

## **Gandy, Jerry U.S. Navy**

[00:00:15.33] JERRY GANDY: I was born in Birmingham, Alabama. I never really knew my parents. I was put into foster care. And rest of my young life, I bounced from home to home-- people who the state paid to take care of me, until I landed in a old man's home, who I call my daddy today and who I kept with me until he died and took him home to bury him. When I was in the military, he traveled with me.

[00:00:56.00] I joined the Navy the day I was 17. I knew I couldn't do very well the way I was, picking cotton in Alabama. So on my 17th birthday-- the day before my 17th birthday, I went to the Navy. They had to put me in a hotel overnight, so they could swear me in on my 17th birthday. So actually, I left home when I was 16. and away to San Diego to boot camp I went. I was 29 years old and a first class petty officer when I went to Vietnam.

[00:01:39.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Describe the training you received before you went to Vietnam.

[00:01:47.61] JERRY GANDY: I went to NIOTC in Mare Island in Vallejo, California, and underwent PBR training. I was a radioman, I'd never driven a boat. And my job in Vietnam was to drive a boat, in some pretty bad conditions. So they taught me to drive the boat. I went to Whidbey Island, Washington, to SERE, search, evasion, resistance, and escape training, pretty realistic.

[00:02:26.03] I went to a language school at Cal Berkeley for Vietnamese for two weeks. And the instructor-- who was North Vietnamese-- finally said that my Alabama Vietnamese wasn't cutting it, so they gave up on me. But I still went. That was basically-- large weapons, small weapons training at one of the Army camps. I forget which one it was. But that kind of encompassed my training.

[00:03:04.46] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your first impressions on arriving in Vietnam?

[00:03:08.57] JERRY GANDY: I had stayed for two years in Japan. I'd been stationed in Japan. And when I first landed in Saigon-- I guess Tan Son Nhut-- and went out, it was kind of a parallel to Japan to me. It was oriental, far eastern. Of course, I was dead sure that everybody was looking at me, wanting to kill me. That's what I was there for, I guess.

[00:03:42.30] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your initial duties?

[00:03:45.21] JERRY GANDY: I went right to my river division, River Division 532, and the second day there, I was on a boat as boat captain, underway on a night patrol. 90% of our patrols were night patrols. And our job was to interdict the Viet Cong and NVA at crossings. The Army would do a sweep and drive them to the river where we were.

[00:04:23.71] We would do-- maybe once every two weeks, I'd do a day patrol, where we would just go out and check what we called can cuoc, check ID cards from the junks and sampans. But basically, what we did was, we were assigned an ambush position, and every night just-- and we

never went out the same time. We never set pattern. But just about sunset, we would go out and go into position.

[00:04:53.02] Sometimes we would pull loose during the night and drift without engines, because we knew-- they always knew where we were. And that was about it. The most dangerous part of it was going from home base into ambush position. Once we were there, we felt better.

[00:05:23.85] JOE GALLOWAY: But it was the trip between the two points, you were traveling down rivers--

[00:05:30.28] JERRY GANDY: Rivers and--

[00:05:31.48] JOE GALLOWAY: --and canals.

[00:05:32.99] JERRY GANDY: Canals.

[00:05:33.55] JOE GALLOWAY: So not--

[00:05:34.69] JERRY GANDY: It doesn't look like now.

[00:05:35.66] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. There was not much cover for you, no camouflage.

[00:05:42.13] JERRY GANDY: No, we had green boats, and they were made of fiberglass. So there wasn't a lot of-- we had a little bit of armor on there, but it just disintegrated into shrapnel when an RPG hits it.

[00:05:58.86] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your living conditions, your quarters like?

[00:06:03.63] JERRY GANDY: Well, we slept on the boats or we slept in porta campers. They were kind of screen-topped and solid bottoms, or something like that.

[00:06:17.35] JOE GALLOWAY: What did you do for recreation, off-duty activities?

[00:06:23.22] JERRY GANDY: There really wasn't any down there in the ditches. I went on R&R to Hong Kong one time for a week. Occasionally, I would have a problem with a boat, or somebody would have to go to Binh Thuy, and that was heaven, maybe squeak out a night there, and you're right back on the river again. So there wasn't much recreation. Never saw a-- I've heard about these USO shows. They didn't come where I was.

[00:06:56.81] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your impressions of the Vietnamese people?

