

Markiewicz, Ronald US Army

[00:00:15.13] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I was born on the first of September, 1946 in Worcester, Massachusetts.

[00:00:21.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Who were your family members?

[00:00:23.27] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: My father was Edward Markiewicz who had been a first sergeant during World War II in the 100th Infantry Division in field artillery. And my mother was Eleanor Markiewicz, but she went by the name of Laura. They were both from the central Massachusetts area.

[00:00:40.79] JOE GALLOWAY: What'd your dad do for a living?

[00:00:42.81] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: My dad, after the Army he stayed in the Reserves. So he had a total of 20 years. But he became a commercial artist winding up as a photogravure retoucher, which is the guy who does the finish work and straightens out the mistakes made by the engravers.

[00:01:00.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. JOE GALLOWAY: Where did you go to school as a kid? What do you consider your hometown? Worcester?

[00:01:09.74] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: My hometown is West Boylston, Massachusetts. Like I said, I was born in Worcester. We moved to Holden in early 1953. And then on the-- I believe it was the seventh of June 1953, my mother and I were in a very bad tornado that took out the house. It was the Twin tornado. It's called the--

[00:01:36.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Tornadoes in Massachusetts?

[00:01:37.60] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It's called the Twin tornado, Joe. The first one hit Flint, Michigan. I remember as a boy watching on TV with my mom saying, oh, those poor people, the night before, or the--

[00:01:49.06] JOE GALLOWAY: It got you.

[00:01:50.20] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. And then it went away. And that was an F5 there. And then it reconstituted itself in the Quabbin Reservoir and then--

[00:01:58.66] JOE GALLOWAY: And came back.

[00:01:59.23] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And came back. And it was an F4. It went right through our house.

[00:02:03.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Damn. How'd you survive? Get in the bathtub?

[00:02:07.99] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No. We didn't know. They made-- the government made a decision not to warn the people. We saw bad things happening. My mom was sitting next to the picture window and I said, mommy, mommy Mr. Duffy's trees are being torn up. I actually saw trees come out of the ground. And she ran in, grabbed me. Last thing we knew, it drove her through the door of the house, took me and dropped me down into the basement and I ricocheted off one of those old wringer-style washing machines.

[00:02:43.94] Now, I thought later on that that would-- my knee was so bad that it would get me out of-- I wouldn't be allowed to go into the service. Well, that didn't happen--

[00:02:54.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, right.

[00:02:54.32] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --obviously. But my mom went through some horrible operations, about 13 operations in nine years.

[00:02:59.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my god. So she was really banged up bad.

[00:03:02.38] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Horribly. But we then moved to West Boylston. That's where I grew up. Which is the next town.

[00:03:12.79] JOE GALLOWAY: When did you enter the military and did you enlist or-- ?

[00:03:21.13] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I entered the military-- it's an interesting story. We had a friend of the family, Joe Benedict, who was one of the banking advisers for President Kennedy. And he was a major general in the Air Force Reserve. And Joe did-- Joe did a little research and found out I was going to be drafted immediately upon--

[00:03:47.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Finishing high school.

[00:03:47.53] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --exiting college--

[00:03:48.25] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:03:48.79] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --finishing college. And so therefore, I went down to the Army recruiter as a draft-induced volunteer.

[00:03:58.06] JOE GALLOWAY: You signed up for what, three?

[00:04:00.64] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No, I signed up-- because I was a college-- going to be a college graduate, it was going to be with-- to go to Officers Candidate School.

[00:04:10.27] JOE GALLOWAY: So they kept their word? They sent you to OCS?

[00:04:14.18] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They did.

[00:04:14.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah?

[00:04:15.66] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They did. And about halfway through OCS, I took a look around and said, my God. I'm going to be still running around with that same M16 as I would as a Spec 4.

[00:04:26.32] JOE GALLOWAY: Draftee BFC.

[00:04:27.79] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And-- sure. And so I went to flight school. And-- well, we'll get to that story later on. I'll refer back to it.

[00:04:37.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, what year was that?

[00:04:39.19] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: 1968. Right after-- so it was right after--

[00:04:41.63] JOE GALLOWAY: Right after Tet.

[00:04:42.58] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --Tet of '68. Yeah.

[00:04:43.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my. What was your sense of what was happening in Vietnam when you went down and signed on the dotted line?

[00:04:52.93] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was split. It was, wow, this is really crazy and everything like that. But like in all young men-- I won't say in all young men. At least historically. During the Civil War, they said, ah, we're going to get to see the elephant. Well, I wanted to go see the elephant. So it was with kind of split feelings there, of fear on one side, but hey, I'd really like to kind of do this.

[00:05:25.39] JOE GALLOWAY: I've got to see that elephant, yeah.

[00:05:26.66] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I want to go see that elephant.

[00:05:33.38] JOE GALLOWAY: OK. So you go through OCS.

[00:05:35.61] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yep.

[00:05:36.47] JOE GALLOWAY: You've got your silver bars.

[00:05:40.04] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Gold bars.

