

## Hoe, Allen US Army

[00:00:13.52] ALLEN HOE: All right. I was born in-- and this you'll find interesting-- in Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii in Kapiolani Hospital, April 19, 1947. And I always find it unique to say, Territory of Hawaii because that was prior to it becoming a state. Yeah. My mother is native Hawaiian and Caucasian. Her ancestors, obviously, are over 100 generations here in Hawaii. Part of the original Polynesian immigrants.

[00:00:45.12] Her other ancestry comes from Europe as well as from Hingham, Massachusetts. My father is Asian, Chinese and Japanese. And his grandparents immigrated here from China in the 1870s. My dad was a-- like many young men born and raised in Hawaii, he had a variety of different skill sets. He was a cabinetmaker by trade.

[00:01:18.36] And when the war occurred in 1941, he worked as a ship fitter at Pearl Harbor. And then was drafted. And after completing his service and after having three young sons, took advantage of the GI Bill and got a college degree. And then he completed 25 years of federal service as a personnel manager at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

[00:01:50.95] ALLEN HOE: I was drafted. Special invitation by Uncle Sam. During the era that I grew up in, military service was always part of life's process here in Hawaii. And I graduated from high school in 1965. Really had no clue, other than what we-- back then-- had periodically heard on TV or in the news with regard to Vietnam. But all of us sort of accepted and realized at some point in our young lives that we would either join the service or Uncle Sam would request our service.

[00:02:28.40] I was a young 18-year-old going on 19. Enjoying life as a surfer. And I actually started to work at Pearl Harbor as a pipe fitter. And Uncle Sam sent me a letter one day in 1966 saying that we have other plans for you right now. And for us, like I said, growing up this is something that we acknowledged would occur at some point. And so I got in line like many other young local boys and did our service for our country.

[00:03:03.17] MARK FRANKLIN: And you didn't have any real sense of what was going on in Vietnam?

[00:03:06.50] ALLEN HOE: You know, not really until the early part of the summer of 1966, July 1966, when the brother of a very close friend-- and we had sort of all grew up together-- was killed in Cu Chi. He was a squad leader with the 25th Division. The Golden Dragons. 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment.

[00:03:33.05] And I just think that-- I think really kind of awoken me to what was happening when we participated in his funeral services at the old mortuary services at Kapalama military complex. And then when we went up to Punchbowl where he was buried.

[00:03:59.59] He had two young-- two very young children. And it suddenly, like, OK, Vietnam somehow became a reality. Not for my friend's family, but also a little bit more in terms of what the consequences of war was for me. ALLEN HOE: I actually did my basic training-- when I

was drafted, I went to Fort Ord, but I did my basic training at Fort Sam Houston. That was medical service.

[00:04:33.38] And so I was destined to become a combat medic from day one. Basic training-- I think, we, being young, very active, you know, always thinking that you're physically capable, mentally strong, and tough kids, right? And we'd get up early in the morning and do the routine road run and march, et cetera. But the one thing that stood out for me was as we were going through the PT test one day-- I think maybe the first or second PT test experience.

[00:05:05.38] I was doing the 40 yard crawl and ran out of gas. I just literally ran out of gas. And I kind of stopped. And Sergeant Jackson is a black E-6, I distinctly remember him. He looked down at me, and he said, Private, is that all you got? And I was huffing and puffing and kind of thinking, yeah, that's all I got. He said, well, if that's all you got, that's where you're going to die. I said, oops, OK, this is like for real.

[00:05:34.15] And you just kind of find a little bit more energy to finish it. But that I remember to this day so vividly. Then we stayed at Fort Sam Houston and went to AIT.

[00:05:48.84] MARK FRANKLIN: And what kind of training did that involve? Describe that training.

[00:05:51.38] ALLEN HOE: Well, it was-- I believe it was nine weeks of very intense-- people relate to it these days as EMT type of training. They gave us, I guess, what you would call, advanced life saving skills. And it was basic first aid to something a little bit more advanced. They actually taught us how to administer shots, how to insert IV implements to provide IV, intravenous support, and those types of things.

[00:06:36.20] I found it interesting, not necessarily fun. But I recognize, one, that was going to be the skill set that I needed to master. One of the-- I think one of the interesting things for me as well is that from the day I was sworn in, I was given leadership roles. To this day, it really puzzled me. I was always kind of singled out. All right, Mr. Hoe, this is what you have to do here, here, and there.

[00:07:03.38] And in AIT, I was a platoon leader for young-- for young medic trainees. And so I took that very seriously. And so studying and participating in the class activities, et cetera, always was important to me. ALLEN HOE: When my class finished AIT, the war was about ready to go full tilt. And everyone expected to go to Vietnam.

[00:07:36.92] And when they posted the orders on the board, I was pleasantly surprised to see that I would be heading to the Presidio in California, which was to me totally foreign. But everyone said, oh, you lucky SOB. How did you get that assignment? As the rest of them were going to Vietnam.

[00:07:55.03] And I really-- luck of the draw, whatever. I have no clue. But on my way to Presidio-- it was over-- I think it was over a long three or four day weekend-- I flew back here to Hawaii. And when I got here, I was getting ready to report to the Presidio.

[00:08:15.52] But the night before I was to catch the military flight, I came down with what was diagnosed as a slight case of mononucleosis, which is kind of what happens after basic training to a lot of people who go through that very close experience of living together during the wintertime. And so I was admitted to Tripler Hospital and stayed there for about a week.

[00:08:44.45] And then by the time I was released and got a flight to go to San Francisco to report to Presidio, I was informed that because I had come late, they were going to send me-- to give me a different assignment, which was to a Nike air defense command station at Travis Air Force Base. And in retrospect, that was way better than the Presidio because we were a very small army unit on an Air Force base and we were basically unknown to everyone.

[00:09:23.21] And so we got to basically just do a five day a week job, 8 hours a day.

[00:09:29.10] MARK FRANKLIN: Conditions were pretty good.

[00:09:29.59] ALLEN HOE: And conditions were good, you live in neat barracks and you eat in a great mess hall. And it was-- what? Maybe 40 miles away from San Francisco. So our weekends were consumed by taking off late Friday and coming back-- reporting back for duty by formation Monday morning. So back in 1967, in San Francisco, we had great times.

[00:09:57.35] It looked like I was almost completing my first year of my two year draft commitment. And for me, I was-- back then-- very aware of my cultural heritage in terms of the native Hawaiian traditions of being a warrior, et cetera, and hearing the stories of friends and family members who had served either in World War II or in Korea. I felt, one, that I had a specific skill set, I was very young, that I needed to be able to serve my country in a way that would be beneficial to my service.

[00:10:42.97] And so I submitted a 1099, which was basically the form to request a transfer of duties. Not 1099-- I forget what-- 10-- 1040. I'm not sure if it's 1090 or was it a 1040. It was a form. And generally, if you volunteered to go to Vietnam, they would process those relatively fast. And I think it was maybe two weeks later. I still hadn't heard anything. So I went in to see the first sergeant. And I inquired about what was the status of my request for transfer to Vietnam.

[00:11:22.04] And he had just completed service in Vietnam. And he was now stationed at that battalion. And he sat me down. And he basically gave me a long lecture about, are you crazy? Why would you want to do that? I just came back from that. As a combat medic, if you go there, your chances of survival are not that great. And so he said, I hope you are not volunteering because you want to do something for apple pie and motherhood and all of that good stuff.