[00:06:59.99] JERRY GANDY: Of course, when I went to PBR school before-- my training, before I went to Vietnam, all the instructors had done a tour in Vietnam. So they all had their tale of woe, how lazy and lousy the Vietnamese sailors were and how they just wanted to wear clean greens and look good. That was basically my impression when I got there.

[00:07:25.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Did that change over time or pretty much stay the same?

[00:07:29.48] JERRY GANDY: Selectively. I found the ones they were talking about. I found the conditions they were talking about. But I also found some very, very dedicated and sincere Vietnamese.

[00:07:50.73] I'll never get closer to friends than the friends I had there in Vietnam. You depended on each other. Your life depended on each other. So there's probably not much about any of your friends that you didn't know, they didn't tell you. It's just the way it was.

[00:08:18.88] When I first got there, we were in Ha Tien, right in the Gulf of Thailand. And our nightly ambushes were on the Vinh Te Canal, the canal separating Vietnam from Cambodia. So every night we would get a different guard post, and we would go up and find our position and either tie up on the Cambodian side or the Vietnam side and sit there and wait for contact.

[00:08:54.65] And then maybe a couple of times a night, we would-- about halfway through our tour, we had this one old tree that was called the hanging tree. And we would maybe go back down there so we could smoke a cigarette, have a cup of coffee, and maybe take 10, 15 minutes, and we were right back there again. So basically, that was it.

[00:09:17.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe significant actions that you participated in, combat operations?

[00:09:24.56] JERRY GANDY: I think it was Operation GAME WARDEN when I first got there. Then it was Tra Hung Dao. There were several different names. I couldn't really remember. I heard them, but I couldn't remember all of them.

[00:09:45.26] JOE GALLOWAY: But--

[00:09:45.69] JERRY GANDY: Nothing ever changed with us.

[00:09:47.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:09:54.69] JERRY GANDY: My memory of Vietnam-- are you talking about a personal memory or the impression it put on me? I probably felt I was accomplishing more there than I have anywhere in my life. I like to believe that. I like to believe we were.

[00:10:17.85] I got promoted to chief petty officer, and I had just gone to Hong Kong on R&R, and I got back into Binh Thuy. And they heard I was there, and the personnel office called me over-- they had all our personnel records in Binh Thuy. They called me over and said, hey, you made chief. And that's-- if you've spent a career in the Navy, that's your goal. I mean, that's just-- that's just it.

[00:10:50.84] JOE GALLOWAY: That's it.

[00:10:51.61] JERRY GANDY: That's probably my best day. Probably the second-- I would say the second time that I got hit, when I was medevacked out of country.

[00:11:07.38] JOE GALLOWAY: Describe that for me. What was going on?

[00:11:10.83] JERRY GANDY: I was patrol officer riding the lead boat on a two-boat patrol going into ambush. And like I said before, you had your trouble going and coming. And we were at an outpost out at Phuc Xuyen, Plain of Reeds. And we were going into an ambush, and all at once, all hell broke loose.

[00:11:35.91] And I had been hit before, so I knew what an RPG sounded like. I had taken a few of those. And all at once, I heard the explosion. And I was in the coxswain flat with the boat captain. And when I heard the explosion, I looked, there was this Vietnamese sailor on the starboard .60-caliber machine gun.

[00:12:09.33] And he had-- I thought he had a smile on his face, and he was reaching out toward me. And he had no hand, just the whitest knuckle I've ever seen, just a big knuckle. And then, all at once, I went down. I guess I'd already been hit. I don't know. And I knew I couldn't breathe.

[00:12:36.33] And they got me to the river bank, and I had a lot of stuff hanging out of me, I guess. I had taken shrapnel into my back, through my flak jacket, into my back. It took my right lung and parts of my liver out. I couldn't breathe.

[00:13:00.42] And someone gave me some morphine. But they didn't put the pin in my collar, so it wouldn't stay in. And they laid me on-- we were on a muddy river bank, so they laid me on my good side, my good lung, because I had a hole in the other side of me. And that was not the good thing to do when you've only got one lung. I guess it was compressing it.

[00:13:21.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Compressing it, yeah.

[00:13:23.63] JERRY GANDY: So then a Vietnamese corpsman came along and gave me another shot of morphine. I couldn't breathe. I remember just begging them to do me, somebody do me off. I can't breathe. It's a horrible thing when you can't breathe. And at some point there, I passed out.