[00:05:40.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Gold bars. And you volunteer for flight school.

[00:05:45.89] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, yeah. About halfway through OCS, they put on a firepower demonstration. And a guy starts it off with a .45, pop. And in the end, Phantom jets are coming in, and they had brought the helicopters. And I said, I think I want to do that.

[00:06:03.47] JOE GALLOWAY: I want to do that.

[00:06:04.31] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And it came--

[00:06:04.64] JOE GALLOWAY: It's better than walking to war.

[00:06:06.44] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Right. It came right after that. Not too long after that, that they came down and said, who wants to go to flight school? And the hand went up.

[00:06:13.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:06:13.91] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: The hand went up.

[00:06:17.03] JOE GALLOWAY: And you were off to Fort Mother Rucker?

[00:06:20.36] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, I was-- the way the Army did it at the time, Joe, is that infantry officers would go to Fort Polk for six months to get some time, all right, and then they would go to Fort Walters for primary training.

[00:06:33.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Fort Walters.

[00:06:33.86] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And you'd go through here's how to pick up a helicopter, and hover it and fly it a little bit, then a little bit of tactics, and then you would go to Mother Rucker.

[00:06:45.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Where did you do your officer basic? Or did you?

[00:06:50.97] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Fort Benning.

[00:06:51.95] JOE GALLOWAY: Fort Benning.

[00:06:52.49] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: The Benning School for Boys. There was no basic.

[00:06:55.13] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:06:55.37] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Officer candidate school at that time--

[00:06:58.10] JOE GALLOWAY: That qualifies you.

[00:06:58.31] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --was the whole thing. And they had-- it was interesting, because they had a screw up in scheduling. Gee whiz, the Army having a screw up--

[00:07:05.33] JOE GALLOWAY: The Army screwed up in scheduling?

[00:07:05.96] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --in scheduling? So what they wound up doing was, oh, let's do an experiment. Let's play social engineering. Let's take all the college boys and put them over here and let's take all the NCOs and that and put them over here. Well, it was

interesting that your first test that you go through is the leadership test, which is you get the barrels across the pond, and you climb up and you do all these things.

[00:07:32.93] We bombed it horribly. Horribly. And oh, you college boys are a bunch of duds and everything like that. We all got together and had a little talk, had a little come to Moses meeting. And so we said we are not going to do this again. And we went through, Joe, and we set about every record that an OCS class has ever set on all the other subjects. We just left everybody in the dirt behind us.

[00:08:07.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:08:07.40] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And it was pretty good. But we only graduated 50% of our class. Matter of fact, I got to talk to the company commander later on. He got his rear end chewed out pretty severely for that. But, hey.

[00:08:20.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Hey.

[00:08:21.57] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It is what it is.

[00:08:27.88] JOE GALLOWAY: How did you get to Vietnam and where did you land?

[00:08:33.22] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I got to Vietnam. I went out of McChord. McChord? Yeah, out of McChord. And went to the Alaska route and then down through Kadena and then down to Vietnam to Bien Hoa. And landed down in the south.

[00:08:51.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Tan Son Nhut?

[00:08:51.98] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Tan Son Nhut, I guess it was.

[00:08:53.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:08:54.53] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I was up north most of the time.

[00:08:56.16] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your first impressions when they opened that door?

[00:08:59.96] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Oh, man.

[00:09:02.87] JOE GALLOWAY: You thought you were back at Fort Polk?

[00:09:05.57] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. I said, oh man. This is really happening. What did you get yourself into this time? Especially when it-- what really triggered that was when I saw the wire on the windows of the bus.

[00:09:17.99] JOE GALLOWAY: On the windows of the bus. Do you know how many people say that?

[00:09:21.41] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Oh, I'm sure a lot.

[00:09:22.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:09:23.76] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I'm sure an awful lot.

[00:09:25.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Why would they have--

[00:09:25.70] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Why would you be doing that?

[00:09:26.42] JOE GALLOWAY: --chicken wire on the bus windows?

[00:09:28.63] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Right.

[00:09:29.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Hmm, keep the grenades out much?

[00:09:32.07] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, maybe.

[00:09:32.94] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. So they put you in the Repo Depot?

[00:09:39.90] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yep. They sure did.

[00:09:40.73] JOE GALLOWAY: And where were you assigned?

[00:09:42.91] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: OK. Initially I was assigned to the 17th Aviation Group at Tuy Hoa in a staff position. Lam Son had not bubbled up yet and it had been kept really down, and the end of '70 was pretty calm, beginning of '71 was pretty calm, and they needed people in a security role. So I was a physical security officer for about two months. And I was struggling hard to try to get some flight time, because you have to have a certain amount of flight time, and it just wasn't happening.

[00:10:17.48] JOE GALLOWAY: Or they ain't going to write you that check.

[00:10:19.07] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Or they're not going to write you that check, that's exactly right.

[00:10:23.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah, the Army.

[00:10:24.05] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: So then we were watching-- myself and my roommate were watching all the helicopters going north, going north, going north, going north. Next thing you know, Ron was going north. And I wound up in the 71st Assault Helicopter Company, which was 16th Group, Americal. In the 14th battalion.