[00:11:58.85] I said, no, First Sergeant, for me I think I want to do it because if I don't do it, the rest of my life I will be always asking myself, you trained for war, how would you have done in war? And I said, my heritage, my background-- I believe that I come from a warrior class. And therefore, I want to be able to answer that question, am I worthy?

[00:12:30.54] And he-- you guys from Hawaii, you guys are all alike. You're kind of like half crazy. And he said, but if you resubmit it, we'll put it through. And so I did. And sure enough, in 10 days I got orders. Vietnam bound. I arrived on December 1st, 1967.

[00:12:46.11] MARK FRANKLIN: 1967. Describe that journey. How did you get there?

[00:12:49.97] ALLEN HOE: I obviously came home for my 30 day leave. And then caught a commercial flight-- Pan Am Airways. And reported to Honolulu airport early. I can't-- I don't recall exactly what day of the week it was. And then got on board the plane. And that plane took us from Hawaii to Guam to the Philippines, and then into Tan Son Nhut late in the afternoon.

[00:13:17.52] But the most memorable part of that trip was that sitting in two rows in front of me was the famous young singer, Connie Francis. Tiny little lady. She was on her way over there for maybe a USO show or something like that. So everybody in the airplane was all pretty-- feeling pretty neat that we had a celebrity on board. All of us on the plane-- for those of us who were going to be first timers-- we were very nervous. Unsure of what was happening.

[00:13:52.24] And of course, everyone experienced-- we're coming in high. And of course the pilots says because of fear of being shot at they'll circle the airport high and then they'll dive down. And sure enough, that's what they did. So everyone was scared shitless.

[00:14:07.45] [LAUGHTER]

[00:14:08.19] OK? And then, of course, now going through the whole orientation, and the whole training prior to arriving in Vietnam, they basically said that the enemy wears black pajamas. And the enemy wears straw hats, the conical straw hats. So anyone you see in black pajamas and straw hats, they're there to kill you. And of course, when we landed, looked out the window-- crap. That's all we saw.

[00:14:31.30] [LAUGHTER]

[00:14:32.77] People in black pajamas and straw hats. And then it was like, when do we get our weapons? We need some defense. And then we got off the plane and got our luggage, got on deuce and halves and then did that ride to Long Binh, the 90th Replacement.

[00:14:53.36] MARK FRANKLIN: So you ride to the 90th Replacement. And how long did you stay there before you found out where you were going?

[00:14:58.09] ALLEN HOE: Probably, if my memory serves me correctly, not more than a couple of days.

[00:15:05.87] MARK FRANKLIN: And what did you do during that time during replacement?

[00:15:08.39] ALLEN HOE: I did KP. And I did the diesel cans and the diesel oil and became a shit burner. It's a 55 gallon drum that they probably cut-- not quite in half because half would be too high. So maybe about a third. And those drums are what are placed in the outhouses. And

then everyday, those are drug out in the open, and then they pour diesel fuel into that, and then they light it and cook the feces.

[00:15:41.24] MARK FRANKLIN: It's not the best duty.

[00:15:42.66] ALLEN HOE: And it's-- it's not the best duty. But a lot of guys given the opportunity to go out in the field in combat or burn shit--

[00:15:52.29] [LAUGHTER]

[00:15:54.78] I eventually was assigned to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade up in I Corps. At the end, it was-- headquarters were in Chu Lai. Got there-- and this is-- a fascinating part of the story also is when I arrived at the 196th Light Infantry Brigade headquarters, they basically identified a group of us that would then go over to different battalions.

[00:16:26.70] But when I arrived at the brigade headquarters, as I'm getting off the truck, I hear a voice out of the blue says, Allen Hoe, is that you? And I'm like, oh my god. And I turn around and there was one of my childhood friends that I had-- he and I became really great friends when we were about like eight, nine, ten, eleven, when my father had moved our family to Washington State where he went to college.

[00:16:56.16] Raleigh Morrison. And I had no clue he was also a medic. I had no clue that he was even at Fort Sam about the same time I was. And he also was assigned to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. I was then assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment. And Raleigh went to the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment. ALLEN HOE: Initially, I was always a combat medic. When I got there-- I think the first night that I was there, or the second night I was there, I was given guard duties.

[00:17:44.51] And I was assigned to accompany another individual who was a medic, who was just finishing his tour. And we were posted on the beach at Chu Lai to guard a certain segment of the beach. And of course, being my first night on guard duty on the beach and having absolutely no clue-- I think they gave me a .45-- but again, having no clue as to what to be-- what to watch for et cetera, et cetera, I was kind of a little bit nervous.

[00:18:21.85] But anyway, the medic that I was with was just-- had just completed his tour as a combat medic, and was getting ready to leave the unit. And so I asked him, I said, do you have any words of wisdom? Obviously, you survived.

[00:18:44.09] You have any words of wisdom for me being a newbie? And he said, you know-- he said, there's two ways to do this. He said, you can absolutely refuse to do anything that they ask you or tell you to do and make them force you to do it, or you can volunteer for everything.

[00:19:08.65] Do the craziest kinds of things that will come up in an infantry unit. And being-- again, I volunteered to go to Vietnam. So that second one sounded more exciting for me. Then, thank God, there but by the grace of God, that's the choice I chose. Every new Soldier with an

infantry unit has to go through a week's orientation where they go to-- I guess I'm forgetting exactly what it was called.

[00:19:39.87] But I think ours-- I think it was called Charger Academy where all the new guys were exposed to all the hazards. The health hazards, heat exhaustion, and all the dangers of the battlefield, i.e., snakes, et cetera. And then-- we were then exposed to the various types of booby traps, various types of weapons that the enemy used. And we were then shown the various types of explosives that we had available to us, C4, detcord, grenades, et cetera.

[00:20:22.00] ALLEN HOE: At brigade headquarters, the next move was right out to my battalion, 2nd of the 1st. And then I already knew that when I was being assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, I would be assigned to the Recon Platoon. And it was kind of interesting because in December of 1967, the war was taking a huge transition in terms of strategy, tactics, et cetera.

[00:20:56.96] And the division was preparing a long range reconnaissance unit. It wasn't completed yet. And so the different battalions within the brigade were given the task to form these LRRP teams within the battalion. And to begin that type of mission until the division could establish its own long range reconnaissance operations. LRRP is long range reconnaissance.

[00:21:30.96] And the lieutenant who was given that task was a rifle platoon leader, had completed kind of half of his tour with a line company, and because of his experience they had assigned him that task. And so one of the things he was responsible to do was to hand pick Soldiers from a variety of different companies within the battalion to create this initial LRRP team.

[00:22:04.29] Now, this guy was from Macon, Georgia. Charles Fincher was a-- kind of like a star football player. Good athlete. Good Soldier. He had actually spent a couple of summers in Hawaii at the University of Hawaii growing up. And so he was looking for a medic. And the battalion surgeon said, well, go talk to Doc Hoe because he's new and he has kind of like an interesting background. So you might want to invite him to be part of that.

[00:22:36.36] And of course, Lieutenant Fincher came in and shared what the mission was. And of course, again, that sounded a little bit more exciting than doing other stuff. And so he selected me and I became part of the original LRRP team for the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry unit.

[00:23:01.16] MARK FRANKLIN: What were your-- what were your living conditions like?

[00:23:03.90] ALLEN HOE: The ground. Literally. You lived with what you carried on your back. And we had poncho liners. And I slept on the ground. We were-- can't remember the drill, but we traveled in groups of no larger than 8 to 12. And we would stay out for a week at a time. But prior to my first mission, if you will, we went through another, kind of, a very intensive 15 day training period where we were given a little bit more advanced training in terms of weapons, munitions, explosives, communications.

