

Galloway, Joe War Correspondent

[00:00:18.87] JOE GALLOWAY: I was born in Bryan, Texas College Station three weeks before Pearl Harbor. And my mother and I-- my dad went into the Army, and so did six of his brothers and four of my mother's brothers. And my mother and I lived between his mother's house in Franklin, Texas and her mother's house in the little town of Marquez, Texas, 25 miles away. And we rode the Continental bus between those two towns.

[00:01:01.53] My mother was pretty good at figuring out when we had worn out our welcome in one place or another. But there were all these other wives and kids of the uncles and aunts doing the same thing pretty much. So these were big busy households full of frightened women who kind of kept an eye out the window for the telegraph boy.

[00:01:29.64] It was my earliest memories of the uncertainty of everybody-- every man in the family being-- except my grandfather-- being away in service in a dangerous occupation. And I did not meet my father to know him until the end of 1945.

[00:01:57.45] And he and his brothers and my other uncles all came home, and they were in a very big hurry to get on with the life that had been interrupted for four or five years. And my dad took some training courses, and then got a job in the oil fields in South Texas. And my mother and I loaded what belongings we had in the back of a rented pickup, and drove to the little town of Refugio, Texas. Back then probably a population of 1,200.

[00:02:39.51] But an oil boom was underway, and my dad got a job with Humble Oil. And we lived-- housing was hard like it always is in a boom town, and we lived in a little apartment over a gas station and a garage for a while, and then we moved to an oil camp, 10 miles north of Refugio, where there were about 30 families all employed by the same oil company.

[00:03:17.88] And there was a district headquarters office, and my dad worked in that office. And I really grew up on the Tom O'Connor Ranch which was at that time probably the richest oil field in America. And had been since 1929.

[00:03:38.16] The O'Connor family that owned that ranch collected over \$2 billion in royalties between 1929 and let's say 1975 when the field ran dry. But I grew up in a different kind of America-- in a different kind of place. We kids ran wild on the prairie, barefooted, dodging rattlesnakes, and bullhead cactus and hunting rabbits and just really living a different kind of life. And we rode the school bus 10 miles to town in the morning and 10 miles back in the afternoon.

[00:04:27.54] MARK FRANKLIN: That's a long ride to school.

[00:04:28.74] JOE GALLOWAY: Long ride to school.

[00:04:31.08] MARK FRANKLIN: You mentioned when your dad and your uncles came home they were interested in moving on with their life. Did they ever talk about their experiences in the war?

[00:04:37.86] JOE GALLOWAY: You know, we all-- us boys, we all wanted stories from them, and we couldn't get them. What we would get was funny stories, jokes things like that. We-- from the ones who had been in combat, we couldn't get a thing, and I didn't get any of those stories until I came home on leave from Vietnam. And I understood then, there's no point really in telling those stories to people who don't have any basis for understanding them.

[00:05:15.31] MARK FRANKLIN: Because they just won't.

[00:05:16.29] JOE GALLOWAY: And so then you have to understand too that they were of a generation that just didn't blab a whole lot. They didn't talk a lot. Oh Lord, I almost think I was born one. I was interested in the word-- the written word. I read every book in the school library. I consumed books at the rate of five or six a week. I-- and in high school, I made deals with teachers especially math teachers, since me and math didn't get along.

[00:06:07.08] I would sit in the back and read my books, and not cause any disturbance at all, and the teacher could teach math to those who could get it. And I could read my books, and I would read the textbook at the beginning of the year and retain enough of that to make a gentleman's C on the exams, and everything was copacetic. Because otherwise if they wouldn't buy that deal, then I could shut a class down.

[00:06:41.82] [LAUGHS]

[00:06:43.16] MARK FRANKLIN: How would you do that?

[00:06:44.40] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, you know how I could-- you know how I could.

[00:06:50.13] MARK FRANKLIN: Was there anyone in your life that kind of pushed you or maybe motivated you or served as a role model to become a journalist?

[00:06:56.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Several teachers. English teachers primarily. One taught English and journalism. My eighth grade English teacher Mr. Arthur P. Daley, who was a bone-deep Yankee who had been in the Navy and married a local girl and ended up teaching the eighth grade. And he was a ferociously eccentric fellow, and he was also determined-- there were several things that you must learn, or you couldn't get out of the eighth grade. You could be there forever.

[00:07:38.66] You had to learn how to diagram the sentence, "give me the ball." And it's not easy.

[00:07:48.08] [LAUGHS]

[00:07:48.86] You had to learn that, and you learned yards and yards of Longfellow: Under the spreading chestnut tree, the village smithy stands, the smith a mighty man is he with large and sinewy hands. Now, that's 60 years ago, and it's still stuck in my head. The man was a great teacher. He really was, he was funny as hell, but he was a great teacher.

[00:08:21.57] I had Miss Mickey McMichael-- Mary McMichael to be precise, who was a very seemingly prim and proper old maid English teacher in high school. She was also the adviser to the school paper. And I got a job cranking the mimeograph machine. Not many people today know what that is purple ink all over my fingers and--

[00:08:52.29] MARK FRANKLIN: And a certain smell to it.

[00:08:53.50] JOE GALLOWAY: --and a certain smell to it indeed. She, like Mr. Daley, had a love of good literature and she imparted that to us. She was a very bright lady. And probably the most influential of all was Mrs. Kathleen Maxwell. She was a widow. Her father was a lawyer in town, Mr Hobart Huson. And he was an author, a historian, had been a newspaper publisher until the Ku Klux Klan burned out his newspaper.