[00:13:42.08] And the first time I woke up, I was on a helo. So the next time I woke up, I remember them cutting my clothes off. I was at the 3rd Medical Evac Army Hospital, Can Tho. And I remember them cutting my uniform off. And next thing I knew it was-- I was in the emergency or the--

[00:14:11.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Operating room?

[00:14:12.40] JERRY GANDY: Well, it wasn't operating. It was after you get out there, where the most critical people-- where you started, I guess.

[00:14:17.41] JOE GALLOWAY: ICU?

[00:14:17.71] JERRY GANDY: The ICU. And the nurses' station was there, and I was right to the right of the nurses' station. And I learned, as you got better, you rotated in the beds around the-- you got to the door, then you were going to get a room. But they were all tents.

[00:14:37.15] And I worked my way around, and finally got a room. But the weird thing about it, it may be a Viet Cong next to you in bed. We took care of everybody. I remember at one point, there was a female, a Vietnamese woman, with a big hole in her stomach. And she was in the bed next to me.

[00:14:59.13] JOE GALLOWAY: How long were you in that in-country hospital before they flew you out?

[00:15:07.05] JERRY GANDY: They got me where I was able to go in about two weeks. But I had malaria, they said, and they couldn't get my temperature down. So I had to stay a few extra days till they could get my temperature down enough to ship me to Yokosuka, Japan, to the Navy hospital.

[00:15:29.22] And I stayed a few days there, and then they medevacked me back to Travis on a big medevac plane. I remember I was on the bottom, and there was five or six stretchers above me. And I'm kind of claustrophobic, and I had about an inch between me and the guy.

[00:15:48.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, lord.

[00:15:49.30] JERRY GANDY: And I had all kind of tubes attached to me. That was a very uncomfortable ride, but I knew I was going home. So that might have been my best day. But I got to Travis. And I guess that's when my heart really broke, because I was-- and I've got to tell this. I was on a stretcher, and they were taking me-- they had a bunch of smaller medevac planes at Travis, and they brought you in on the big one.

[00:16:15.89] Then they took people according to what area of the country you were being medevacked to. They took you to the plane you were going on. I was on a stretcher, and two corpsmen were carrying me from the big plane to the plane that was taking me, that actually took me to Montgomery, Alabama.

[00:16:33.71] And this young lady-- and I remember it very vividly. This young lady walked over and looked down at me. And I looked up at her, and she just dribbled spit in my face. Just dribbled spit in my face. And she said something. It wasn't nice.

[00:16:55.56] But I wasn't mad, I was hurt. It just-- I couldn't understand. I just couldn't understand that. First of all, I don't know how they got there. But that was my post-Vietnam experience.

[00:17:13.08] JOE GALLOWAY: That was your welcome home.

[00:17:14.24] JERRY GANDY: Yeah. Yeah. And then they took me-- from there, I went to Montgomery, Alabama, for about three nights until they could get another load together there.

And then I wound up at my first hospital for any duration, which was Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida. My family lived in Jacks Beach.

[00:17:38.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Were you married and have kids by then?

[00:17:40.88] JERRY GANDY: I was married and had two children. Those doctors worked miracles in Vietnam.

[00:17:47.54] JOE GALLOWAY: They did. They really did.

[00:17:49.64] JERRY GANDY: I've got two sections of ribs missing back there. And the rib is starting to slip down now and give me a problem, because they didn't brace. They didn't put anything in. They just chopped them off, and everything that was attached to them just fell down to the bottom of my back and kind of holds you all together now.

[00:18:10.14] But the rib where they were broken off is just hanging there and kind of sagging. And people talk bad about those doctors. My god, why didn't they do it? Hey, you leave those doctors alone. They're my heroes.

[00:18:25.47] JOE GALLOWAY: They kept you alive.

[00:18:27.54] JERRY GANDY: Saved my life. In fact, I had so much transfusion there that my blood type changed. I have a universal type blood now that's-- if you sell it, it's worth more money. So I had a different--

[00:18:42.47] JOE GALLOWAY: That's an O negative.

[00:18:43.27] JERRY GANDY: Yeah, but I had a type A or something like that.

[00:18:46.54] JOE GALLOWAY: You switched, you changed.

[00:18:47.71] JERRY GANDY: I didn't know that until somewhere I had to have a blood test, and they tested my blood. And they-- your blood test for your ID card is wrong.