[00:10:47.48] There were really two battalions that were attached to the 101st from outside. I believe one was from the 1st Aviation Brigade, and I don't recall-- it's 230-something I'm pretty

sure. And then ours was the 14th Battalion, of which they brought two of our four companies north.

[00:11:11.30] They brought the 71st north, the Rattlers and the Firebirds, and they brought the 174th north, the Dolphins and the Sharks. And they would rotate the other two companies, the 176th, which was-- the Muskets were the gunships and the-- I don't remember the slicks. But 174th, Not 76th. 174th was the Dolphins and the Sharks. They rotated the other two companies in to kind of help us out. In my readings, I found out that we were-- our company was in direct support of the 147th Marine Brigade up there.

[00:12:00.30] JOE GALLOWAY: When you got up north where were you based?

[00:12:03.21] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: We were at-- we were at Quang Tri. And a matter of fact, we were in the old dog compound at Quang Tri.

[00:12:11.94] JOE GALLOWAY: I must have been right next door to you, because they bunked the press with the loach outfit--

[00:12:17.49] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: OK.

[00:12:17.80] JOE GALLOWAY: --in Quang Tri.

[00:12:18.72] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. And we used to sit on the bunkers at night and watch--

[00:12:21.23] JOE Galloway: Watch the--

[00:12:21.43] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --the rockets. And it was cold.

[00:12:23.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:12:23.70] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was cold up there in the morning.

[00:12:25.47] JOE GALLOWAY: It was cold, yeah.

[00:12:26.65] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: We used to use-- do you remember the old railroad watering device where they put in the steam engines?

[00:12:34.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:12:34.44] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That's how we took our showers with cold water at about 5:00 in the morning.

[00:12:39.06] JOE GALLOWAY: That's bad.

[00:12:39.96] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That was bad.

[00:12:40.65] JOE GALLOWAY: That's bad.

[00:12:41.22] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, not good.

[00:12:46.35] JOE GALLOWAY: So you were in a tent hooch of some kind?

[00:12:50.58] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, I was in a hooch with the co-pilots. One of the-- the co-pilots' hooch for the 1st Platoon.

[00:12:59.55] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:12:59.97] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I was in the 1st Platoon. RONALD MARKIEWICZ: This is interesting because aviators are known to screw with one another a lot.

[00:13:12.43] JOE GALLOWAY: I've heard that.

[00:13:13.57] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I'm sure you have. Let me tell you something, though. When I got up to Quang Tri and that, and came in, there was none of this, hey, go get me a yard of flight line. There was none of this, hey, get me bucket of prop wash.

[00:13:30.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:13:31.44] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was man, are we glad to see you.

[00:13:33.84] JOE GALLOWAY: Are we glad to see you.

[00:13:34.27] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Because that means one less time I have to go fly.

[00:13:37.55] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:13:37.80] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Because the antiaircraft fire was just insane.

[00:13:40.89] JOE GALLOWAY: Fierce up there.

[00:13:41.86] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was fierce. So we were treated extremely, extremely well. It was kind of like, what can we do for you?

[00:13:48.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Now your outfit, I heard rumblings that the crew chiefs, when they were flying in to supply the ARVN, the crew chiefs were using axle grease on the skids to keep all the ARVN from hanging on trying to get out of there.

[00:14:06.27] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Hydraulic fluid.

[00:14:07.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Hydraulic fluid. Slipperier?

[00:14:08.66] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Hydraulic fluid. I only saw it done once, and I'll tell you why it was done. It was after the Marine brigade, they got chased off of Delta. And they put up one hell of a fight. But they ran out of ammunition. And they ran out of ammunition, they ran out of medical supplies, they ran out of--

[00:14:28.89] JOE GALLOWAY: And they were running for their lives.

[00:14:30.27] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And so they came off of there and-- not at first. They were not running for their lives at first. They came out very, very orderly at first. But it was near the end.

[00:14:40.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:14:40.88] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was near, near the end. And we were to pick up on the average-- we were supposed to be picking up about 15 or 16 of them. We could see things starting to go wrong. The mob was starting to--

[00:14:58.01] JOE GALLOWAY: They were getting real nervous.

[00:14:59.36] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Getting real nervous as there were fewer, and fewer, and fewer of them. And a matter of fact, in the last lift that I came out of there with, I had-- the aircraft commander had them put down the hydraulic fluid. I had my gunner or crew chief actually beat them off with a machine gun barrel, because at that time, we had 23 of them on board.

[00:15:25.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, man.

[00:15:25.94] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And we were watching the power start to come down and that. And the aircraft was shuddering badly. And that was one of the two hardest decisions I had to make over there was to tell the gunners, beat them off with the machine gun barrels.

[00:15:43.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:15:43.94] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They would have they would have just--

[00:15:45.11] JOE GALLOWAY: They would've dropped.

[00:15:45.40] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And I got my ass bit by the battalion commander, who's the AMC, for having 23 of them on board.