[00:09:43.05] He was the leading Pythagorean scholar in America. He would-- in the summertime, take a vacation to Greece, and the King of Greece would turn over the royal yacht to him and let him sail around the Greek islands supposedly doing research. He was also very fluent in Spanish-- old Spanish-- proper Spanish. Because part of his law practice were lawsuits between counties and districts based on the old Spanish land grants, where's the county line? And he would go to Barcelona, and do research, original research in the Spanish colonial archives.

[00:10:37.85] The guy was incredible. He wrote a two-volume-- fat volumes, too-- history of Refugio County, going back to pre-historic times. I have those books. They're valued at \$10,000 for an original set. He wanted me to go be a lawyer-- to become a lawyer. He offered to put me through college, and law school. If I would come back to Refugio and practice law with him. And I was tempted but not that much.

[00:11:16.25] I had the bug for journalism by then. And I graduated high school. In the summer that I graduated, I worked for a group putting together an opposition weekly newspaper in my hometown, that eventually put the established weekly out of business. So that's a tough thing to do in a little town. But I went to-- I was a volunteer, I worked for nothing to get the experience, and I covered trials, and all sorts of things that summer.

[00:11:58.85] And then went off to college-- not very far just to the nearest big town with a community college. And it was too much like high school. I lasted six weeks, and I went to my parents and I said, this is not for me, I'm going to join the Army. And I had talked to a recruiter who had blown a lot of smoke, and said that I was an ideal candidate because of how I tested for intel work, G2 work.

[00:12:33.77] Well, I'd have ended up an 11 Bravo in a heartbeat, but I didn't know that. I thought the guy was telling me the truth. And I was 17, I couldn't go without a parent's signature. And I browbeat my mother and much against her will, she finally said, OK, if you'll shut up, I'll sign the damn paper.

[00:12:57.32] And she drove me to Victoria. And we were within two blocks of the recruiter's office. We passed the daily newspaper, and I had been the stringer for those six weeks on

campus-- I'd been their campus stringer. And my mother said, Joe-- last gasp you know-- what about your journalism? I said, good call Mom. Stop the car. And I got out and I went in, and I went up to the managing editor Jim Rech. And I said, sir you wouldn't happen to have a vacancy for a reporter, would you? And he said, actually I do.

[00:13:38.67] And he hired me on the spot. \$35 a week and a free subscription to the paper, and I worked six days a week. And so that was the end of my enlistment in the Army and the beginning of my career as a reporter.

[00:14:00.62] In 1963, I was in Topeka, Kansas. I was the United Press International bureau chief, covered the state house the governor's office, the attorney general, covered a lot of fabulous murder trials, including the In Cold Blood murders, a couple of other cases like that. I was having a good time, but I started reading stories on the wire from guys like Neil Sheehan of UPI and Maxwell-- Malcolm Browne of the AP, Dave Halberstam of the New York Times, all about this place called Vietnam.

[00:14:53.11] And the more I read, the more fascinated I was. And I got a feeling that there was going to be a war there, it was going to become America's war. It was going to be my generation's war, and I wanted to cover it. And I thought at the time, and I still believe it that I thought it would be a lot easier 50 years later to explain why you went, than to explain why as a journalist and a student of human affairs you didn't go.

[00:15:31.87] So I began browbeating my bosses begging, pleading for a transfer to Asia. And I wanted to go straight to Saigon. And that wasn't going to happen. But I did get a transfer in 1964, after Lyndon Johnson won the election by telling a big fat lie about Vietnam. And he said, I'm never going to send American boys out to do what Asian boys ought to do for themselves. And I came from South Texas, and I knew Lyndon Johnson, and his politics, and I knew he was lyin'. And I said, ah, there's going to be a war and that's certain.

[00:16:22.21] And I got a call, I was home on leave in Refugio at my mother's house. And my boss in Dallas rang up and he said, do you own a trench coat? And I thought, now that's the strangest damn question I ever heard. I said, no. He said, well, you better buy one because you're being transferred to Tokyo. Tokyo is the Asia division headquarters. And I thought, aha, if I can get there, I can get to Saigon.

[00:16:53.08] And as soon as I got back and handed over the bureau to my replacement, I got on a plane to New York, I spent a few days there, sort of being briefed. And then got on a plane to Tokyo. And never looked back.

[00:17:13.62] MARK FRANKLIN: When did you actually get to Vietnam?

[00:17:16.14] JOE GALLOWAY: I arrived in Tokyo in November of 1964, and I was transferred to Saigon in April of 1965.

[00:17:29.19] MARK FRANKLIN: So you didn't waste any time?

[00:17:30.57] JOE GALLOWAY: No, I asked the boss to go the first week I got there. The first day I met him, and he laughed. He said, oh, he said, I just assigned a second man to the Saigon Bureau an American-- second American to the Saigon bureau, and we're never going to need more than that. And I just thought to myself, hide and watch. And sure enough in March, the first battalion of US Marines to land on the mainland since the Korean War, the Asian mainland, in violation of Doug MacArthur's rules and suggestions after Korea, don't do that.

[00:18:19.02] We landed a battalion of Marines in Da Nang to guard the airfield, and it was off to the races. And somebody went in to cover temporarily, but it was our Hong Kong China watcher, so I was sent to replace him. And I spent two days in Saigon getting my passes, and press pass from MACV, and then I got on a plane and went to Da Nang, and very quickly was up to my neck in the war.

[00:19:00.68] Well, I got to tell you that I got on this Air France plane out of Tokyo to Manila, Manila to Saigon. And from Manila to Saigon, my seatmate was a Buddhist monk-- a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, who was extremely nervous, and I talked to him a little bit, and he spoke some English, but this was the nervous-- most nervous guy you ever saw.

[00:19:28.97] And I found out when we landed why, because he had been thrown out of the country for demonstrating against the government, and as soon as that plane rolled to a stop, a whole bunch of police in white uniforms stormed down the aisle and yanked him out by his stacking swivel and drug him off that plane and I'm sitting there.