[00:19:01.80] JOE GALLOWAY: That ain't good.

[00:19:04.17] JERRY GANDY: Not if you needed blood.

[00:19:05.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Not if you need some blood.

[00:19:07.53] JERRY GANDY: I couldn't believe that they had to give me so much blood, or I lost so much blood, it completely changed my blood type. I know they used to use a lot of those plasma bottles. I had that stuff. I had stuff in me, till one time, every vein in my body collapsed.

[00:19:25.48] JOE GALLOWAY: They had nowhere to put it in.

[00:19:27.20] JERRY GANDY: Doctor had to come in and put the IV in my neck. The nurse couldn't do it, the doctor had to do it. Those were some long, painful periods in hospitals. It's something I don't look back at, except times like this when we talk.

[00:19:52.02] JOE GALLOWAY: How much contact did you have with your family back home when you were pulling that tour in Vietnam?

[00:19:57.78] JERRY GANDY: My first wife was Italian, and she didn't master the English language that well, and she didn't write very well. So her letters were very infrequent. And then I had to kind of decipher them once I got them. So I might get a letter every two weeks. We didn't have the whole stuff they got today, the internet and all that.

[00:20:22.16] JOE GALLOWAY: How much news did you receive about the war from home?

[00:20:27.63] JERRY GANDY: While I was there?

[00:20:28.56] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:20:29.73] JERRY GANDY: Fairly limited, because we wasn't in any place to receive it.

[00:20:33.64] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't get the Stars and Stripes very often?

[00:20:37.66] JERRY GANDY: We would get a Stars and Stripes, but it would probably be two weeks old when we got it. I remember one time, a Stars and Stripes reporter came down, and I had to take him out on my boat and do a phony firefight or something so he could do some filming. That didn't really excite me. They woke me up.

[00:20:57.00] We'd been out on patrol all night, went out that night, and they woke me up in the middle of the morning. And I had to go out again that night. And we took him out, and he, well--

[00:21:11.85] But we didn't get-- we wasn't where we could get a lot of news. But we heard news. We heard people saying, boy, how bad the war-- how bad people felt the war-- see, we thought the war was going good. We thought we were kicking butt. But obviously, the people in America didn't think that.

[00:21:38.69] JOE GALLOWAY: What was your reception from family and friends?

[00:21:44.12] JERRY GANDY: When I first came in, they put me on a stretcher, and they took me-- when I got to Jacksonville, they took me to the top floor of the hospital, because they didn't allow children above the second floor, first floor, something like that. And they let my wife and two children come up to see me. I remember I was laying there on a hospital bed or stretcher, sitting in the middle of the floor.

[00:22:07.94] And then they came in the door, and my little girl, I scared her. She was young. She had been born the year before-- the year I went to Vietnam. And she ran out. She wouldn't

stay in the room. But I spent a little time with my family up there. And then once they got me down and got settled, my wife was there every day, every other day.

[00:22:40.93] But as far as friends, I didn't really-- I just took her back there, because that's where she wanted to stay. I was on recruiting duty in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. And before, when I got ordered to Vietnam, my wife didn't want to stay there. She had friends in the Jack-Mayport area, and she wanted to stay there. So I took the family there and bought a home before I went to Vietnam. So that's why they brought me back there.

[00:23:07.81] JOE GALLOWAY: How much contact have you had with fellow veterans over the years?

[00:23:14.32] JERRY GANDY: Well, I'm the president of the mid-Atlantic chapter of Game Warden Vietnam. And though not many of them, very few of them did what I did in Vietnam, we're still Vietnam veterans, and Navy of some--

[00:23:37.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Some sort.

[00:23:37.46] JERRY GANDY: Some sort, either supported PBRs or Seawolves, and the other Naval support activities.

[00:23:48.13] JOE GALLOWAY: So you see those guys regularly?

[00:23:50.41] JERRY GANDY: I see those guys in-- the highlight of the people I saw, I don't know if we're going to get there or not, but I had-- that wasn't my worst firefight, the one that I got laid out on. I had another one where I was actually-- I actually saved three people's lives. And I saw two of them after 20 years. I went to a reunion out in Vallejo, I think it was. And just seeing them was--

[00:24:35.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Describe that action.