[00:23:48.87] So we learned how to call artillery. We learned how to call for airstrikes. And it was kind of interesting because I assumed the-- because I had the largest pack, I assumed the additional responsibility to be the demolitions guy. So I spent some time learning a little bit more in terms of the various types of mechanisms that we would use in triggering high explosives.

[00:24:19.98] So I carried all the caps-- the blasting caps, carried all the fuse, carried the detcord, and carried my share of TNT blocks and C4, as the medic. Yeah, this is-- yeah. And again, as a medic, part of my responsibilities was to make sure the rest of my guys, in my platoon, also knew what to do in the event Doc went down. So I learned-- I handled all the weapons, the M79, the M60.

[00:24:56.79] ALLEN HOE: That was probably the most amazing thing. I have two brothers. Biological brothers. And we grew up very close. Three boys in my family. But the buddies that went with me into combat 50 years ago, they are closer to me today. Even to this day they are closer to me than my two brothers. And we have-- of all the guys that I served with over that almost 10 months I was in country, probably only-- of that whole bunch, probably there's only about 10 of us that survived.

[00:25:36.98] And to this day we're still very, very close. I will pick up the phone, and I'll hear, hey, Doc, and I know exactly who I'm talking to.

[00:25:49.23] MARK FRANKLIN: You know the voice.

[00:25:50.15] ALLEN HOE: Yeah, it's amazing. I just know the voice. It just kind of goes way down deep and it just-- bang! There you go. Back then, music probably was the most significant denominator in terms of where you came from geographically. And it was strange because you would think like soul music would be solely for black Soldiers. But no, soul music came from the heart of the big cities, right? Country and western music

[00:26:20.63] came from Hicktown and mid-west America. And rock and roll. And those things all was probably more generational. And back then surf music was kind of like West Coast and Hawaii. And so there would be a lot of ribbing about, turn off the goddamn hick music or, enough with the-- enough with the-- not rhythm and blues, but soul music. Yeah.

[00:26:54.09] MARK FRANKLIN: Do you have any specific memories of the popular culture in music? Any one song stand out in your mind?

[00:26:58.97] ALLEN HOE: Oh my god. Oh my god, of course. The Animals, "We Gotta Get out of This Place."

[00:27:03.41] [LAUGHTER]

[00:27:03.71] MARK FRANKLIN: We've heard that a lot. Yeah.

[00:27:05.33] ALLEN HOE: Creedence Clearwater. The Doors. Jimi Hendrix. And oh, boy-- and Light-- not Light My Fire, but the blind Hispanic singer. His name will come to me. José

Feliciano. There you go. Yeah. And, you know, those were the anthems for me of Vietnam. And of course, probably one of the favorite ones was Joe Cocker's rendition of, And It's One, Two, Three, Four.

[00:27:39.29] [LAUGHTER]

[00:27:41.21] And you know whenever we were out of the field, maybe on a stand down for a couple of days. Everyone's little-- not CD player, but portable transistor radios. And we'd all sing in unison. We gotta get out of this place, or it's--

[00:28:01.07] MARK FRANKLIN: When you had those stand down periods, what did you do for recreation? Did you just--

[00:28:04.55] ALLEN HOE: Just drink. Eat steak.

[00:28:06.74] [LAUGHTER]

[00:28:07.98] MARK FRANKLIN: That's pretty usual--

[00:28:08.81] ALLEN HOE: Yeah. And the guys who smoked, would smoke. I never smoked cigarettes, but they would send out these SP packs, right? The special packs with the C-rations. And Doc would always get the cigars. I was a cigar smoker. Yeah. ALLEN HOE: I Corps, which is the northern sector of then South Vietnam from-- we went from Chu Lai all the way over to the Laotian border, and all the way up to the DMZ.

[00:28:42.34] We were-- as we recall, we were the bastard battalion in the bastard brigade in the bastard division. So whenever trouble occurred, our battalion commander would always volunteer us. And being light infantry, I guess he was trying to earn his ribbons. So we got volunteered for a lot of shit.

[00:29:10.92] Typical recon mission in that area really meant hiking through the mountains. And we would pack our stuff for about four, five days. Always carrying extra ammo as opposed to extra food. And we would then either mount up on the APCs-- the armored personnel carriers. The M119, I guess they call it. Or we'd get on helicopters. And usually, we'd either travel in three APCs or three helicopters.

[00:29:45.52] And I think the first time that we did an insertion by air, I was very amazed by how it was done because we-- the three slicks or the three Huey helicopters that carried the troops, would be accompanied by a gun team of two gunships and a spotter. And we would fly into the area, generally where we were going to be inserted. And then the aircraft would make three landings and then take off.

[00:30:18.21] And then at any one of those three landings, then we would have to jump off. That was just to kind of throw the enemy off as to where-- MARK FRANKLIN: So they didn't know exactly where you were? ALLEN HOE: They didn't know exactly where we were. The same when we were inserted by the armored personnel carriers.



[00:30:33.15] MARK FRANKLIN: Describe the quality of your leadership? What were your impressions of your immediate and upper echelon leaders?

[00:30:39.46] ALLEN HOE: To be honest with you, at the battalion, brigade level, at the division level, I really had no clue. At the small unit level, it was incredible. There was an immediate bonding. One really based on my observations of the guys that I were with and how competent they were. I easily place my life in their responsibility and vice versa.

[00:31:14.22] MARK FRANKLIN: Can you describe or would you describe some of the significant actions that you participated in and witnessed firsthand?

[00:31:21.63] ALLEN HOE: Oh my god, it's just-- we would need a couple of days, but--

[00:31:29.23] MARK FRANKLIN: Give me one or two.

[00:31:30.55] ALLEN HOE: Yeah. Probably, one occurred February 7, 1968. We were given a mission to begin a patrol. So we mounted up on a track of platoons-- F Troop, 17th Cav. Usually the platoon sergeant and I would always ride in the lead track. And this morning, for some unknown reason, as we were getting ready to go, the platoon sergeant said, hey, Doc, let's pick up the rear. So we know exactly where we're headed for.

[00:32:17.59] And we were out maybe about half hour or 45 minutes going through the jungle and over-- traversing terrain when, as we're going up a rise, that first track-- we were all watching the tracks as they were going up the rise. That first track crested the hill and just disappeared in a huge explosion, in purple and yellow and white smoke. It had hit a command detonated 500 pound bomb.

[00:32:49.39] And the track itself, on the bottom, it's got ammo and fuel, et cetera. And that morning I lost three guys. And everyone just-- all the tracks-- there were like five tracks I think in a platoon. All the tracks just immediately stopped where they were. And of course, everyone's screaming for Doc because I'm in the last track. I grabbed my bags. Have no clue what to expect. And I'm running up the hill.

[00:33:15.52] I crest the hill and all I see is just mangled metal. And then immediately-- we weren't attacked. So there was no small arms fire. We thought we had observed some people running off in the distance. But then immediately when I called it clear, everybody came up and they saw that. And it was like something out of a horror movie.

[00:33:48.36] So then of course we called it in. And then we spent a good hour-- two hours-- picking up body pieces and putting them in a bag. And I think the first-- the largest body piece that we recovered, actually, was like maybe a quarter of one of the Soldiers' shoulder. The rest was just-- I mean, it was just absolutely-- and bits and pieces of scalp. But the rest was just totally-- yeah-- destroyed.