[00:15:51.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Well, how you going to keep them off?

[00:15:55.10] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Right.

[00:15:55.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell him to fly the damn mission.

[00:15:59.45] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They swarmed the aircraft.

[00:16:00.47] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:16:01.34] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They did. And by the time you could figure out what was going on--

[00:16:05.31] JOE GALLOWAY: They were packed in like sardines.

[00:16:06.17] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They were packed in like-- and holding on and that. So it wasn't axle grease, it was hydraulic fluid.

[00:16:14.33] JOE GALLOWAY: Hydraulic fluid. Do you have any specific memories of the popular culture, specifically songs, if you hear it today, it takes you right back there?

[00:16:26.48] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Oh, one of the-- yeah, there's a couple of them. I was listening to-- Buffalo Springfield was on the other day, "Something's Happening Here."

[00:16:33.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Something was happening here, yes.

[00:16:34.31] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yes.

[00:16:34.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:16:34.86] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: So that was there.

[00:16:35.93] JOE GALLOWAY: "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."

[00:16:37.88] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, we always sing that. And a funny story, I lived in Connecticut before coming down here, and Eric Burdon was playing at the Mohegan Sun in the Wolf's Den down there. My wife and I went to see it, because we always sang that along with it.

[00:16:56.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:16:56.39] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And I was wearing my Firebirds hat and all that. My wife grabbed it from me, got up on the table, and we were just singing away.

[00:17:05.24] JOE GALLOWAY: Singing away.

[00:17:06.02] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And I've got a good friend who has a band, and he goes around to different places here. And when we find out-- they play music from that era a lot. And they always leave that one, and I get up on stage with them and get to sing. We get to-- "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."

[00:17:26.01] JOE GALLOWAY: "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."

[00:17:27.24] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Oh yeah. And then the other one was-- it was funny. I was playing gunships later on and we were flying along and "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"--

[00:17:36.83] JOE GALLOWAY: "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida."

[00:17:37.70] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" came on. Well, we'd be listening to AFVN and that old gunship was just bouncing like that as we were flying. In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida, darling.

[00:17:48.83] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, man. But you mentioned the Rattlers. Did you fly with them?

[00:17:55.31] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I flew with the Rattlers. Yeah, was 71st.

[00:17:57.35] JOE GALLOWAY: I've spoken twice at their reunions.

[00:17:59.21] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I know you have. I mentioned I've met you.

[00:18:03.54] JOE GALLOWAY: OK.

[00:18:04.01] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: You gave a great speech that night, and I needed it. Because I had-- because my wife had just died of cancer.

[00:18:08.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh.

[00:18:09.77] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And to go and listen, and it was good. It was really good, Joe.

[00:18:16.58] JOE GALLOWAY: If you could hear it over the mariachi band--

[00:18:18.99] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I could hear it over the mariachi band. And my best friend from 'Nam who had gotten his leg blown off, was at that one. It's the only one that he's ever gone to, but he was at that one. So it was a--

[00:18:32.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Good time for you.

[00:18:33.71] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was. It worked out. It really helped, because I had lost her in February. This was in April.

[00:18:47.27] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about the missions that you were flying in Laos.

[00:18:50.84] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, first--

[00:18:53.36] JOE GALLOWAY: You were flying slicks.

[00:18:54.08] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, I was flying slicks at the time. And my first mission was a flare mission. We just kind of went at night and started-- when the bad guys were-- started chucking flares out. And then we flew some resupply missions over there. And like I said, we were in direct support to the 147th Armored Marine Brigade. It was a very good unit.

[00:19:17.99] And I remember flying out one day and I heard a radio conversation when they said, Delta's heating up. They said, this place was really beautiful. The Marines had really set it up nicely and everything like that. They said, Delta's heating up. And then the following day, the North Vietnamese put a main--

[00:19:39.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Came after them?

[00:19:40.25] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Came after them big time. Main attack. And I wasn't on the lift in the morning. They tried to get in and they got beaten off. And then they called all the Rattlers that were out that day, brought us to Khe Sanh. And at about 1 to 2 o'clock in the afternoon, I'd say early afternoon, they said, we're going to-- we need to try to get in there. They're getting-- there's a main attack going.

[00:20:07.74] JOE GALLOWAY: You're going to try to get them out?

[00:20:09.30] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No, we're going to try to get in ammunition--

[00:20:11.18] JOE GALLOWAY: No. To resupply?

[00:20:11.58] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Ammunition and medical supplies only. Not even food. So we stacked up with ammo predominantly, some medical supplies.

[00:20:21.57] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, that you can shove out, right?

[00:20:24.57] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, well--

[00:20:25.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Theoretically.

[00:20:25.71] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: We'll get there. Oh, yeah. We'll get there. So like I said, what we would do, and if I recall this correctly, you know in helicopter when you push down on your power, you put in the right pedal to keep yourself in trim. The antiaircraft fire was so bad and it started off real small, real small, and those little balls coming up, and then they look like bushel baskets going by.