[00:19:53.21] There's my introduction to Vietnam. And as I hit the door, this wall of humidity and stink just slapped me in the face, almost a physical thing, and you climbed down the ladder and walked across the tarmac, and a fellow fixer from UPI-- a Vietnamese guy was waiting for me. And he grabbed my suitcase, and he went around behind the customs and immigration guy's desk, and took his hat and put it on, and took his stamp, and stamped my passport, and then took me out to a Jeep and we went to town.

[00:20:46.64] It was kind of irregular back in those days. And we rode through the streets past canals that were just, the smell would knock a buzzard off a gut wagon. You couldn't believe, and the heat was oppressive. The hot season was on if there's-- there's not a cool season. There's hot and wet or hot and dry. And it was hot and dry right then. And took me to the office, and I met the two Americans, and then I met the photo bureau chief. And the two Americans took me to dinner.

[00:21:35.21] And the first thing they asked-- the last thing my boss told me was I made an American salary, a union salary when I came out. And he told me, don't you dare tell the other two Americans down there how much you make. And the first question out of their mouth was, how much do you make? And I was working for them now, not for that guy, so I told them.

[00:22:04.04] And they--

[00:22:04.66] [LAUGHS]

[00:22:05.36] --all immediately wrote letters off demanding a raise, and my first letter from my boss in Tokyo came a couple of weeks later, and it was addressed, Dear Benedict.

[00:22:19.34] [LAUGHTER]

[00:22:21.11] That was UPI, the cheapest outfit in the world, but I didn't care. I was in Saigon for two days, and I got on a plane that was the milk run, mail run all the way up Vietnam to Hue Phu Bai and then down to Da Nang, and I got off in Da Nang. I hadn't even had time to go to the black market and get any fatigues or combat boots or anything, I was wearing chinos and loafers, and carrying a Samsonite suitcase.

[00:22:55.13] And I got off the plane and there was a very excitable guy standing there, and he came and he said, you're Mr. Galloway, with a very French accent. I said, yes. I am Henri Huet and I am from UPI. And there is a big battle south of here. You must come. And I said, what about my suitcase? And he said, the hell with your suitcase. And he threw it in the 8th Aerial Transport hooch out by the airport. And drug me on a C-130 that was spinning up. And we went off to where I knew not.

[00:23:42.24] And landed about 20 minutes later in this-- it looked like a beehive that had been stirred up with a stick, a place called Quang Ngai City. Not much of a city. And it was under severe enemy pressure, and we got off the plane and he ran over to a Marine helicopter that was sitting there spinning up. And he talked to the crew chief. And he waved at me. And I ran over there, and we got on this helicopter, and flew away. Again, I knew not where.

[00:24:22.11] And we flew 15 minutes out over the rice paddies, and then there was a hill, a barren hill in the middle of the rice paddies. And he-- the chopper circled it, and I could see holes dug all around it, and men, and we landed on top of this thing. And they shut the chopper down, and we jumped out.

[00:24:48.42] And I looked again and all of the men in all of these holes-- a battalion-- were dead. Vietnamese Rangers, I believe. And they had been caught by a big VC force there, and they all died. They were laying in their holes like this, like they were holding their rifles-- only the rifles were gone. And they were just frozen like this.

[00:25:18.06] And why they brought Henri and I along was they were looking for the two dead American advisers. And we went from hole to hole until we found them, and then helped carry them back to the chopper, and got on and flew back to Quang Ngai City. And that was my introduction to the Vietnam War, and it was a very sobering one.

[00:25:44.78] I didn't know anything about war, other than what I read and movies-- John Wayne movies. But I sat on that helicopter and I looked at the faces and the boots of these two men, and they didn't look like John Wayne to me, and they didn't look like they were going to get up after it was all over, and walk away.

[00:26:08.37] And it was very sobering because that up until that point, I thought this war is going to be over with in a hurry, and I had to get there in a hurry. If the Marines have landed, it's

over. We're going to take these little guys out in a hurry. And I began to realize right there that there was going to be enough war for me and for a lot of others like me, and a lot of years.

[00:26:45.62] It was the biggest bloodiest battle. Not just to that point in the war, but for the entire war.

[00:26:54.90] MARK FRANKLIN: Can you describe the events that led you to covering that battle?

[00:26:59.19] JOE GALLOWAY: I had been covering the Marines since April, and we're now coming into October-- early October and things had been-- I knew things were happening up in the Central Highlands. 1st Cavalry Division was arriving, I heard about them, I heard they had a lot of helicopters.

[00:27:24.15] The Marines didn't have many helicopters and they were old H-34s that were Korean War or earlier vintage, and they had not many of them. So the Marines did all theirs walking. And I had walked the rice paddies and hills of that coastal area of northern South Vietnam for all those months. And I thought the Central Highlands, nice mountains. It'd be cooler. I like that, and helicopters, I get to ride to work. And so I talked myself into a shift up to Pleiku in the highlands in early October.

[00:28:11.91] And I was kind of scooting around seeing what was going on and staying at the MACV compound and things started happening. A Special Forces camp at Plei Me came under siege by two regiments of North Vietnamese. This is a new deal.

[00:28:35.94] North Vietnamese had not been seen on the battlefield to that point. And suddenly, we got the equivalent of a division of them. And I-- they fell under siege, and I was trying to get out there, and I couldn't get a ride. I was rushing around the flight line in Pleiku.

[00:29:01.25] And I had been making some friends there. There were some Texas Aggie helicopter pilots. And I spoke their language and played poker and drank their whiskey and-- so I ran across one of these boys from Ganado, a fellow named Captain Ray Burns from Ganado, Texas. And he said, what are you doing, Joe. What's the matter? I was really mad.