[00:34:19.60] And so they reported it in and the brigade commander was flying out to inspect. And so now the tracks are still in line and the platoon leader is saying, well, we better take the

defensive position. I forgot what they call it, not being a tanker. But when an armored unit like that is attacked or when they go into a battle mode, each track has a pre-positioned place to go. From a straight line

[00:34:50.15] they move off into various angles and various positions. And so the platoon leader for the tracks then call the command, and the second track, and the third, and fourth track immediately took up their motions. And I'm standing next to the second track. And there's only the TC-- the tank commander-- and the driver in that track. And he pulls immediately into his spot. And as soon as he pulls into his spot, he gets blown up.

[00:35:18.89] And I-- and it was like, incredible. I'm standing there watching this guy maneuver his tank into his position. And I watched this tank get blown up. And it's flying over my head, doing a big somersault, then boom! Lands down. And of course, the--

[00:35:34.33] MARK FRANKLIN: The entire track?

[00:35:35.32] ALLEN HOE: The whole machine. It was just absolutely phenomenal. Then of course, now, the driver is screaming because he's been badly hurt and same with the TC. And so, I'm right there. I drag the driver out and get the TC out. And both of them survived. But I think it was horrendous. Like the concussion injuries-- concussive injuries. You could see guy's eyes are all bloody. He's bleeding at the nose, and at the ears.

[00:36:03.30] And the driver, being somewhat more protected, he just had some superficial leg injuries. So we called the medevac and we got them out. And I'll tell you what, when that happened, the platoon leader said, basically, stop! Don't anybody move anywhere else. And then, eventually, when we finally cleared that battlefield area that day, the only way that we felt safe moving out was everybody backing down the same tracks they came in.

[00:36:37.73] MARK FRANKLIN: So you didn't finish that mission?

[00:36:39.78] ALLEN HOE: No. That was pretty much the end. And it was kind of funny because I learned something that day, I think. Not being a combat arms guy, when units get hit bad like that-- and it's probably for good reason-- they don't allow the unit that has gotten hit to continue with their mission unless they are receiving active fire.

[00:37:12.24] Simply, one, because there were several villages in that area. And you know what would have happened if they would have said, all right, you guys continue your mission. Probably a lot of casualties would have occurred as a result of us trying to get even. ALLEN HOE: They were all pretty significant. I-- there was-- this is one part of my experience in the war that always intrigued me. I-- being somewhat superstitious, I always believe, and most soldiers believe, you have three lives, three strikes.

[00:37:55.06] Guys usually get killed within the first month or on their last day. And then the third one is just out of the sky. Stuff will fall out of the sky and kill you. And I distinctly remember my first escape from death. I remember my second escape from death. But the third

escape from death was very, very vivid. We were being ambushed and the rest of my guys were executing what they did best with their weapons.

[00:38:28.63] And we had shot one of the enemy guys, and he was laying out in the trail. And you know, hey Doc, check him out. Because this is probably one of the most bizarre things about war for the medics is that you try and kill somebody, but obviously, if he's wounded, then the Doc has to go out and save his life so they can take him back and interrogate him, right?

[00:38:52.27] So I'm crawling out to get this guy and halfway-- and the fire is pretty intense. And so the lieutenant is saying, hey, Doc, where is it coming from? Where is it coming from? So there's a tree standing there. So I can't see anything. So I kind of crawl over to the tree and stand up next to this tree thinking the tree is going to save my life, right? [LAUGHS]

[00:39:13.90] It's kind of like, right. It's better than standing out there by yourself. So I stand up next to the tree. And I'm watching, and I'm trying to listen for where the fire is coming from. And as soon as I say, I think he's over there, I hear this, bang! And bark starts falling on my head. And I turn around and I look-- this freaking hole right over my head where a sniper had shot the tree. I said, holy shit. [LAUGHS]

[00:39:40.18] Then I went down, right? And then, you know, later in reflection, I said, hey, three strikes, you survived. Shit. Nothing's going to happen to you. And it just kind of changed my whole outlook on life after that. After that-- that never was-- I never worried about it after that.

[00:39:57.49] MARK FRANKLIN: Did that come towards the end of your tour?

[00:39:58.91] ALLEN HOE: No. It was like within the first two months.

[00:40:02.29] MARK FRANKLIN: How about the enemy laying on the ground? Did he survive?

[00:40:05.51] ALLEN HOE: No. He actually-- when I got there, he was dead. Yeah. He was dead. So yeah. ALLEN HOE: My best day was when I could see the sun come up. So it was like every day. But--

[00:40:21.40] MARK FRANKLIN: OK.

[00:40:22.45] ALLEN HOE: Yeah, but one of-- my best day was my 21st birthday, April 19, 1968. We were en route to relieve a Marine company that was being ambushed north of us. And so we had actually flown by helicopter to an airstrip. And then we were going to be flown north by C-123s, which could take the whole unit rather than just three or four guys.

[00:41:05.62] And so we were sitting on this airstrip at this LZ Baldy-- it was called. And everybody knew it was my birthday. And unbeknownst to me, several of the guys said, we're going to go do something special for Doc on his 21st birthday. They went over to-- they found their way, somehow, over to the officers' mess and stole two racks of fresh eggs and a case of soda. And they brought it back.

[00:41:32.80] And so, you know, my 21st birthday was celebrated by drinking orange soda and eating fresh boiled eggs.

[00:41:40.09] [LAUGHTER]

[00:41:42.25] You know? At that point, it couldn't get any better than that. ALLEN HOE: We had passing contact with the Koreans. The Koreans-- the ROKs-- we always kind of knew were tough guys. The Aussies we all knew were crazy guys-- well, heavy drinkers. And the Kiwis, we always knew as crazy guys, just willing to do any mission under any circumstances.

[00:42:22.75] ALLEN HOE: Vietnamese civilians-- I felt very sorry for. Very quickly, over a period of two, three months, it quickly became very apparent, one, that the civilians in the areas that we were at, they didn't want to have nothing to do with what was going on. They were just poor farmers trying to survive. The Vietnamese army and the Popular Forces were the sorriest bunch of people I have ever met in my life. I still feel so.

[00:43:00.71] And this occurred on a number of occasions. One that really comes to mind was we were given-- part of this pacification thing-- and we were given assignment to take a unit out and work with them. And so we were not on a long patrol. And at the end of the day, as we were getting ready to set up for night, they come forward, and they announce they're going home. So wait a minute, what do you mean you're going home?

[00:43:32.30] Through our interpreter we were discovering, yeah, this is not our war. So we're going to go home now. OK. So we're set up in our night defensive position, they know exactly where we're at. And now they're all going to go home. We said, the fuck you are. And then from then on it was just kind of like-- just sorry. And I understand, recognize that there were units within the Vietnamese army that were crack soldiers. We never had-- we never worked with them. Never saw them.

[00:44:08.54] It was-- and obviously, I'm a Soldier at the lower level. I'm just sharing what I heard in terms of how corrupt their officer corps was. And the fact that when they were called upon to do their duty, you were lucky if they even hung around. Yeah. And you know, I understand. That bothers me to this day. But unfortunately that was my experience.

[00:44:47.95] ALLEN HOE: This flag is very special to me. When we formed our long range recon team in December-- I think one of my buddies and I were in the ville outside Chu Lai, the division base. And in every war that we have participated in it's almost a guarantee that right outside camp there are going to be a bunch of entrepreneurial spirited locals, right? That they'll sell curios and mementos, et cetera.