[00:20:49.17] JOE GALLOWAY: And they started getting like that.

[00:20:50.91] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. And then they got real big. We actually, as I recall, and we slammed down the power, slammed the left pedal in to throw ourselves out of trim so that we could get down faster.

[00:21:05.12] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my.

[00:21:05.87] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And you'd start spiraling down as fast as you could. You'd almost immediately peg the VSI, the vertical speed indicator, on 3,000 feet per minute. So we had no idea how fast we were coming out of the air. But it wasn't fast enough, as far as I was concerned. OK--

[00:21:25.60] JOE GALLOWAY: However fast it was, it wasn't enough.

[00:21:27.30] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: However fast it was. We did that and we came down. And Delta had two pads, and what the AC was going to do was he was going to shoot for the bottom pad. Because what the North Vietnamese did, and this is what I was told, that they had a pole, and they knew how fast we were coming out of the sky. So it was time and distance. And when that aircraft got to the top of the pole, they dropped the mortar rounds.

[00:21:51.98] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my.

[00:21:52.85] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And you and the mortar rounds got to the LZ at the same time.

[00:21:56.20] JOE GALLOWAY: The same time.

[00:21:56.76] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: So what happened was is we shot to the bottom and we pulled out. I remember as the co-pilot, it was my job to direct the fire. So I started out real Joe Cool, Fort Benning-style, Fort Rucker-style. OK, gunner shoot at 3 o'clock, crew chief, shoot at 1 o'clock, or whatever the things were.

[00:22:21.62] Man, it rapidly broke down to just shoot the fuck anywhere.

[00:22:27.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Anywhere

[00:22:28.31] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Because they're everywhere.

[00:22:29.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Keep the trigger down until the barrel glows.

[00:22:31.64] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: We actually pulled out-- I believe there was a North Vietnamese T-54 or T-55. I believe we clipped the antenna, that's how low. He was going to shoot to that and then try to jump up to the upper pad. Just as we were getting ready to jump up to the upper pad-- yeah, we got to the upper pad and then they started kicking the stuff out, just kicking the ammunition in the-- like you say, exactly like you said. And then all of a sudden everything went blank.

[00:23:05.69] The mortar rounds came in. And they hit. I woke up-- I came out of the daze with the scream from the RPM warning system. The fire light was on and every yellow light as well. Every red light, every yellow light was on. All of a sudden, I looked down and I'm starting to see fire coming up from below like that.

[00:23:37.91] And then either the crew chief or the gunner, I don't know which one of them, yelled out, holy shit, we're on fire back here. And I turned around like this and I looked in the back, and yep, he was right. It was all fire in the back. There were four wounded Vietnamese Marines on board. To this day, nobody knows how they got on. Evidently--

[00:24:01.41] JOE GALLOWAY: But you were still in the air.

[00:24:03.02] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, we were going--

[00:24:04.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Skipping.

[00:24:04.58] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --going across the LZ just under translational lift. So we were going about 15 knots across the LZ.

[00:24:11.42] JOE GALLOWAY: And somehow four wounded got on.

[00:24:12.47] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Somehow them guys got chucked-- got chucked on board, OK.

[00:24:16.37] JOE GALLOWAY: While you were on fire.

[00:24:18.14] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Before we were on fire they were chucked on, and then we caught on fire. Went over the edge of the LZ and I went, dear God, get me out of this. Get me out of here and I will change my life.

[00:24:34.57] JOE GALLOWAY: No, you were lying.

[00:24:37.30] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It took me 20 years, Joe. I did. It took me 20 years, but I did. I changed my life. Started at that moment to change my life for the best.

[00:24:48.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:24:49.54] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I'm a very happy person now. And it took that long and I'm still--

[00:24:57.31] JOE GALLOWAY: I'm glad that you worked at it gradually.

[00:24:59.65] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I worked at it gradually. Took my-- well, you know there's a lot of hit and-- a lot of trial and error. You hit over here, bonk.

[00:25:08.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Bonk.

[00:25:09.31] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Slap you in the head. Well, OK. So we got down to the bottom. I was on the controls with the AC. And as I reached up to turn off the fuel, a .50 round came through, caught me in the hand and also in the helmet. And just bing, bing, bang, bang.

[00:25:33.25] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, man. .50 caliber, one those .51 caliber Chinese shots.

[00:25:37.30] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was .51 caliber. 12.7s.

[00:25:38.88] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, 12.7.

[00:25:39.52] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: But it came right through the windshield, caught me in the hand, caught me--

[00:25:43.36] JOE GALLOWAY: I'm surprised you've got any fingers left.

[00:25:45.40] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It caught me right in this fleshy part. It was amazing, right down here in the fleshy part.

[00:25:50.47] JOE GALLOWAY: That and your helmet.

[00:25:50.92] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And this is gone.

[00:25:52.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, your ear.

[00:25:53.50] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Gone, gone.

[00:25:54.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Well--

[00:25:55.00] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: OK, so we managed--

[00:25:56.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Music today really sucks.

