAY: '54.

[00:38:13.79] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah. Exactly. JOE GALLOWAY: When the Catholics all came. STEPHEN DULIN: Yup, exactly. They were part of that group and they were just super nice people.

[00:38:25.68] STEPHEN DULIN: I don't remember getting a lot of letters. My grandmother who was born and raised in Switzerland had a very difficult life growing up because she was an orphan. She wrote me all the time. She couldn't write. She always had that jitteriness.

[00:38:49.26] JOE GALLOWAY: Parkinson's?

[00:38:50.43] STEPHEN DULIN: I don't think she had Parkinson's. I think it was just-- JOE GALLOWAY: A quiver. STEPHEN DULIN: --a quiver, yeah. And so she typed with an old typewriter. And it was an old typewriter that needed adjustment, so sometimes the words were like this, you know. But she was pretty religious about writing me, and it was wonderful. But I don't remember getting too many letters. And I didn't have anything to write about. I didn't want to tell them what was going on.

[00:39:21.21] JOE GALLOWAY: You just didn't write.

[00:39:22.75] STEPHEN DULIN: I wrote very little.

[00:39:24.43] JOE GALLOWAY: How much news did you guys get about the war you were fighting?

[00:39:29.55] STEPHEN DULIN: Didn't get any. I don't remember any news.

[00:39:31.95] JOE GALLOWAY: *Stars and Stripes*?

[00:39:33.60] STEPHEN DULIN: I don't remember a lot of-- I don't even remember how often I got it. I remember reading *Stars and Stripes* a couple of times, but--

[00:39:46.20] JOE GALLOWAY: It was kind of sporadic.

[00:39:47.25] STEPHEN DULIN: It was very sporadic. And I just don't remember too much about what I got out of it. But I don't remember hearing many rumors. I did, just before I left. One of the rumors was that you want to take your ribbons off when you get off the plane when you go home because they were shooting vets and that kind of stuff. We had heard that. So, I don't know. I didn't get any fine details about it. They just said that you might get shot on the way getting off the plane-- I mean, getting off the plane. You might get shot, so-- I know it didn't make any sense and there was also that thought in my mind that it was just scuttlebutt.

[00:40:27.57] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. And it was.

[00:40:29.40] STEPHEN DULIN: And there was so much scuttlebutt going around, you just didn't know what to believe. And after a while, you just kind of have to-- wow, if I just worry about everything I'm hearing, I'm never going to be a sane person. When I lost my best friend, I decided at that time, I had to survive this war mentally if I was coming home, and I didn't think I was coming home. But I had to come back mentally intact. And the only way I was going to do that is if I had my ducks in a row mentally. JOE GALLOWAY: Tune out all the nonsense. STEPHEN DULIN: I had to concentrate on survival and taking care of my team. They were the most important thing to me.

[00:41:07.72] STEPHEN DULIN: It was uneventful. I got off the plane and nobody shot me, and I was wearing my ribbons. I didn't care.

[00:41:13.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Nobody messed with you?

[00:41:14.95] STEPHEN DULIN: Nobody messed-- yeah, and I went home.

[00:41:16.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did you go to?

[00:41:17.83] STEPHEN DULIN: I think we flew into Norton, where we flew out of to begin with. I think it was Norton. Pretty sure it was.

[00:41:25.84] JOE GALLOWAY: San Bernardino, California.

[00:41:27.94] STEPHEN DULIN: Yes. And then from there, I took a plane to my home because we immediately got a 30-day leave.

[00:41:34.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Did you still owe the Navy a year or so?

[00:41:39.40] STEPHEN DULIN: I had a year left, yeah.

[00:41:41.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did they send you after your leave?

[00:41:44.38] STEPHEN DULIN: Vallejo, California. Naval shipyard.

[00:41:49.24] JOE GALLOWAY: And you pulled your last year there?

[00:41:51.88] STEPHEN DULIN: Right.

[00:41:52.69] JOE GALLOWAY: Working in the hospital?

[00:41:54.19] STEPHEN DULIN: I was working in a-- we had a dispensary. The building I worked in had at one time been a hospital, but they turned it into a dispensary. So I had made E-5 and I had my choice between E-5 or getting a Navy Achievement Medal with a V and I took E-5 because I knew it meant money and I wasn't into medals.

[00:42:22.36] JOE GALLOWAY: You weren't into medals.

[00:42:23.23] STEPHEN DULIN: No. My sergeant on one of my first patrols tried to write me up for the Bronze Star and I laughed at him. I told him, you're not going to do that. We've got guys dying and I'm just doing my job. I am not going to let you do that. He persisted and finally, I just told him, if you do that, I will find a way to embarrass you. And he was a good guy. I feel so bad about doing that, I really do. I feel like I should have had some respect for him and just let him do it because he really wanted to write that up, and I was so mean to him about it.

[00:43:07.27] JOE GALLOWAY: When you finished your enlistment, what did you do?

[00:43:14.68] STEPHEN DULIN: I went to college.

[00:43:15.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Went to college. Did you have any difficulty readjusting to life after combat?