[00:45:29.59] So we went into one of the stores one day and I saw this and I said, well, that's pretty neat. And of course, now it's faded. This used to be very bright red, white, blue. And the gold tassels were really gold tassels. And I thought, oh, we ought to get that. And I bought it. And I carried it-- we carried it. I carried it with me through my tour. And it was just kind of like a special memento or as a talisman, if you will.

[00:45:59.65] And on Mother's Day, 1968, my unit was overrun. And I lost 18 men that day.

[00:46:12.78] MARK FRANKLIN: 18?

[00:46:13.16] ALLEN HOE: 18 men. Mother's Day in the battle called Kham Duc, which occurred on the Laotian border. And of the 18 men that we lost that day, one was captured, taken prison-- prisoner. But of the 18 men, 10 of them remained missing in action for 38 years.

[00:46:37.02] And so the survivors of my team, we kind of made a personal commitment to each other that when our lieutenant and our close friends were recovered, or if they were recovered that-- especially the lieutenant-- we would all go and attend his funeral. And we would present this flag to his family.

[00:46:59.58] And then, of course, over the years, it just never dawned on us that he would remain MIA for all these years. One of the very fascinating experiences for me was the fact that here in Hawaii-- JPAC, when they stood up to command-- the joint command for POW/MIA's, I became very close to several of the men who are responsible for the operation of that unit.

[00:47:24.54] And because the family members of my men who were still missing in action became very active in the national organization-- and we kind of shared our angst, if you will, and our frustrations over the fact that not enough was being done. But anyway, so this flag, after I got out of the Army, sat on my desk at my home for all those years.

[00:47:55.11] And my two sons grew up knowing the story of this flag. And of course, knowing the story of dad's service. And over the years they had occasion to meet several of my buddies who survived, who they call uncle. And my oldest son eventually, after earning two undergrad degrees, went and got a master's degree in business. And then earned his commission.

[00:48:21.87] And for him it was an experience that he wanted to have as part of his growing up. And he became an infantry officer. And when he was notified of his first assignment, he discovered that it was to be with the Gimlets, 3-21 Infantry out of Fort Lewis, Washington. And he was just thrilled to death because he knew 3-21 one was a sister battalion of Dad's brigade.

[00:48:56.49] So Dad served with 2nd of the 1st. And it was 4-31 and then 3-21. And so he was just ecstatic. And when he got to Fort Lewis and he saw the logos on the wall, in terms of the units that were going to be part of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team. He said, oh, I see the Gimlets are part of this. And they kind of looked at this young kid and said, what the hell you know about the Gimlets? And then-- so he shared the story.

[00:49:20.34] And of course, then the battalion commander of the Gimlets was very anxious to make him part of their team. And he was. And so he was very excited to call me that, one, he had finally got his rifle platoon. And it was with the Gimlets. And so they went to war in October of 2004. And he had developed this very close relationship with all the men in his platoon.

[00:49:53.22] And he had shared the story of his father's service, et cetera. And the connection with the 3-21. So they asked him, hey, sir, ask your father to send us the flag because we want to

carry it in honor of the men he served with and more so, in honor of the lieutenant-- your dad's lieutenant-- who, at that time, was still missing in action.

[00:50:16.97] And of course, you can just-- can imagine how proud that made me feel. So yeah, I sent this flag to my young son. And he was with the 25th Division, the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 1-25. And they were-- their assignment was the area of Mosul. And it is kind of-- I always wondered about the rationale that Mosul at one time was very safe, because it was occupied by a whole division. Petraeus's division. 101st.

[00:50:55.69] And then when they left, it was given to 1 Brigade. 1 Brigade was expected to basically maintain order in an area that a whole division had difficulty maintaining order. But they did an incredible job. My son would share with me his experiences and how great his young Soldiers were and how they were able to kind of accomplish all the missions that they were given.

[00:51:23.43] The day before the first major election he was given a special patrol to go out and check some of the voting areas. And they were on their mission-- they had completed their mission early in the morning, and they were back. But the brigade was-- the battalion, 3-21, still had one more task to accomplish. Cold, wet miserable day. And it was given to a different platoon. But the platoon leader was brand new. And they weren't confident that he would be able to complete the mission.

[00:52:01.31] So of course, my son volunteered his guys. He said, you know what-- they said, no, you've already done yours. He says, no, no, no, we'll do it, he says. That's what we're here for. It's what we're trained for. So he roused his guys, and they went back on another patrol. And he was shot by a sniper. And to this day, I mean, everyone who knows the story-- it was a golden bullet. It found a crease in his flak jacket, pierced his aorta, and he just dropped.

[00:52:34.85] And that was the opening shot on the gun battle that took them a couple of hours to resolve. And he was carrying the flag that day. And of course, subsequently, when dad heard that story and the flag came home, it just took on a whole life of its own. And eventually, the family of my lieutenant, who knew the story of this flag because over the years they had come to be very familiar with this flag, they said, hey Doc, we want you to have it because it means so much more to you.

[00:53:13.83] This flag, as I've shared in that piece you'll see, it's been now to Iraq four or five times. It's been to Afghanistan as many times. It has an incredible legacy. Admiral Keating, who was the PACOM commander during that period, whenever he would go downrange, he would send his aide to come pick it up, to carry it with him. It rode on the Kitty Hawk on its last assignment. Kitty Hawk being the last Vietnam-era aircraft carrier when it was decommissioned.

[00:53:46.95] It's flown with the Blue Angels. It rode in Angel One. And after it was given back to me, we discovered that the pilot of Angel One was the husband of one of Nainoa's best friend's sister. All these very interesting stories that have come about as a result of all the connections. But one of the most incredible connections was-- that occurred at the Battle of Kham Duc-- the battalion had been tasked to go in and relieve a Special Forces A camp.

[00:54:31.49] And the brigade was then going to resupply, support-- Westmoreland had decided that they were going to try and save this whole area. And then halfway through the transition, it was learned that there was an NVA regiment that had already surrounded the camp. So rather than increase in support, they did an evacuation.

[00:54:57.93] But during the battle that took place over a three day period, one of the Air Force spotter pilots-- the FAC was flying the O-2, what they call them, forward air controllers-- who was controlling the airspace and actually calling strikes on the enemy as it was attempting to overrun my guys, was Captain James Gibbler.

[00:55:25.63] 37 years later-- and this is all bizarre how it came about-- but 37 years later, his son, Colonel Michael Gibbler, was Nainoa's battalion commander. ALLEN HOE: Letters.

[00:55:41.77] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you tell them much about what you were doing?

[00:55:45.16] ALLEN HOE: In a cryptic, sort of, way. Yeah. I did ask my mom, you know, please keep all the letters. And I still have all those letters.

[00:55:53.50] MARK FRANKLIN: You have?

[00:55:54.10] ALLEN HOE: Yeah. And I'll go back from time to time and read them. And I think-- and I look at them and say, what the hell was this about?

[00:56:00.50] [LAUGHTER]

[00:56:01.40] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you get much news from home about what was going on back in the country?

[00:56:05.30] ALLEN HOE: No.

[00:56:05.78] MARK FRANKLIN: They didn't tell you any of the social or political--

[00:56:08.23] ALLEN HOE: No.

[00:56:08.84] MARK FRANKLIN: --things that were going on?

[00:56:09.98] ALLEN HOE: No. We'd heard stories about experiences of what veterans would go through when they got back. And that always intrigued me because when I got back in September of '68, it was probably at the height of all of the bad stuff.

[00:56:36.96] And I never had one bad experience. And I went-- I traveled all up and down the West Coast for about a month before I came home. And of course, I had to wear my uniform because I wasn't going to pay full fare. I would fly-- Seattle, San Francisco, LA airports. Absolutely--

[00:57:01.21] MARK FRANKLIN: No issues?