[00:29:32.12] And I said I've been trying to get to Plei Me Special Forces camp, and I can't get there. And he says, well, he said, maybe I'll give you a ride. He said, let me go get the clipboard. And he goes over to the little operations hooch and he comes back. He said, Joe they shut the airspace around there, they've shot two Air Force planes and a Huey helicopter down. They've got a lot of machine guns around there. I said, I know that. I still want to go. He said, well, I'd like to take a look at it. So I'll give you a ride.

[00:30:11.27] And I got on his helicopter and he flew me out there, and I have a picture somewhere that I took out of the open door of this helicopter. It's laying on its side kind of doing a corkscrew descent. And you can see perfectly the triangular shape of this camp below, and you can also see about eight puffs of white where incoming mortars are landing and that's where we're going.

[00:30:41.42] And we landed. And I jumped out. And they threw a few wounded Montagnard tribesmen on board, and my buddy took off giving me the bird through the Plexiglas as he flew out. And I'm standing there, and Special Forces master sergeant comes running up. He said, sir, I don't know who you are, but Major Beckwith wants to see you right away. And I said, which one is he? He said, it's that big guy over there jumping up and down on his hat.

[00:31:25.11] [LAUGHTER]

[00:31:28.17] I went over and he said, who the hell are you?

[00:31:32.88] [LAUGHS]

[00:31:33.51] I said I'm a reporter. And he--

[00:31:37.22] [SLAPS HEAD]

[00:31:37.56] --slaps his head like that. And he says, you know, he said, I need everything in the world. I need medevac. I need food and ammo. I would love to have a bottle of Jim Beam and a box of cigars. And what has the Army in its wisdom sent me but a godforsaken reporter. He said, I have news for you, son. I have no vacancy for a reporter.

[00:32:07.23] But I have desperate need of a corner machine gunner. And you're it. Well, I look, and my ride is going over the mountain. There's nowhere for me to go. And he takes me over to a sandbag little bunker thing and he shows me the care and feeding of the 30 caliber air cooled M2 machine gun 30 caliber, and how to clear a jam, and how to load it, and he says my instructions to you are simple enough.

[00:32:44.64] You may shoot the little brown men outside the wire but not the ones inside the wire, they belong to me. And I was on that gun for three days and nights I guess, until an armored column came in and lifted the siege, and I got some good pictures and got a good story and as I was leaving, Major Beckwith said, son you're not carrying a piece.

[00:33:20.91] And I said, well, technically speaking, I'm a civilian non-combatant. And he said, son there ain't no such thing in these mountains. He said, Sergeant Major, get this man an M16 and a bag of magazines, and I went out the gate to join up with the 1st Cav with my own rifle and my own sack of ammunition. And they stood me in some good stead a few weeks later.

[00:33:54.48] This was now the third week of October 1965, and the armored column that relieved the camp and got me out of there was South Vietnamese troops, but they were protected by American howitzers who were heli-lifted along the route, and were within firing distance when the expected North Vietnamese ambush clapped closed on that column.

[00:34:31.44] And normally, that would have been enough. The North Vietnamese would have wiped out that column. And those were the last South Vietnamese troops stationed in Pleiku. The capital of the highlands would have been open, and they would have had a route all the way to the sea with nobody really against them. But the Americans messed up their plan, because we

came in, and we provided the artillery support that broke the ambush, and broke-- then they broke the siege.

[00:35:07.77] And then the Americans landed a brigade, and using helicopter tactics, began the pursuit of the North Vietnamese. And there were several pretty good fights. And the brigade switched around the 10th of November, and a new brigade came in, and a battalion of the 7th Cavalry led by a Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore, and I hooked up with them. They were going the wrong direction.

[00:35:48.54] They were going east of Plei Me camp, up in the mountains. But I guess it was a good shakedown, there were no enemy up there that we knew of, but there were a lot of Montagnards. And I hiked with them, and a long hard hike through wait a minute vines and kind of stuff that even with two men working with machetes at the head of the column, you could go an hour maybe 100 meters-- 100 yards if that really hard going.

[00:36:29.78] And right before dark, we forded a neck-deep mountain stream that was cold. And then we dug our holes and settled in for the night dripping wet holding our ponchos around light discipline, no fire, no smokes. And I spent probably the coldest night of my life.

[00:36:56.64] We were at about 4,000 feet, something like that, up in the mountains. And I never expected to be that cold in Vietnam. I was-- my teeth were chattering all night long. And just as there was a little pink sun in the corner over there and we had survived this night, and I got out my pack, and I got out a little ball of C4 explosive and pinched off a chunk.

[00:37:27.69] And you could really boil some water in about 20 seconds with that stuff, and I had my canteen cup and I was about to make me some coffee. I was boiling that water up, and I felt somebody was there. And I looked over my shoulder, and there stood Colonel Moore, and Sergeant Major Basil L. Plumley.

[00:37:51.09] And the colonel looked at me. And I must admit I looked pretty scruffy. And he informed me that in his outfit, everybody washed and shaved in the morning, including hapless journalists.

[00:38:08.67] [LAUGHTER]

[00:38:10.74] And I repurposed my hot water from coffee to shaving water, and that was that. Then a little later in the day, I caught a ride out and shipped my film and wrote a story. And then things speeded up a considerable amount. And the night before I went into the Ia Drang and he went into the Ia Drang with his battalion, and the battle started, I was with one of his companies,

[00:38:47.47] dug in under the tea bushes at a tea plantation called Catecka. And the brigade headquarters were located there. And we were the perimeter. So that was my birthday-- my 24th birthday was spent in a foxhole under a tea bush. And I asked a guy, I said, what day is this? And he said, Saturday.