[00:43:25.80] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah. But you know, after a year of combat, when you come back, you really don't know what normal is. And so I had been adjusting to the combat situation for a whole year. It kind of became part of my DNA. And so when I came home, I just kind of went on with life. I put Vietnam in the rearview mirror and I had a goal. I needed to go to college and get a career and go on with life.

[00:43:59.61] One of the good things was when I got out of the Navy, or when I was discharged from the Navy, I had some friends that lived in Sacramento that I had been stationed with. And most all of them had been combat corpsman, so I had this immediate support group. We never talked about it, but there was always that understanding and I felt really comfortable around them. I did not do well with guys my age that didn't serve. I didn't have any animosity towards them, I just never got close to anybody. I just couldn't.

[00:44:39.99] But I had the nightmares right away and stomach problems and emotional issues. And the VA, I tried getting some help from the VA and they just laughed at me and so I stayed away. I just had to survive with what I had.

[00:44:57.90] JOE GALLOWAY: What did you do in college? What did you study?

[00:45:00.96] STEPHEN DULIN: I became a registered nurse.

[00:45:02.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you?

[00:45:05.07] STEPHEN DULIN: And I just retired last November. Well, my last job I functioned-- I was not a nurse practitioner, but I functioned much like one. My last year in the Navy, I worked with some great doctors in Vallejo and they were inspiring. I just loved them and I was going to become a doctor and most of my doctor friends said, no, you don't want to do that.

[00:45:30.82] JOE GALLOWAY: You don't want to do that.

[00:45:32.39] STEPHEN DULIN: He said, you might not like them. So when I got out, there was a group of us that were interested in furthering our education into medicine. And we were told that because of our Navy experience as corpsmen, and because we were older, that medical school was untouchable because there was this age problem. They wanted you young and they didn't want you to have any medical background, so it was really tough. I was not a scholar. I didn't get 4.0. I might not have been competitive. I did want to become a doctor, but I ended up going the nursing route. And I was married, I was working, and going to school. And if I would have gotten into medical school, it would have been fabulous, but I just didn't try hard enough to go that far with it. It just looked like there was too many obstacles.

[00:46:26.47] JOE GALLOWAY: They were putting up obstacles.

[00:46:28.26] STEPHEN DULIN: I was trying to get my life together and I just didn't need that kind of pressure. And I don't do well with people who I don't think are fair. You know what I mean?

[00:46:41.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you think you had difficulty readjusting to life after combat, after the war?

[00:46:49.61] STEPHEN DULIN: I think I had a lot of difficulty, but I didn't understand it. If you can't talk about it and if there's nobody even interested in hearing you, it's-- because I tried talking to my dad. He's a World War II veteran. I tried talking to him a couple of times and he'd change the subject. And so I didn't feel comfortable talking to anybody that wasn't a combat vet. There's just no need to talk to somebody about your combat experience that didn't experience it. And none of us wanted to talk about it.

[00:47:20.36] I only remember once, at the summer of 1979, a friend of mine who was a Marine corpsman and he was on Hill 64 in Khe Sanh. And he was one of the few survivors of that hill when it was overrun. And I remember we briefly talked. He briefly told me about his experience

on the hill, how he was in a bunker, the hill was overrun, and this NVA soldier came in the bunker to kill him, and he shot him when he came into the bunker. And I don't remember if I said anything about my experience. I just don't remember that. But I remember him telling me that. But that's the only time I remember talking about it and that was with another combat corpsman.

[00:48:10.46] You didn't tell anybody that was a civilian that was our age because there were so many people that were so against the war. I was introduced to a girl just after I got out of the Navy and she asked me what I did for a living. And I had gotten a job at Sutter Memorial Hospital in Sacramento, but I told her I'd just gotten out of the Navy and she just turned around and walked away.

[00:48:44.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Whoa.

[00:48:45.55] STEPHEN DULIN: So that didn't hurt my feelings or bother me at the time, I remember that, because I kind of expected it. You kind of had to be careful what you discussed around other people. And people that did know that you were in combat, especially other guys, they just seemed to kind of avoid you. It was an unusual feeling being around people, guys my age, that weren't in the military.

[00:49:21.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your experience coming home from Vietnam affect the way you think about troops coming back from the wars today?

[00:49:29.67] STEPHEN DULIN: I just have a lot of respect for them and I'm glad they're being treated differently.

[00:49:34.55] JOE GALLOWAY: Differently and better.

[00:49:35.67] STEPHEN DULIN: They're being treated a lot better and they're being treated as the heroes that they are. I think a lot of the Vietnam veterans that didn't have good coping skills-- fortunately, I had some good coping skills-- just didn't do well. I started losing friends in my 30s.

[00:49:56.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Alcohol, drugs, you name it.

[00:49:58.29] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, absolutely. And I lost several friends of mine that were corpsman with the Marines. They started dying in their 30s. You know, alcoholism and-- this one friend of mine, he was 33 years old. Unfortunately, the male family behind him had heart problems and he just precipitated it with his alcohol consumption.