[00:57:02.58] No issues. ALLEN HOE: We landed at McChord Air Force Base, I guess it would have been. And then we processed out through Fort Lewis. And one of the funniest things because there were a relatively large group of us-- maybe 100 or so-- and it was all ranks, all grades, enlisted to officers. And it was really a very long and tortuous process that you had to go through, right? Filling out all the forms, get your medical exam, go to the dentist, et cetera.

[00:57:44.47] But the last final act of who's in control, we all gathered in a room. And this young private comes in and he says, all right, before I can let you go-- of course, everyone said, what? before you can let us go?-- you guys have to police the area. And oh my god-- I mean, they screwed with you up until the very last second. So you can imagine the young lieutenants and captains, right? Who had just come back from war, having to take this crap from this private.

[00:58:16.33] But we all dutifully did. And then we all left. And I then caught the plane, caught up with some friends in San Francisco and spent a few days with them. But then when I-- again, we were in uniform, got on the plane in San Francisco to fly to Los Angeles to spend some time with some other friends down there. I sat in the same three rows of seats with Janis Joplin and her band, Big Brother and the Holding Company.

[00:58:49.15] MARK FRANKLIN: Wow.

[00:58:49.51] ALLEN HOE: And it was-- you know? For me, it was-- and that's why I say it was kind of unique. It was a very interesting experience because I sat next to the guitar player with the long blonde hair, and we had this incredible discussion.

[00:59:04.06] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you actually get to talk to Ms. Joplin?

[00:59:06.43] ALLEN HOE: Oh, no, because she was back with her manager, and they were chatting. But he-- I can't think of his name-- but he introduced me to her. But I was sitting with the boys in the band.

[00:59:17.68] MARK FRANKLIN: Wow.

[00:59:18.40] ALLEN HOE: Yeah, and it was like, oh my god.

[00:59:20.50] MARK FRANKLIN: Connie Francis--

[00:59:20.76] ALLEN HOE: Yeah, Connie Francis and Janis Joplin on the way back.

[00:59:23.94] MARK FRANKLIN: What was the reception like when you got home?

[00:59:26.94] ALLEN HOE: Coming from a very-- here in Hawaii, ohana is everything. So coming from that kind of upbringing, it was very warm and welcoming. Yeah. And of course, I got to catch up-- I had a couple of buddies who were stationed at Schofield that I'd grown up with. We all kind of went in around the same time. And so we all kind of got together. And it was-- I think the first 30 days home were kind of like a blur. [LAUGHS]



[00:59:57.21] MARK FRANKLIN: What did you do after the Army?

[00:59:59.57] ALLEN HOE: I actually went back to work at Pearl Harbor, because I came home after-- I had already decided, I'm going to go back to school. And so I'd come home during mid-semester, so there wasn't an opportunity for me to go back to school. So I went back to Pearl Harbor, and worked there for about three, four months. And then spring semester of 1969, I enrolled at the University of Hawaii.

[01:00:29.00] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you have any trouble adjusting to life after Vietnam?

[01:00:32.68] ALLEN HOE: Not really. Not really. People-- people have shared with me-- well, one thing, my personality and my outlook on life absolutely changed. Absolutely changed. I was no longer kind of carefree, free spirited kind of guy. I was-- how can I say?-- deeply affected by the war. Mostly in terms of the realization of how it changed other people's lives as-- more so than how it changed my life.

[01:01:16.73] And watching the news stories in the late fall of '68, during the elections, and the riots in Chicago, et cetera, et cetera. Watching cops beat up on these young protesters really kind of pissed me off. So here are these cops defending "America." It's easy to defend "America" at home in the streets. Why aren't you assholes-- you guys are so big and tough and strong, why aren't you over in Vietnam?

[01:01:48.42] But no way. They knew where they had it good. And for a long time, and I think still to this day, I don't disrespect law enforcement, but I don't share the same high opinion that I had of them as a child.

[01:02:12.15] MARK FRANKLIN: What do you think the Vietnam War meant to you and your generation?

[01:02:16.65] ALLEN HOE: Looking back in retrospect, it was part of who we are and what we believe in. Maybe a failed effort of diplomacy. But seven years ago, I had an opportunity to go back to Vietnam. I was invited to go back to the old battle site with the commander of JPAC. Like I said, we had established a relationship. And so he said, hey, Doc-- he said, we want to take you back with us.

[01:02:54.67] I went back and I got to meet Vietnamese people. And then realized, one, that they had totally left this war behind. Our involvement-- they love Americans. Everyone I spoke to was amazed. They would say, hey, Mr. Hoe, is this your first visit? And I said, no, I was here in the war. And they would look at me like, what war?

[01:03:24.08] And then I realized that the generation that's in charge now, they have no recollection. They refer to it-- oh, that's our-- that was during our grandparents' time. Oh, yeah. I guess it was. Most of them are very pro-American. A lot of them have been educated in the West. And in the US. There's a whole new burgeoning economy over there in terms of manufacturing.

[01:03:52.23] But where we were, as part of this JPAC mission, it was all in the "developing tourism areas." So all of our best five star hotels-- they're all there. And, you know, it was incredible. The one thing-- two things that kind of-- I experienced. People said, hey, Doc, you remember now, when you get there, things are going to be different. You're not going to recognize it.

[01:04:23.37] And it's kind of funny because the plane landed, doors opened, and I walked down that flight of stairs. Shit, I knew exactly where I was. It's just that aura, that atmosphere, the smell, the intensity, and stuff like that. But for me it was different, because I knew at the end of a week, at 10 days, I'm going home. It's kind of like, yeah. Yeah. And it was fascinating.

[01:04:49.98] MARK FRANKLIN: That's interesting, you say that they've let it go. They don't think about it. How do you think the war is remembered by Americans today?

[01:04:57.69] ALLEN HOE: Mixed. Very mixed. There's probably a-- well, obviously, 58,000-plus families, they could give a shit less. It burns deep in their souls. And I would be lying to you if I said that I don't understand that. I understand that. I understand why and how it's impacted-- how a single life-- my son, when he was killed, how painful that was.

[01:05:37.93] I cannot imagine, for the families of my guys, who are missing for 38 years. I just-- I call them-- I still call them my heroes to this day. For them to live through that every day, it is incredible what these families have gone through, what our government has put them through. One of the fascinating things is that when, after the battle and Lieutenant Ransbottom was declared missing in action, within-- I think within a couple of weeks-- but there was-- we all had this unwritten code.

[01:06:27.13] And to a certain extent, it still exists today. If anything happens to me, before they shut down the net, I want you guys to call a, b, or c to make sure they know what's going on. Well anyway, back then we didn't have cell phones, right? So it was writing letters. And I had some personal effects of my lieutenant. I was part of the command group. So me, the lieutenant, and the RTOs.

[01:06:51.44] So I had some of his personal effects. And I'm not going to turn it in because if I turn it in, it'll never get to his family. So I sent a letter and mailed the stuff home to his family. And I said, you know, I can't tell you what happened. But if you ever want to ask me questions, I will be happy to respond. OK. So back then, there was this total denial when a person in combat was either wounded or killed or missing in action.

[01:07:27.86] There was just a total blackout on any kind of information. And that's probably why the MIA family organization came about, because the government continually started with lies and continued to perpetuate these lies over the course of 40 years. And so one day, we were out on a patrol, out in the middle of nowhere. The call comes in over the radio. There's a slick inbound to pick up Doc.