[00:39:13.84] I said, no, what date? He said, the 13th of November. I said, ah, it's my birthday. And he flipped me a can of C-ration pound cake, and said, happy birthday. And that was that. I had my rifle and my sack of ammo.

[00:39:34.90] And we had a few alarms during the night, but everything went off and the next morning, everybody started lifting out, going on this operation. And the brigade commander said don't worry about it, it's probably going to be another hot walk in the sun. And if anything happens, I'm going to go out there, and I'll give you a ride. Fair enough.

[00:40:00.22] I didn't believe him, but I waited and they had a line of helicopters come in and they were loading everybody on and, I slipped into one of the sticks, and got on the chopper. And a few minutes later, this captain came running down the line with a medic trying to find some place to stick the medic in. And he looked at me and said, who are you? And I admitted who I was, and he yanked me off and put the medic on and I couldn't argue with that.

[00:40:34.78] I went back to the brigade commander's place and sat there and waited. And a couple of hours later all hell broke loose. The radios went crazy, and the colonel came zooming out of his tent heading for his chopper, and I was right in his slipstream, and we flew out over this battlefield.

[00:40:59.03] And it was easy to find, the smoke was already rising 5,000 feet in the air. And we circled, and he-- the colonel was talking to Lieutenant Colonel Moore, and telling him he wanted to land. And the colonel down on the ground was saying, sir, if you come in here with that command helicopter, they're going to shoot it all to pieces and you will have to walk home.

[00:41:24.04] He didn't want his colonel there looking over his shoulder in the middle of a close fought battle. So he was waving the colonel off. And the colonel didn't like that. But he couldn't really argue.

[00:41:38.11] And while they were circling, I'm sitting right in the doorway. And I've got a headset and the mic on. And an A-1E Skyraider passed under our helicopter with a-- 50, 100 yards of fire flowing off of it. And it was going down, and it was bad hit. And I leaned out so I could watch it. And I watched it all the way. And they were yelling on the radio, anybody see a chute? Anybody see a chute?

[00:42:19.25] And I thumbed the mic and I said, no chute. He went in with it. And at that point, the colonel called off his attempt to land there and flew over to the artillery base, LZ Falcon and dropped me off there.

[00:42:44.21] And I really hated that because all you're getting is the noise and none of the action. The artillery was firing nonstop. And worse yet there were four or five other reporters there. And one of them was my nemesis Peter Arnett of the Associated Press. And what I knew was I'm going to do him one way or another.

[00:43:16.05] And so I'm floating around there all day, and middle of the afternoon, I spot Hal Moore's S3, Captain Matt Dillon-- Greg Dillon by name. We called him Matt. And I grabbed him and I said, Matt I want to get in there. And I can't find a ride.

[00:43:41.78] He said I'm going in as soon as it's dark with two helicopters full of ammo, but I can't take you without the old man says it's OK. I said, get him on the horn, and I followed him into this tent. And he got on the radio, and you can hear the fight going on as the Lieutenant Colonel Moore is responding, and he's reporting-- he's coming in and he's bringing this ammo and he's bringing these men.

[00:44:17.16] He was going to bring the helicopter liaison and the artillery liaison guys. So they had been overhead in the chopper all day for communications purposes, but now it was time to get them on the ground. And he says, oh, by the way, I got that reporter Galloway, he wants to come in too. And I'm there listening real hard for the answer and Colonel Moore said, if he's crazy enough to want to come in here and you got the room, bring him. I had my ride.

[00:44:50.65] So all I had to do then was hide out until dark. And an hour before dark all the other reporters got on helicopters going back to Pleiku. And I could come out of hiding and get on the helicopter with Dillon. It was flown by Major Bruce Crandall.

[00:45:13.32] And we flew in there. It was just going dead dark, and came in low, and settled into this high grass, and jumped out and pulled boxes of grenades and ammo and five gallon jugs-- plastic jugs of water off the helicopter and threw them out there, and then fell flat on my face. And the choppers lifted out.

[00:45:43.22] And I hear this voice, follow me and I'll take you to the CP. Be careful where you step. There's a lot of bodies in this grass and they're all American.

[00:45:57.88] Well, that's not exactly a good welcome. Raised the hair on the back of my neck. It was Sergeant Major Plumley. I was meeting him again, and he led us over to what they called a CP. It was just a termite hill, pretty big and pretty hard and solid, but no foxholes just guys leaning against it. And I saw Colonel Moore and talked to him about the lights we had seen on the mountain.

[00:46:35.92] First, I thought they were the flashes of people firing at us, but Dillon said no. He was pretty sure that they were these little lights that the enemy wore on their packs when they were moving at night. And they were moving in the direction of the battlefield, they were coming down those mountains and they were going to be part of the attack, the next day and there were a lot of lights, and I mentioned that to the colonel, and he was ordering up artillery to give them a warm welcome.

[00:47:12.42] MARK FRANKLIN: So you got in there right at the beginning--

[00:47:14.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah

[00:47:14.60] MARK FRANKLIN: --just right at the beginning. And they had already suffered a lot.

[00:47:17.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, they had already suffered a whole afternoon of some serious fighting and killing. There are so many-- there are so many. I guess the real-- the moment that changed it all for me was these-- the morning after. As soon as it got light I was moving, thinking about trying to boil up some more coffee.

[00:47:50.40] [LAUGHS]

[00:47:51.58] And all of a sudden all hell broke loose, I mean literally. The enemy in two battalion sides attacked the southeast perimeter of the landing zone. And they were pouring fire in. And anything they fired at that they didn't hit, the bullets swept right through the CP area-- the command post area where we were sitting or rather now laying, because it was coming through about 2 and 1/2 feet off the ground, and lots of it.