[00:25:57.22] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: We managed-- I know it does. I can get it out of this ear. We managed to get it down to what we thought was the ground, but was in reality about a 75 bamboo-- foot bamboo thicket. So we hit that and just crashed our way through that. My back is still screwed up from that. We got to the bottom and I looked and said, OK, we're not leaving them. We're taking them. Everybody take one. So I grabbed an ARVN, everybody grabbed an ARVN and we went and hid in a thicket because we could hear the North Vietnamese looking for us.

[00:26:36.94] JOE GALLOWAY: They were right on you.

[00:26:38.29] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, they were. They were on us really, really quick. Well, it was a burning airplane, easy to see. And so they were looking around. Gunner managed to hold on to his machine gun as well as carrying the ARVN. How he did it, I don't know. But he goes, do you want me to shoot them? And I went, shh. There's 10,000 of them and eight of us. Don't piss them off.

[00:27:05.17] About two or three minutes later, or I don't, a lifetime later, I'm going to say. Well, it was a lifetime getting down and then a lifetime down there. One of our own guys managed to

get down further down in the valley. So I said again, we're not leaving them. And everybody picked one up. Gunner left his machine gun this time, and just picked one up. And I was carrying my ARVN right by the back. I didn't-- none of that fancy stuff they teach you at Fort Benning. I just grabbed him by the back. He was a little guy. His arms and legs were dangling like this as we crashed through the swamp.

[00:27:42.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my.

[00:27:43.35] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And we got--

[00:27:44.14] JOE GALLOWAY: How long a run to the pick up point?

[00:27:47.91] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was a long run, I don't know.

[00:27:49.77] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:27:50.74] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I really don't know. We couldn't see them, let's put it that way, when we came out. We were going toward the sound of the engine.

[00:28:01.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:28:03.63] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Then we got on board. We were climbing up, climbing up, and I'm going, oh man, we made it. We made it. And all of a sudden he slams it on the right hand side and breaks it off like that and he said, we're being engaged by a 12.7. And I'm going, oh. But--

[00:28:18.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Not again. Not again.

[00:28:19.50] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --we managed to get out of it. That was that.

[00:28:25.05] JOE GALLOWAY: So you got out of there with the wounded ARVN--

[00:28:27.93] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: With the wounded ARVNs.

[00:28:29.04] JOE GALLOWAY: --who could magically fly into a passing helicopter door.

[00:28:33.50] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Evidently. There was a-- we're going to talk for just a second about medals. And what was interesting was, is the ARVNs won it for that. The ARVNs wanted to give us all the Cross of Gallantry for doing that. Our company commander said, well-- and how he phrased it was, you heroes get the chance to get medals all the time. I'm going to send four other guys over. And he did. And he said--

[00:29:03.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Who weren't involved at all.

[00:29:04.09] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Who weren't involved at all in it.

[00:29:05.71] JOE GALLOWAY: I'm surprised--

[00:29:06.14] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And they got their--

[00:29:07.54] JOE GALLOWAY: --he didn't send himself over.

[00:29:08.47] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, he did that for something else.

[00:29:10.38] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh.

[00:29:12.82] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And so the ARVNs were all given-- the Army and Marines were all given ARCOMs and our guys were all given Cross of Gallantry. Now 39 years later, take the clock 39 years, I received a Silver Star for that.

[00:29:31.89] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah.

[00:29:33.72] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: For leading the guys out of there.

[00:29:34.96] JOE GALLOWAY: Who put you in for that?

[00:29:36.39] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: What had happened was our unit historian-- we were at one of the unit reunions.

[00:29:41.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:29:42.42] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And they were making fun of this co-pilot. And I said-- and that's for the next mission that I'm going to tell you about. Because I wound up with a .50 caliber-- a Bell-- you know the old Bell Helicopter pedals?

[00:29:57.51] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:29:58.20] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And it has the bell on it. Well, the bottom of the bell was gone, because there was a .50 caliber round through it that I took as a souvenir. And they were laughing at this co-pilot. And the crew chief of that aircraft was in the meeting while we were all sitting, drinking beer. And I'm looking around and all of a sudden I said, well, that was me. And I said, and I'll prove it to you. At the next reunion, I'll bring the pedal.

[00:30:27.68] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:30:28.15] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And I did. And then it got into, well, you were also flying with Ed Albrecht over on Delta.

[00:30:34.70] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:30:35.33] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Right. And our unit historian would actually put that through Congress. That took 10 years to get it through Congress. But it still-- it took a long time, because my congressmen up there, who is a retired lieutenant colonel, screwed it up.

[00:30:49.67] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:30:51.11] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And then finally, I guess it was--

[00:30:54.44] JOE GALLOWAY: You did say he was a lieutenant colonel.

[00:30:56.82] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. And then it was down here that it finally got in. I got Silver Star. I was awarded the Silver Star for that. And then four days later as part of another mission with the pedal and that, all of the pilots wound up with a Distinguished Flying Cross. And all of the crews got an Air Medal with V for Valor.

[00:31:17.25] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, outstanding. I'm glad.