[01:08:06.75] Tell Doc, get his stuff, get on board. And he's wanted back at division. And this was like within 30 days of my DEROS date. So everybody's saying, you lucky s.o.b. You're

getting an early out. And I seriously thought I was going to go home early. So, chopper comes in. I get on board. I say my goodbyes. And we fly back to division-- I mean, fly back to brigade.

[01:08:29.78] And the first sergeant meets me. He goes, hey, Doc, what the hell did you do? And I go, what are you talking about? He said, yeah, we got an order to bring you in. They want to interrogate you. I go, for what? He says, I don't know. I'm asking you. What did you do? I said, I didn't do anything. And so this didn't make sense. I didn't put two and two together.

[01:08:56.64] So the next morning, we're getting ready. He's going to take me up to the division. He said, you might want to put on clean uniform. I said, hell no. Why would I want to put on a clean-- they drug me out of the jungle. They're going to see me how they got me. Oh god, Doc. Not again. [LAUGHS] And so of course, we go up there, and I'm sitting in front of this young captain. Spit shine boots and starched uniforms.

[01:09:23.93] And, you know, he's not been outside the wire his whole frickin' tour of duty probably. And he comes in, and he says, you know, Mr. Hoe, you're in some pretty bad trouble. I go, I am? For what? For unlawfully communicating with your lieutenant's wife. Oh, when he said that, I just kind of like got relieved. I said, oh, yeah? Tell me about it. I say, you're full of shit. Tell me about it.

[01:09:54.26] And my first sergeant is going-- I said, what are they going to do? Send me to Vietnam? I'm already here, pal. Right? And then-- so this went back and forth for a while. I said, you know, what are you saying that I did? I'll answer your questions. I'm not afraid to answer your question. So stop playing this frickin' game. He said, well, we are responding to a congressional-- that you corresponded with your lieutenant's wife.

[01:10:24.29] I said, OK. That's the best you got? That's it. And we can court martial you for that, because that was the rules back then. I said, OK, I'll tell you what, you want to waste your time, go ahead. But let me tell you something that you don't know and may change your mind. My lieutenant wasn't married, and you should know that because you got his goddamn records. And he went, oh.

[01:10:47.19] [LAUGHTER]

[01:10:49.13] Right? So his whole, kind of-- his whole investigation went out the tubes. And he said, so OK, what did you do? I said, I simply mailed the stuff that my lieutenant asked me to make sure his family got if anything happened to him. And they were telling-- later on, obviously, as time went on, and I finally met up with the families and stuff, we learned that, although the government knew exactly what happened, when, and where, they refused to acknowledge any of it to the families for years and years and years.

[01:11:30.80] And you know, what started was-- when they went in and sat down with Fred's mom. And-- oh, she was an incredible lady. Just incredible lady. [LAUGHS] B.S stops right here. And yeah, you know, it's sad. She finally passed away last year. And over the past several years, we'd become very close. But another fascinating part of that story. Nainoa was killed in 2005 in January.

[01:12:15.29] In 2005, JPAC was about ready to close the books on that file. And of course, they knew it was going to be difficult to close it on the families because back then, we still had like 10 families who were actively involved in my guys' cases. And so they-- the family told me about this. And then I went to talk to the guys at JPAC. And they basically said that they were being kind of ordered to do this from another office in DC.

[01:12:52.75] And I say, you can't do that. You guys have to make one more effort. And thank God, there was a civilian guy there-- Dickie Heights-- who was in charge of that job. Just an incredible Soldier. And he and I had developed a very close relationship. He said, you know, Doc-- he said, we will make one more effort, but we need some additional-- some new information. So can you gather everybody together one more time. And we'll do another debrief.

[01:13:23.93] And unbeknownst to me, he had some information that he just couldn't put on the table. But if we forced him to do it, then he would put it on the table, which would allow them to go forward. So in October of 2005, we gathered all the survivors back in Virginia for another final briefing, if you will. And it was at that point in time, that we were able to request and were shown some additional evidence that made us realize that the original layout that they were examining to conduct their searches from, were off by about 15 degrees. That makes a huge difference.

[01:14:17.56] And we subsequently learned, when we made them put that evidence on the table, that we had eyes on the battle that day from our spy satellites. But because it was so classified, they couldn't even share it with the military commanders on the ground. And so when we looked at that evidence, we went, oh my god, where did this come from? Well, you know.

[01:14:47.86] It was finally declassified only about 10 years ago. And fortunately, Dickie Heights was in that black shop way back during the Vietnam War. And so you didn't know that this photographs existed, but he knew of the existence of that capability. And so when we were finally able to get it and we established, one, in terms of locating the proper search parameters, he said, OK, this is enough for us to go back and plan another mission.

[01:15:26.02] And so they did. And he said, hey, Doc, when you get home, can you please come down to the shop, when do we get ready to go out again, and bring us a bunch of You're My Hero buttons. And he sat there right at the table with all of the family members and said, you know, Mrs. Ransbottom, we guarantee you that when we go back up on the hill with Nainoa's buttons, Nainoa's going to help us find your son.

[01:15:56.08] And of course, everyone went, yeah. Yeah. OK, cool. That's a good story. Oh my god. And in December of that year, January, there's this young reporter out of Las Vegas whose dad was in the 5th Group, Special Forces that same time. She was doing-- was going to do a series on Las Vegas men who were now beginning to get killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[01:16:28.12] She wanted to do a special story on young Soldiers. And so she came across the name William Skivington. And she did her research and she discovered, one, that he was missing in action. He was part of this battle in Kham Duc. So she reached out to one of the family members, and they told her, you need to call and talk to Doc Hoe.

[01:16:52.87] So she contacted me and I gave her all the background. And then about a month later-- it was maybe February-- she said, I think I've gotten all my stuff together, but I want to interview you on camera. And I said-- I said, well, I could go down to a local station here, an affiliate, and they could-- you can ask me questions, and they can video it for you.

[01:17:18.04] But, I say, if you want to-- if you can wait a month, I'm actually going to be up at Lake Tahoe in the ending part of March, because my younger son was coming back from Iraq, and he had never seen snow. So one of my clients has this incredible cabin in Tahoe, and he had always said, hey, Allen, bring your son, and you bring your family up here.

[01:17:40.68] And so we were there the last week of March. And I had scheduled to meet this reporter, Colleen McCarty, on March 31 at the Reno-- Reno has a Veterans Memorial Park. So I said, OK, I'll drive from across the lake and come and meet you there. And you can film me. Oh my god. Midnight, March 30, I get a call from Dickie Heights.

[01:18:12.70] Hey, Doc, you're not going to believe this. I go, what's up, Dickie? He says, I know it's late where you're at, because he knew I was in Tahoe, going to meet this girl. But we just got off the phone with the team in Vietnam, and they have found them. They have found them. So the next morning, I drive to Reno. I'm sorry, not Reno. Carson City. Carson City.

[01:18:42.70] And I sit down. And the reporter and her cameraman-- they set up. And I have the flag with me and stuff. And she says, OK, Mr. Hoe, are you-- are you ready? And I went, yeah, I think so but, you know, I don't-- I don't know if I'm ready to share the story about Skip being missing at this point. And she kind of starts to freak out, right? [LAUGHS] And I could see her face just turned ashen, right?

[01:19:12.70] Oh my god. Now, everybody says you're kind of crazy. So here we are. You brought us all the way up from Vegas. And here we are, and you're going to tell me now that you don't want to talk about it? And I started laughing. And she has a more puzzled look. And I said, Colleen, you're not going to believe this, but midnight last night I got a call. Skip is no longer missing. He is not missing. He has been found. They found him yesterday.