[00:24:38.34] JERRY GANDY: We were, again, underway one night, going into ambush. I was a boat captain at that time. And we were on the Rach Giang Thanh, the Giang Thanh River that leads from Ha Tien to the Vinh Te Canal. We were on our way to the Vinh Te Canal to set up our ambush position. And we went around a little bend, and then just all hell broke loose.

[00:25:05.85] The forward PBR-- I was trailing the forward. There was two of us. We always went everywhere as two, never alone. Never alone. We went as two. And the patrol officer was riding the lead boat, and I was driving the second boat. And all at once, they opened up on us.

[00:25:32.88] And I guess a heat round hit their PBR, because it just-- immediately just burst into flames. The entire boat was nothing but a big-- just engulfed in flames. And it blew the steering wheel off the boat. I thought they were all dead.

[00:25:50.94] And some way, they got it turned to where it would aim to the starboard bank, because they hit us from the port-- starboard bank, and beached it. I took two B40s, or two



RPGs, one in the bow and one midships, right behind me, right behind the coxswain flat. And the one in the bow-- I didn't know at the time, I didn't know until after the fact-- didn't detonate.

[00:26:18.48] It was live, and the one that hit me, hit midships, took the splinter shield, or the armored shield that the port .60 gunner stood behind to protect him. It blew it away, blew the .60-caliber overboard, blew the after .50-caliber overboard, blew out my port engine, blew it right through the bottom of the boat, and blew my engineer over the side and into the water. He was gone. I thought he was dead. And blew me down.

[00:27:02.97] And I got up, right up. I remember it like it was yesterday. I was down, and then I was up. And I was shaking myself. And I noticed my forward gunner in the gun tub, and he wasn't firing. He was frozen, he was just--

[00:27:21.00] And all hell was breaking. I mean, they were shooting everything they had at us. And I kept yelling at him to shoot. I was trying to talk on the radio and tell him to shoot at the same time. Because I knew that they wouldn't be able to do it and get on the radio in the lead boat, because it was engulfed in flames.

[00:27:38.61] And all at once, for some reason, I took the handset and threw it and hit my forward gunner in the back-- because that's our main armament, the twin .50 forward-- hit him in the back of the helmet. And he started shooting, and then he didn't quit till he burned both barrels up.

[00:27:58.73] But then I noticed that they had gone toward the other bank, because that river at that point was very narrow. You're not talking much over a canal. And so I got in between. I took my boat, only on one engine. It's very difficult to drive a PBR on one engine, but I managed to get it between the incoming fire and them, their boat.

[00:28:24.55] And I worked as well as I could on one engine. I worked back toward their boat, which had been beached and was burning. I didn't know it at the time, but Lieutenant JG Bomarito, who was the patrol officer on the boat, had got all the guys off the boat. And they were all just terribly wounded. All of them were terribly wounded.

[00:28:48.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Burned as well?

[00:28:51.01] JERRY GANDY: I don't know if they were burned or not. They were just tattooed with shrapnel. One of them looked like he had mumps. I mean, the shrapnel was deep.

[00:29:03.85] And he got them over the side. And he wasn't aware that I was coming after him, so he first ordered them to-- and all the arms, the guns, and even-- they didn't have a gun. It was all on the boat.

[00:29:18.49] And they were worried about-- and they were hiding behind the boat to hide from the incoming fire. And then they started worrying about the boat cooking off, and all the stuff. We carried-- we were loaded for bear on those boats. And about that, he had told them, OK, let's go into the nipa palm. Let's go into the reeds here.

[00:29:42.09] And that would have been death for them, no way to protect themselves. And I mean, our boats were a trophy for those-- the NVA. They determined that was an NVA unit. And our boats were nothing but a treasure for them.

[00:30:00.55] So I'd managed to make their boat, and I worked myself, and then I heard them. I heard somebody talking. I worked my boat around. And at one point, then I saw them. And we got two of them into the boat. Like I say, they were-- I thought one of them was dead, but we took him anyway. It turned out he wasn't dead.

[00:30:27.89] And then it got down to the Lieutenant JG Bomarito, who was 6 foot 2 or 3, something like that, a big guy. And he was just too weak to get on my boat, so I dove into the water. And I don't-- it all happened so fast. All I know is I had to get him on my boat, because we had to get out of there. They were still--

[00:30:53.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Shooting chunks off of you?