[00:48:32.53] There were just bees in the air. And I fell flat. And I'm really feathering out at the edges and cursing my buttons and zippers because you want to be low--

[00:48:45.94] MARK FRANKLIN: As you can.

[00:48:47.05] JOE GALLOWAY: As you can. And about that time, I felt this thump in my ribs. And honest to God I didn't know whether I was hit or what. And I was real careful about looking to see what it was, I didn't want to raise my head, and I looked and what it was was a size 12 combat boot on the foot of Sergeant Major Plumley, a bear of a man out of West Virginia.

[00:49:16.66] And he bent over at the waist and he hollered at me-- the din of this battle was deafening. And he bent over and he hollered down at me. can't take no pictures laying on the ground, Sonny." And I thought, well, he's right.

[00:49:36.57] Later, I would learn sergeants major are always right, but I didn't know that yet. But I knew enough to know that I couldn't take any pictures down there, and taking pictures was part of my job. And so I got up and I followed the sergeant major. And he proceeded over to the area where the wounded were, and where the battalion surgeon and the medical platoon sergeant were.

[00:50:06.72] And he approached those two gentlemen, and he pulls out this .45, and he jacks a round into it. And he said, gentlemen, prepare to defend yourselves. And the doctor looked like he had been shot. I mean, he was an honorary captain at best.

[00:50:28.83] He had been drafted out of his residency, and captain's bars slapped on him and run him through a 12 week course at Fort Sam Houston, and the next thing he knows he's in a battle. And someone's telling him that this .45 he's never taken out of the holster, he's got to pull out, and jack a round into and defend himself.

[00:50:52.80] [LAUGHS]

[00:50:55.67] Oh, the sergeant major I later figured out was gathering up a battalion reserve. He thought, as did I, that we were liable to be overrun any minute, because the pressure over on that southeast side was intense. The company commander was down, wounded.

[00:51:21.63] Everybody in the foxhole with him was wounded or dead. They were under almost direct fire of enemy machine gun. The enemy had overrun two platoons, one of them completely wiped out except for one man. And if they hadn't stopped to loot the dead and shoot the wounded, they would have burst through into the open, and right across into the command post.

[00:51:58.35] The battle would have been lost. There wouldn't have been anybody come out of there alive, I'm pretty sure. So the sergeant major was pulling together what he could find, a journalist with a rifle, a doctor with a .45 he didn't know how to shoot, various and sundry people that were around the command post. He was gathering them up in case he needed them.

[00:52:28.60] And things were very, very close run. But from that moment that the sergeant major popped me in the ribs and told me I needed to get up, the fear went out of me. It really did. I was pretty sure we were all going to die.

[00:52:48.64] And I took some care to write very good notes, and to hide my film that day and the next, hoping that if I did get killed, that someone somewhere would find my body and recover the film and the notes, and be able to make a story from it. Because if you can't make a story out of it, what's the use of dying? You've got to get the story out-- you've got to get the film out.

[00:53:28.15] I had my-- I had been shot at before, I'd been on a lot of Marine operations, but nothing like this. And never again was I ever in something like this. This is a once in a lifetime event, and you're never the same. I don't think a single man who survived left that place the same as he was when he arrived. You can't. You can't. Too much goes on. Too much death and dying and killing all around you at close range.

[00:54:16.73] People don't understand what close quarters heavy infantry combat is like. There were people who were wounded by parts of flying people from the artillery, from the air support, the 500 pound bombs. It was continuous. MARK FRANKLIN: Continuous shrapnel you had to deal with. JOE GALLOWAY: Oh shrapnel. But shrapnel hits somebody, sometimes pieces of him go flying in the air with the same velocity almost, and they can do their own damage.

[00:55:03.47] MARK FRANKLIN: Sure. And also you helped evacuate a lot of the wounded and get them to the helicopters.

[00:55:07.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Of course I did. I brought water to the wounded. I went out into that grass where we had thrown the ammo and where we had thrown those water things because Lord knows water is what you needed, what the wounded needed.

[00:55:25.60] And so I just went on out there in that high grass, and drug back those five gallon bottles of water, and drug back ammo too. You do what you can. It's what I-- I've never had to

explain it. I've had people say-- ask in an audience question and answer thing, did you kill anyone?

[00:56:02.77] Well, I certainly hope so. I hope I shot straight. I'm not proud of it. I'm not ashamed of it. It was in the moment, and I never used a weapon except when my life and the lives of those closest around me were in dire danger.

[00:56:30.35] So really only at Plei Me under orders of Major Beckwith and only in this battle, I always carried, but I never fired unless it was real bad situation. And boy, this qualified. Like I said earlier this thing changed us all. And not least me.

[00:56:53.15] I left there thinking several things but one of them, the first thought was that 80 young Americans had died there, so that I might live. And 130 had been wounded some of them quite horribly in that same pursuit as far as I was concerned, and I knew I owed them a real debt of gratitude. And I owed them the truth to be told of how they lived and how they died.

[00:57:41.28] There were three of my colleagues that the Marines awarded the Bronze Star with "V" after the battle-- for the Battle of Hue, for the same thing, carrying wounded Marines to safety. I had the only one the Army gave away, and maybe the only one the Army ever gave in history to a civilian. I don't know. Nobody's come up with any other examples.

[00:58:14.67] Look, there were two categories of reporters in Vietnam. There were what we called field correspondents. And in the time I was there, the first tour anyway, I saw the same 15 or so guys at every fight and on every operation.

[00:58:40.28] The faces changed sometimes but not often and at that same time when there were 15 of us out there constantly, there were nearly 500 back in Saigon, and they covered the briefings, and they wrote the stories based on the information in those briefings, and they did interviews in the headquarters. And they took a weekly-- the bureau chiefs had weekly briefing from General Westmoreland, the commander.