[01:19:39.16] And she was like, no. You've got to be BSing me now. This young boy's been missing for 38 years. How convenient. Then we schedule this interview, and now you tell me he's found? I said, yeah, he's found. And I said, but you know you're not going to get any "official statement" on that. This is all back channel. You're not going to get any official verification because his remains have to now be recovered and transported to Hawaii, where they can do all of the testing, et cetera.

[01:20:09.26] But he was found in exactly the same position that we described where he would be found. Right next to the radio operator and next to the lieutenant. Our lieutenant had very small feet. So he had small boots. Our RTO never took off his helmet, and he carried the radio. And they found the two of them together, found a very small pair of boots, the helmet next to the radio.

[01:20:32.92] MARK FRANKLIN: Had they been buried--

[01:20:33.91] ALLEN HOE: They were-- yeah, they'd been covered up in their last known position.

[01:20:39.65] MARK FRANKLIN: Wow.

[01:20:40.34] ALLEN HOE: And so she said, OK, Doc. Now, who's going to tell Mr. Skivington?-- his father. Now, over the years, his dad and I had become very close. His dad was an incredible Soldier. He had fought in World War II. He was in the invasion of Normandy. He fought at the Battle of Bastogne. And at-- yeah, I'm drawing a blank. Bastogne.

[01:21:11.57] And-- and so I said, well, obviously the Army's not going to tell him. I said, I'm obligated. I'm going to tell him. She said, when are you going to do that? I said, you know, this is too important. I have some stuff I have to finish back home. But I will be back within a week. So I flew home and did what I needed to do. And then I called his dad. I called Bill. I said, hey, Bill, I'm going to be in Vegas next week, and I just want to come and talk story with you. And he said, OK.

[01:21:45.06] So by this time now he's-- Battle of the Bulge. Remind me of that story. So he said, so I'll come and see you. And he had no clue. He kind of-- later on he shared, I kind of had a sense. So Colleen had, in the past, tried to contact him on a number of occasions, but he had kind of been done with talking to reporters. And so the morning that we got there, I went to the care home that he was at and they had had him out in a wheelchair. It's so funny.

[01:22:22.47] And so I walk up to him and say, hey, Bill. And he goes, hey, Doc, is that you? Boy, you're looking kind of old, aren't you? [LAUGHS] And we laughed. And I said, hey Bill, I've got some great news for you. And he knew. He said, have they found Skip? And I go, yeah. And all of this-- and all of this was being-- because I'd promised this young reporter. I said, you know what? You need to do a story on this.

[01:22:52.00] And so I brought her and she was filming that. She actually did an incredible series. I'll shoot you the CD on it. And she won a-- she won an Emmy for that award-- for that series. Incredible. And then within-- this was in March of '06, June of '06. They had the Repatriation Ceremony.

[01:23:15.35] So we flew the Ransbottom family. We flew Bill Skivington. And the sister of the last guy who was still missing-- Danny Widner. Vicky, we flew Vicky here. And then four of my team guys also flew in to be part of the Repatriation Ceremony at Hickam.

[01:23:36.17] Now, the 196th Brigade is stationed here in Hawaii. The XO at that time was a close personal friend of Nainoa's. He's now-- he was now the XO of the 196th Brigade. So I called him up, and I said, you know what? I said, I expect that you guys will have an honor guard when your Soldier comes off the plane. And he went, yeah, Mr. Hoe, you got it. We'll be there. Yeah. And for them, it was like an incredible honor. He is buried at Arlington.

[01:24:13.37] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh.

[01:24:13.64] ALLEN HOE: And Lieutenant is buried in Lawton, Oklahoma. His hometown. ALLEN HOE: Absolutely incredible. Now, it's a place where miracles happen. I'll share another miracle story with you. Memorial Day, 2005. I was invited by Jan Scruggs to be one of the speakers at the Memorial Day Ceremony. I-- at that time, I was also-- because Diane Carlson Evans, the founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, she and I were personal friends. And so I've been serving on her board of directors.

[01:25:02.45] So I was asked to be part of the Memorial Day Ceremony, 2005. To give a speech. And of course, I had our legacy with me there. But more importantly, earlier in the day, as we normally do at the Vietnam Women's Memorial, each Memorial Day and Veteran's Day, we have a morning talk story session where we invite veterans to come and share their experiences with the thousands of people that pass through there.

[01:25:35.35] And so on that morning, we had-- well, we had learned for that day, there would be two nurses who had just recently returned from Iraq, and would we like them to be part of our program? Oh yeah. Absolutely. We'd love to have them be part of our program. And so we were waiting for them to arrive. And so I'm standing there. I had actually taken a couple flower lei with me to present to these two young returning nurses.

[01:26:07.77] And so young Major Coughlin is wearing her desert camos with their boonie cap. And she's walking through the crowd. And so I said, are you Major Coughlin? She goes, yes. I said, yeah, thank you so much for agreeing to participate in our program. This lei is for you as a thank you. And she went down, and I placed a lei over her head. And she saw this button. And as I placed the lei over her head, her hand just reached out and grabbed this button.

[01:26:43.45] And I-- that's cool. And she said, I know him. That's exactly what she said. She reached out. She said, I know him. I went, how do you know him? That's my son. He was killed in Iraq. She said, I was with him when he died. She was the trauma nurse at the CSH unit that he was taken to when he died. And it was like-- everyone in the crowd just went [IMITATES CROWD SILENCING]. You could hear a pin drop.

[01:27:22.78] ALLEN HOE: Oh, yeah. I'm intimately involved with that.

[01:27:24.90] MARK FRANKLIN: With the state of Hawaii--

[01:27:25.83] ALLEN HOE: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. From day-- yeah, from-- even from-- what? D-day minus 360 or something like that. Yeah, from--

[01:27:34.53] MARK FRANKLIN: What are your impressions of the national program?

[01:27:36.44] ALLEN HOE: National program? General Kicklioghter, when he first started it, it was a good program. But-- and I won't say too little too late. That's just a really cliché-- but yeah. I mean-- a lot more needs to be done. But yeah, it was good.

[01:27:59.77] MARK FRANKLIN: Have you received your own Vietnam Veterans lapel pin?

[01:28:02.23] ALLEN HOE: A bunch of them.

[01:28:03.55] MARK FRANKLIN: You're part of the program.

[01:28:04.97] ALLEN HOE: Yeah. Yeah.

[01:28:06.58] MARK FRANKLIN: Well, sir, that was an incredible interview. Thank you very much.

[01:28:09.40] ALLEN HOE: You're welcome.

[01:28:09.82] MARK FRANKLIN: Thank you for sharing that with us. That was awesome. It's going to be used a number of ways. Incredible stories and connections--

[01:28:16.75] ALLEN HOE: Yeah, people talk about six degrees of separation--

[01:28:20.58] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah.

[01:28:21.16] ALLEN HOE: --and Army being a huge organization.

[01:28:24.20] MARK FRANKLIN: But it's actually small.

[01:28:25.39] ALLEN HOE: It's small. And, you know, it's like 1 and 1/2 degrees. Maybe two.

[01:28:28.84] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah.

[01:28:29.08] ALLEN HOE: You know the USARPAC commander now? A four star, General Brown?

[01:28:32.85] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah.

[01:28:33.90] ALLEN HOE: That was Nainoa's brigade commander.

[01:28:35.67] MARK FRANKLIN: Is that right?