[00:30:54.08] JERRY GANDY: Oh, yeah. And I got him on my boat. And then, to get out of there, we had to go right back through the fire, the incoming fire, but on one engine with-- well, what'd I have, four-- seven people in my boat?-- on one engine. So we charge back through there. And I'm on the phone with our tactical operations center, and our XO, Executive Officer, Lieutenant Greenberg, all the time, and he told me where to go.

[00:31:24.89] And Seawolves had come in. I saw more PBRs coming by that time. They had heard about us, and once somebody gets hit, it gets the attention of whoever's left in camp, let me tell you. So I took them to the point he gave me, and we got it got them all on two helos, Seawolves, and they medevacked them.

[00:31:47.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Were you wounded yourself?

[00:31:48.68] JERRY GANDY: I was. I got a Purple Heart from that. I got shrapnel, and both my eardrums were bleeding. My ears were bleeding. It all happened so-- I guess at the time, it seemed like that was a two-hour duration, but time moves slower, it gets sharper.

[00:32:10.92] JOE GALLOWAY: It sure does.

[00:32:12.74] JERRY GANDY: And then I got them and got out. And then I heard that they-- one of the patrols coming to help us had got my guy out of the water. So I got him back.

[00:32:25.57] I had said that the B40, or the RPG on my bow had not detonated. The second one exploded and blew my engine out. There was a hole in the bottom of my boat, and I was sinking.

[00:32:43.36] So the XO again, Lieutenant Greenberg, when I dropped the wounded off, he said, try to make it back here with your boat. We don't want to leave it out there. So he said, when you get here, back to Ha Tien, beach it. Just get as much speed as you can on one engine and ram it up on the beach.

[00:33:10.19] Again, I didn't know that there was a live round in my bow. So I got back there, and did a little circle and got me up as much speed as I could on one engine, and I hit that beach wide open and up on the beach. And I got out, and first thing they do, people run around, they start inspecting where you would-- the B40-- And a couple of them remarked, that don't-- all I see is a hole in the bow. And it hadn't detonated. My god, it hadn't detonated.

[00:33:50.74] So then they ran us all off and put tape around my boat, and the EOD had to come detonate the-- But my god, I rammed that boat up there wide open onto the beach. I could've blew my--

[00:34:03.38] JOE GALLOWAY: Blown the bow off it.

[00:34:04.53] JERRY GANDY: Yeah, really. Really.

[00:34:05.77] JOE GALLOWAY: Was it inside?

[00:34:07.54] JERRY GANDY: Yeah.

[00:34:08.10] JOE GALLOWAY: The rocket?

[00:34:08.94] JERRY GANDY: Yeah. They had to cut a big hole in there and pull it out after they disarmed it.

[00:34:14.35] JOE GALLOWAY: Was it difficult readjusting to life after the war? No.

[00:34:20.05] JERRY GANDY: I didn't think so. I was trying to adjust. When they brought me back from Vietnam, I went to three different military hospitals-- four different military hospitals, in about a 3 and 1/2 year period. But the Navy, in all of its wisdom, felt that I still had to go do my duty if I was going to stay in the Navy. And I fought to stay in the Navy. I didn't want to pay all that and not get to wear that uniform. I never got to wear it yet. I was wearing green.

[00:34:57.08] So they had to put me on a ship. Once I was released from the Naval hospital in Jacksonville, they had to put me on a ship that had a doctor on it. That was the requirement, that I had to go where a doctor was. And they didn't have a ship with a doctor on it, so they sent me to Morocco, North Africa, for duty.

[00:35:19.86] And as soon as I got to Morocco, I still had a draining wound in my back. And as soon as I got there, they shipped me off to Wiesbaden Air Force Hospital. And I went there three times to Wiesbaden in a three-year period while my family was back in Morocco.

[00:35:41.01] At one point, the surgeon there in Wiesbaden had taken two pieces of shrapnel out of my liver and didn't want to cut on it anymore, said that he was going to send me home. I said, what'll happen to my family? Well, he said, I'm sure somebody will take care of them there. I said, oh, no, no. We don't do it that way.

[00:36:00.37] So I convinced him to let me go back to-- I was in Sidi Yahya, Morocco, North Africa, in a communications base. So they let me go back there. We had a doctor, but we didn't have a hospital. All we had was a doctor.