[00:59:19.55] And once in a while, the military would put on a helicopter or an airplane and take them to the end of a battle. After the shooting had stopped, here would come a-- in my case a Chinook helicopter full of reporters and photographers dropping out of the sky, and we're all ready to get on a plane leaving, get on a helicopter and get out of there. And here come these people with their cameras snap, snap, snap, snap, snap.

[00:59:53.30] And you hear an artillery round go off 100 meters away, and they all fall on their stomachs. And I'm standing there looking at them saying, get up, get up off the ground. That's friendly fire and it's far away.

[01:00:13.49] [LAUGHS]

[01:00:17.24] But that's just the way it was. There were times when I could go on a combat operation and catch a flight just luck out and catch a flight that would put me in Saigon the same

afternoon. And I would next day go down to the Five O'clock Follies, the official briefing, and hear the official version of what I had seen.

[01:00:49.95] And it was vastly different. And I would-- the first few times I would stand up and challenge the briefer, and say that ain't how it was. And he would usually inform me that I didn't know the big picture. And if I knew the big picture, I would understand that his version was far more correct than mine. And I reluctantly kept myself from saying bullshit--

[01:01:27.39] [LAUGHTER]

[01:01:28.68] --which is what that was. But that's the way the war ran. And that's the kind of-- look, the people who were out there in the field, myself, Pete Arnett, there were TV guys who were out there doing the job, telling the truth. And I don't apologize for any of that.

[01:02:02.10] I think that we told the truth. And sometimes the military didn't like the truth. Sometimes they would say, you're not on the team. Well, that's not our job. We weren't supposed to be on their team. We were supposed to be there as the eyes and ears of the American people.

[01:02:25.53] The American people provided 3 million of their sons and not a few of their daughters as the cannon fodder for this war. And they were entitled to the truth about how it was going. And however unpalatable that truth was, it had to be told.

[01:02:48.27] And you know, there's no way in hell I was going to stand up after what I had witnessed in the Ia Drang and declare that that was a great American victory, because the truth was that was nobody's victory. That was the burial place of a couple of thousand very good North Vietnamese soldiers. And a couple of American troops were on their way home in aluminum body cases. And I don't call that a victory. I was learning all of this the hard way.

[01:03:30.55] And I think we learned it well, and I think we did our country right and proud. And I tried certainly to do those Soldiers proud. The ones that I knew, the ones that died alongside me, and all the rest of them.

[01:03:52.26] MARK FRANKLIN: The media sometimes gets blamed for contributing to the antiwar movement back home, you think that's a fair assessment?

[01:04:00.15] JOE GALLOWAY: No. We get blamed for losing the war. The media has never started a war, it has never ended a war, it does not have that power now, it didn't have that power then, you want to go into who lost the war. You've got to look at the politicians who started the war.

[01:04:26.27] You got to go to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and five presidents in a row, starting with Eisenhower and ending with Jerry Ford. You look there, and then I'm afraid you also have to look across the river at the Pentagon at the high command,

[01:04:48.91] the chiefs. You've got to look at General Westmoreland, William C Westmoreland, who was the commander in chief in Vietnam. It's like peeling an onion. You

gotta get through the layers, and some of them will make you cry. But there are no easy answers, and you can't kill the messenger because he brings you the truth.

[01:05:27.61] That's really hard. That's really hard. There were very few occasions where all my roommates and I-- who were all field people, reporters, photographers-- where we would all come together back at the old house in Saigon, and just live like young men for a change instead of out there being shot at, not sure if you're going to make it to the ripe old age of 25 or not.

[01:06:04.93] We used to take bets on that. And just have a good night. Go out, have a good dinner in a restaurant, come back, sit and listen to some music, drink some wine, get a decent night's sleep in a real bed. And then load up and go out again. Those were the very good days, the best days.

[01:06:39.19] Every day that you heard that a friend had been killed. I came out of the Ia Drang, and I phoned in my first story to the boss in Saigon. And I was dirty, filthy, bloody, and exhausted beyond belief.

[01:07:02.45] And I was about to hang up and he said, oh, he said, by the way, did you hear about Dickie Chappelle? And I said, no, why? He said, she was killed-- she was on an operation with the Marines, and a Marine in front of her tripped a booby trap mortar shell and a tiny, tiny piece nicked her in the jugular vein and she bled to death. And she was a good friend.

[01:07:32.69] [WEEPING]

[01:07:35.70] MARK FRANKLIN: It's tough.

[01:07:36.80] JOE GALLOWAY: Tough. I hung up the phone, and I walked outside. I sat on the steps and I wept just like now. I had to grieve.

[01:07:48.27] MARK FRANKLIN: Those memories don't leave.

[01:07:51.01] JOE GALLOWAY: They don't go away. It still hurt. She was such a fantastic woman. I was on an operation with her, and the Marines, God love them, they had taken some prisoners and they were just kids, black pajamas, peasant boys, and they had tied them hand and foot with commo wire, and then they strung concertina wire around them, and piled it up this high, and there was a big gruff gunny sergeant there.

[01:08:34.18] And Dickie walked up to him, and proceeded to just rip him a new ass. And she's saying, you sure you got these prisoners secured well enough? Do you not think you might ought to wrap some of that barbed wire tighter around them-- maybe around their neck, in case they get loose? And he was just befuddled. I mean, she weighed all up 85 pounds maybe, and she was right up in his face just giving him this.

[01:09:06.76] And later I said, Dickie, what the hell was that all about? And she said, I can't stand to see anyone abuse a prisoner. There is nothing more helpless than a prisoner.

[01:09:21.85] And when you abuse them, you're not showing any bravery or courage. You're abusing the least capable of all, someone whose hands are tied and his feet are tied. And as she said, I was I was taken prisoner by the Russian army in Hungary.