[00:31:20.30] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And that took a long, long time. But I'm going to tell you, it kind of put a lot of old ghosts to bed.

[00:31:30.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:31:31.28] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: By finally getting the recognition that I really thought that I deserved.

[00:31:42.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:31:42.70] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I'm going to be right up front with you.

[00:31:43.63] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Exactly.

[00:31:44.75] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: So yeah. The next day after that Delta thing, there was a-- you got a day off when you got shot down. That was our unit reward. That was nice. So I got just absolutely just shit-faced drunk and stayed that way. And I had-- that night, I had a horrible, horrible nightmare.

[00:32:06.82] JOE GALLOWAY: I bet.

[00:32:08.18] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: You know what? I guess I had-- it was so bad that I've just never really recall after that having anything that bad. I'd remember things, but it would not wake me up screaming and yelling like some guys go through. And then after that, we had a normal mission. No, that's when I went back into Laos. Right. So what the mission they put me on chalk one back into that LZ.

[00:32:36.26] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh no.

[00:32:37.38] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: As a co-pilot. Chalk one back into that LZ.

[00:32:40.64] JOE GALLOWAY: But now you had a bamboo landing zone.

[00:32:44.84] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And the-- but then we got the word as we were out by the aircraft, hold up. Hold up. Hold up. Then we found out that they had been driven off of the hill. And they were very-- and then we-- the North Vietnamese were smart. They let them out of there. They would beat up on one of the elite units and then let the elite unit--

[00:33:08.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Let them go.

[00:33:08.63] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --and let them go. And that would sow dissent back in the back. And that's what I was saying, though, that the end. At the beginning, they were very well organized. They were very disciplined. But in the end, it really, really was getting to be crazy.

[00:33:26.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:33:26.73] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And the last flight it was 23, I think it was, that I got out.

[00:33:30.32] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, in one lift?

[00:33:31.85] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: One lift. Four Americans, 23 ARVNs, no equipment, no packs. But still, 23 and that aircraft was shuddering.

[00:33:40.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Even though they're small--

[00:33:40.98] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Shuddering. Shuddering.

[00:33:41.40] JOE GALLOWAY: --but still.

[00:33:41.82] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, small. And if I recall correctly, you can pull 102% power. I think I was at 101 and a half.

[00:33:49.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:33:53.17] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And then it was very shortly thereafter it was over. Now it's interesting. The books are now coming out about Lam Son 719. They had about a 40 year break. And I've read pretty much everything. A matter of fact, I put together a nice PowerPoint demonstration-- a nice PowerPoint presentation for a military history forum that I belong to and gave that along with the warrant officer, who was our unit historian. That's the one that I sent you. The books are coming out and in one of the books, they refer to that last day at Delta and they said, yeah, and there were eight aircraft that got in, which is not correct. But they said, and the last one came out, it was shot down on fire. Hello.

[00:34:48.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Hello.

[00:34:48.78] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I was in that one. A matter of fact, in that going into Delta, we were chalk two. And chalk one went in, he went spiraling down like that. And then when we saw him start to come back out was when we decided to go in. AC looked at me-- I was a lieutenant, he was a warrant-- he looked at me and said, well, what do you think? I said, well, let's give it a shot. He seemed to have made it. What we didn't know was that his radios had been shot out. Chalk one's radios had been shot out. He was trying to warn us off--

[00:35:20.31] JOE GALLOWAY: Don't go.

[00:35:21.21] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Don't do this. Well.

[00:35:24.18] JOE GALLOWAY: And you did.

[00:35:25.02] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And we did.

[00:35:25.79] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you get out?

[00:35:27.42] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. That's when we got out-- we got knocked down on fire, or we got picked up--

[00:35:31.33] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, all of that.

[00:35:31.46] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --and all of that. He was trying to warn us off. But oh well. Still alive.

[00:35:37.68] JOE GALLOWAY: That's why they send young men to war.

[00:35:39.85] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That's correct.

[00:35:40.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. They're crazy.

[00:35:42.39] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yes. RONALD MARKIEWICZ: The only time-- well, with the Vietnamese somewhat.

[00:35:51.23] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:35:52.05] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: But the only time--

[00:35:53.28] JOE GALLOWAY: They're a separate issue.

[00:35:53.82] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: The only time I saw other than the Vietnamese was I had already gone over to the 134th. I was flying guns for the 134th, and it's a very interesting story, because they were going to do both Vietnamese and Koreans. And the Vietnamese were

wandering around and everything like that, and their sergeants were trying to beat them back into line. The Koreans came out, guy had a little placard, sat down, the squad came out--

[00:36:22.38] JOE GALLOWAY: Lined up exactly perfectly.

[00:36:22.92] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Lined up exactly perfectly, all sat down exactly perfectly. Didn't--

[00:36:27.08] JOE GALLOWAY: That's because if they did line up perfectly, they got--

[00:36:30.57] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Whacked.

[00:36:31.01] JOE GALLOWAY: --the teeth beat out of their heads.