[00:36:20.15] And as far as adjusting, I was just a chief among chiefs. I was fine. I got to Morocco and still had that big draining wound with shrapnel in me. And I went to NAS Atlanta, Georgia, for duty. And the reason I went there is so I could go back to another Air Force hospital, Maxwell Air Force Base, back to Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. And that's where I had my last operation, which was a total of four operations, the doctor there--

[00:37:00.16] And at that point, every day I had to go in twice a day and have peroxide put into the wound. And it would squirt out because it was closed on the outside. It was dirty-- dirty stuff on the inside. So this doctor-- I guess in the military, different doctors read cases, and this doctor had read my case, I guess, and said that he thought he could either kill me or cure me. At this point, I didn't care. And I'm honest, I just-- I had to get better.

[00:37:36.09] JOE GALLOWAY: You were how long past the time of being wounded?

[00:37:39.93] JERRY GANDY: Three years.

[00:37:40.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Three years, and still fighting it.

[00:37:43.44] JERRY GANDY: Yeah. So he took me to Maxwell Air Force Base. And essentially, what they did was bore a hole all the way through me and took a tube, and he cut it in the middle and then pushed it back into me. And I had to stay in a clean room for something like 90 days, while that tube grew out one side. What was happening before was every time they debrided it and put a bandage on it, in a couple of days the surface would close over, but it was still--

[00:38:16.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Infected inside.

[00:38:18.21] JERRY GANDY: So they had to open me up every day and get the infection, put peroxide in. So he put that tube, that split tube in, and it cleared up both sides. And once that was done, I was fixed.

[00:38:37.47] JOE GALLOWAY: How did your Vietnam experience affect your life afterward, or did it?

[00:38:44.07] JERRY GANDY: Well, I never forgot it. I considered it a high point in my life. That might sound weird, but I did. I was proud of what I did, and I'm still proud of what I did. I feel like I accomplished something.

[00:39:01.38] As far as it really affecting it, my goal was to make master chief petty officer within a non-war, competitive environment, and I did that. In fact, at one point, when I left Atlanta, Georgia, they had been offered some slots at the US Army Sergeants Major Academy in El Paso, Texas, Fort Bliss. And I guess they formed the selection board in Washington. They

called me up there. And I was selected as one of the six to attend. So I went PCS to Fort Bliss, Texas, to the US Army Sergeants Major Academy. I'm a proud alumni of Class 6 of that academy.

[00:39:46.82] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans coming back from combat today?

[00:39:53.30] JERRY GANDY: Yes. And this Wounded Warrior program I'm so thankful for. I'm envious of them, yet I'm thankful for them. I understand that when people are in these hospitals, away from their family or away from their home, that they let their family stay in the hospital or in houses. That didn't happen with us.

[00:40:16.60] Every time I went to hospital, I left my family, and usually in a different city. And the way the people appreciate their service today, it's so enlightened, so refreshing. And it is a big difference.

[00:40:38.05] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today in our society?

[00:40:43.11] JERRY GANDY: In our society, it's remembered as a war we lost-- unless you were there. We know.

[00:40:51.17] JOE GALLOWAY: We know. Did you take away from Vietnam more that was positive and useful than you invested in blood, sweat, and tears?

[00:41:01.51] JERRY GANDY: More that was positive. Oh yeah, more.

[00:41:08.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you list for us those positive lessons, learning, wisdom that came from going to that war?

[00:41:19.52] JERRY GANDY: As an individual, you may not think you're capable of doing certain things. You can do anything. You can do anything you have to do. You can do anything you set your head to do. You can do anything you want to do.

[00:41:34.95] I had a tenth grade education when I joined the Navy. I've got a degree now and, I've got a commission in the Navy. So from a cotton patch in Alabama to there. And without Vietnam, I don't think I'd have ever done that. There wasn't any stopping me. Once I convinced them that I should stay in the Navy. There wasn't any stopping me.

[00:42:02.09] JOE GALLOWAY: In the end, what did the war mean for you and for your generation?

[00:42:11.66] JERRY GANDY: If you're talking about the generation that fought there, we look back with pride when we look back at the war. It was our war. Unfortunately, the people of America didn't let us finish it. But it was our war, and I look on it with great pride.

[00:42:35.96] JOE GALLOWAY: What lessons did you take from Vietnam that you would like to pass on to future generations of Americans?

[00:42:45.07] JERRY GANDY: Get out and do something, and know yourself. Know yourself and believe in yourself. Don't say you can't do something, get out and do it.

[00:42:59.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Thank you.

[00:43:00.50] JERRY GANDY: You're welcome.