[01:09:44.51] She said, I slipped across the border to cover the uprising and then it all went bad. And before I could get out, the Red Army came in and they took me prisoner, and they held a drum head court martial and sentenced me to death by firing squad, and they were holding me in this old central prison in Budapest.

[01:10:10.99] And they were shooting people all day, all night in the courtyard. They had five or six posts buried in the ground. And she said, every night sometime between midnight and 2:00 AM, they would come and drag me out of my cell and take me out there and tie me to that post, dripping with blood and entrails.

[01:10:37.18] And they would tie me to that. And they would go through the order of arms for an execution right up to fire. And they would pull the trigger and click on empty chambers. She said, every night for months. She said, you asked me why I have sympathy for prisoners.

[01:11:00.19] MARK FRANKLIN: I never knew that.

[01:11:01.12] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. She was a remarkable woman. I hated to see her go

[01:11:15.51] That would be Ia Drang and some of the events that took place there. I carry in my memory and in my heart the name and face of Jim Nakayama, who's a engineer, Spec 4, who was caught in the napalm strike. And I carried him out of the fire.

[01:11:43.49] And he was so badly burned. The docs hit him with all the morphine they could, and it did no good. We couldn't get him on a medevac for a couple or three hours. He screamed the whole time. I looked for-- he had a daughter who was born that week, look for her and her mother for years. The movie came out and they came out.

[01:12:25.97] MARK FRANKLIN: They found you.

[01:12:26.59] JOE GALLOWAY: They found us. And we remain friends to this day. We sat and we talked. We laughed and we cried, and that was 12 years ago, something like that-- good while ago. And I see them occasionally, and the daughter is now in her 40s. And if she was born that week, then you know you don't forget those things-- you don't forget those people.

[01:13:08.91] Because of the research for the book, the general and I came to know almost every man who died there. Most of all of the others not only in his battalion but in the sister battalions, and the helicopter crews. They're family. There are people we carry in our hearts.

[01:13:45.07] There's such a division in this country about the war. And there are those who were opposed to it, and I can respect that. I can respect those who said, I'm a conscientious objector and I'll either go do two years in prison, or I'll go be a medic for two years. I have

nothing but respect for that. I don't have any respect at all for draft dodgers, for people who were too good, to serve their country in this war or any war.

[01:14:26.41] This is-- it's always been a touchy subject in our country. And for me, I knew pretty early on there was no way we could win that war. The Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese soldiers, they were determined to get the foreigner out of their country. And we were the foreigners, or the latest generation of them. They had driven others out, including the French, and the Japanese, and certainly the Chinese.

[01:15:16.75] They were a good enemy. I used to just cringe when I would see some US battalion commander stand up and say, they won't stand and fight. They're cowards. Nonsense. How can you call people cowards who had none of what we had?

[01:15:38.41] They had no air, they had no tanks, they had-- their supplies came down a 500-mile jungle trail in the mud on bicycles and men's backs. Boy you must really be careful with how you fire off your ammo when it takes that much sweat and strain to get it to you. They were a good enemy. And worthy of respect., If you didn't respect them, they were going to kill you. they would. They would get you.

[01:16:21.12] My heart is with the Americans who fought there. There was not one politician who could stand up and tell them why we were fighting there, not one could really answer the question, what was it about that country that was worth sending half a million American boys 10,000 miles from their home to intervene in a civil war in a small Asian country where we had no national security interest whatsoever?

[01:17:03.63] And President Reagan said Vietnam was a noble undertaking. Wrong, there is no noble war. Never was, never will be. War is not a noble calling. But what there was were those Soldiers-- those nine-- average age 19, those Soldiers were American nobility to me.

[01:17:33.85] They didn't have to have some politician tell them why they were fighting. They could fight for each other, they could die for each other, and did. They stood alongside each other, covered each other's backs, I don't know what's more noble than that.

[01:17:59.10] MARK FRANKLIN: Are there any lessons that you take from Vietnam you'd like to pass on--

[01:18:03.12] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, there's so many. MARK FRANKLIN: --to future generations? JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, absolutely. The last thing you do is draw the sword. There are so many other things, you must do first. Diplomacy, negotiation, all of the things we know that are part of a peaceful solution to a problem. Whether it's between one country and another, or one race and another.

[01:18:40.97] Churchill said it's better to jaw, jaw, jaw, than fight, fight, fight. And he was right. War is a total confession of failure. Failure of diplomacy, failure of negotiations, failure of common sense. It's a failure.

[01:19:07.73] We're Americans. We don't like to fail. We shouldn't like to fail. We shouldn't like war. We certainly shouldn't want to start any. That worries me a lot, this idea of pre-emptive strikes. We don't do that. We're Americans. If you mess with us, you've started something and we'll finish it, and it won't be nice. But we're not going to start a war. We shouldn't.

[01:19:42.55] It's certainly appropriate. What I see it as, we're all 50 years older now. That means that we're around 70, most all of us, if not older. Our NCOs and officers are in their 80s now, and we're going. We're going maybe faster than the World War II guys went. There were a lot more of them, too, but-- we were only 3 million. And a million and a half are gone, so there's a million and a half left. But they're going pretty fast.

[01:20:32.58] I see in our own battalions, the guys I knew, and so this is America's really last good chance to give them the welcome home they didn't get when they came home in '69 or '70 or '71 or '72. And the longer the war lasted, the more bitter the welcome,

[01:21:03.33] the more bitter the American people-- bitter and divided. And so we're all back together now I hope. And we can at least in this case say, welcome home. Thank you for your service. You did a good job. You did the best job you could. Welcome home, brother.

[01:21:29.71] MARK FRANKLIN: Thanks Joe.

[01:21:30.57] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.