[00:50:29.77] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today?

[00:50:38.26] STEPHEN DULIN: Well, I don't think there's anything positive. I think it's remembered as something regretful that we probably shouldn't have done. We have politicians that went to Vietnam and came back and have been bashing the war ever since. It's pretty hard when you've got public figures trashing the Soldiers that spent a year, one or two or three tours

over there. If anything good came from it, I guess it would be that the Soldiers today aren't treated that well-- I mean, they aren't treated that way.

[00:51:31.92] JOE GALLOWAY: The only good thing I've ever seen come out of war is advances in medical technology.

[00:51:39.27] STEPHEN DULIN: No, very true.

[00:51:41.85] STEPHEN DULIN: Yes, and I should know that. I should know that because look at the surgeons that came out of that war. Look what they learned. They did procedures that nobody had done up until that time. I think if I'd have been wounded, I have some friends that lost their legs, lost arms, and this, that, and the other thing, and I just take my hat off to them. I don't know how they survive that. I don't know how they live with it. It's just amazing. People seem to adapt well. And with the technology we have today-- I have a friend of mine that lost his leg in Korea. He's 90 years old and he walks like a normal person.

[00:52:27.75] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:52:28.29] STEPHEN DULIN: And that was Korea. I don't know, maybe something like that makes us who we really are. Maybe that makes us take life to the next step. Maybe-- it's a horrible thing to think about, but some guys are so tenacious and such survivalists that a challenge like that makes them a better person. And we've got so many examples of that. We've got guys running marathons that have no legs. JOE GALLOWAY: They're on springs. STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah. When I see those guys, I can't believe it.

[00:53:08.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Are there lessons that you took from the Vietnam experience that you would like to pass along?

[00:53:20.43] STEPHEN DULIN: Well, since it was such an unusual war and it's nothing like World War II, Korea, or the wars we've had since Vietnam, I think the lessons we've learned is that we have to pick and choose our wars based on the people we want to go to war with. Do we want to go to war with the people that have been fighting for what did you say, 2000 years? I only learned this recently that Ho Chi Minh was somebody that we had helped during World War II fight the Japanese. And we were anti-colonialists. How could we not see that? Why didn't somebody from Washington go talk to Ho Chi Minh in person?

[00:54:10.02] JOE GALLOWAY: We had an OSS team that was in the cave with him.

[00:54:13.95] STEPHEN DULIN: Exactly, yes. I just learned that recently too. There were so many missed opportunities. Not only did we lose over 58,000 people, but the Vietnamese lost, what, almost two million? A million? A friend of mine, he was an Army tunnel rat, and he goes back with his unit. And he said the only person he ran across in Vietnam that was rude to him was a Frenchman. He said the Vietnamese people-- he talked to NVA soldiers that he had fought against, they became pals. I mean, respect for each other. It's amazing.

[00:55:04.22] JOE GALLOWAY: You visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in DC?

[00:55:09.02] STEPHEN DULIN: You know what, I haven't. And I just never had a good feeling about it from the very get go.

[00:55:19.47] JOE GALLOWAY: You should.

[00:55:21.52] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah. Yeah, I'm probably going to visit it. STEPHEN DULIN: After 50 years,

[00:55:32.61] I think it's a great idea. 50 years. 50 years has gone by. I just can't believe it. I remember when I was your age, it's so vivid. I just can't believe 50 years has gone by.

[00:55:50.31] JOE GALLOWAY: I went to Vietnam in '65, that's 20 years after the end of World War II.

[00:55:56.49] STEPHEN DULIN: Were you there in '75?

[00:55:57.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. That was my fourth tour.

[00:56:03.06] STEPHEN DULIN: That was one of my worst years, when I heard we pulled out and left all those people there. I was just sick.

[00:56:08.42] JOE GALLOWAY: It actually broke my heart.

[00:56:09.54] STEPHEN DULIN: Yeah, me too. About 16, 17 years ago, I was working with this nurse practitioner that was from Vietnam when she was a child. And I apologized to her. She didn't even know what I was talking about. So when I met her, I apologized to her. I said, we should have never left your family there. Hardworking bright people here in this country, the Vietnamese people, they're unbelievable. I was a home health nurse for about 10 years and I took care of a lot of Vietnamese Hmong. And whenever I went into the home, I was usually taking care of grandma or grandpa. And the grandkids were taking care of grandma and grandpa while mom and dad were working. And sometimes, there was two families in one apartment.

[00:57:10.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Working three shifts.

[00:57:12.00] STEPHEN DULIN: And the kids were fluent in English and they were taking care of mom and dad. It was unbelievable. The family unit is just incredible. I wanted to be part of them. They always treated me wonderfully. I couldn't get enough of that. I really enjoyed taking care of them. So I agree with you. I think the best part about the outcome of the war is that we just have some of the greatest people this country has seen. They've assimilated and they're patriotic. All my Vietnamese friends know I was in Vietnam. They all know I was there and they thank me for it. It's just amazing. The only people who ever did thank me for it.