[00:36:32.09] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Absolutely. I spent-- I had my tour in Korea as well. Oh, yeah. It was tough.

[00:36:37.50] JOE GALLOWAY: I saw that.

[00:36:37.74] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They were tough guys.

[00:36:38.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:36:39.09] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They were tough guys.

[00:36:40.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. And the ARVN would be off stealing chickens.

[00:36:45.42] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Right. But yeah, that was the one time that I saw other than the ARVNs. No, I had nothing with the Aussies, or the Thais, or anybody else.

[00:36:55.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Now tell me about your opinion of the ARVN?

[00:36:59.61] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: 2nd ARVN Division was pretty good.

[00:37:01.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:37:02.01] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I thought that they were quite good. Matter of fact, I had asked-- because I was an infantry officer, I asked if I could stay with the 2nd ARVN as an adviser when I went to leave. I trusted them. I did. I thought that they were quite good. And the 1st ARVN and 2nd ARVN were good divisions.

[00:37:23.32] And what I was told by the chief adviser for the 2nd Division is, well, no. I can't quite do that because we're full. But there's a new division forming up and we can-- I'm sure we can get you into that. It's the 3rd Division. And I said, well, where is it? They said, well, it's going to be up on the DMZ. It's going to relieve the 1st Division. I said, I think I'm going home.

[00:37:49.31] JOE GALLOWAY: I'm going to go home. Yeah.

[00:37:50.86] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That's the one that left their advisers.

[00:37:53.79] JOE GALLOWAY: Now tell me about-- they shut down Lam Son 719 and they send you back down to Tuy Hoa?

[00:38:00.73] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No, back-- I went to Chu Lai. I was with the 23rd Division, the Americal Division.

[00:38:05.14] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh dear god.

[00:38:06.61] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Which was actually-- we were a very good unit. 71st was a very good unit.

[00:38:13.60] JOE GALLOWAY: That's the aviators.

[00:38:14.71] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That's the aviation.

[00:38:15.53] JOE GALLOWAY: But you're hauling these other people around.

[00:38:18.34] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And I never saw any problems with the grunts.
RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Bad mission. Yeah. They didn't tell us that the North Vietnamese had pushed the 2nd ARVN Division out of a series of bunkers just to the west-- just to the east of Firebase Center, down just south of the Hiep Duc Valley.

[00:38:48.62] And we flew in there to cover a medevac. And they had set up a W-shaped ambush. And in the morning, they just ripped the tail of the lead. I was the wingman. And they ripped my aircraft fire team lead's tail almost off with a .50 cal. Huge, gaping holes in that tail. And a couple of them were right next to the bolts that hold the tail on.

[00:39:25.46] In the afternoon, they got me. He was trying-- we were trying to-- still trying to get a medevac-- another medevac in. It was an Australian adviser that they were trying to get out. The medevac was trying to get an Aussie out. And Doug came around like that and I followed him around like that, and they let him through.

[00:39:47.00] And next thing I saw was all kinds of tracers coming up, and I told him, I said, hey, Doug, I'm taking fire. And then the whole world kind of turned to doo-doo real quick. I said, we're taking hits. Blew the greenhouse out from the co-pilot. Just missed his head. Blew the-- one round went up and hit something, but it came-- the round kind of semi exploded, because next thing I hear is the crew chief going, the gunner's been hit, the gunner's been hit. And he's got this huge casing, you know the steel jacket around the lead?

[00:40:30.16] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:40:30.97] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And that's hanging out of his back-- into his back. So I just had him pull it out, take the-- put the plastic in, wrap him up and everything like that. Meanwhile we--

[00:40:42.08] JOE GALLOWAY: It had gone through?

[00:40:42.62] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No. It had gone into his lung in the back, but it didn't go through. It was just the casing. The lead, I don't know, went somewhere else.

[00:40:49.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Right.

[00:40:49.73] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: We had taken the hit in the Jesus nut up in the thing and it looked like a BB gun on a window. Just a little hole, but all blown out on the inside. We started bouncing up and down, so I had to put it down.

[00:41:05.51] JOE GALLOWAY: You put it down where you're being shot at?

[00:41:08.60] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I got it away from where we were being shot. I managed to get a little bit further to the east.

[00:41:13.91] JOE GALLOWAY: Is there anybody around to cover you?

[00:41:16.49] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No. They came and got us right away, though. They came and got us right away. So they got him out and got him in there, and, yeah. It was the right medical attention in that-- you take the plastic bag, you know when you tear open the thing.

[00:41:36.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:41:36.81] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That's what you slap up there.

[00:41:38.25] JOE GALLOWAY: That's it.

[00:41:38.76] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: To stop the sucking.

[00:41:39.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Keep sucking-- stop the sucking. Keep the guy alive.

[00:41:42.20] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Amazing how that comes back.

[00:41:43.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:41:45.00] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I'll give you an interesting story. This one's really weird. Another real weird one. I was on 20 minute standby one day. We had-- you'd fly, escort, or you had five minute standby for emergency and 20 minute standby to relieve the five minute team when they got sent out. I'm on 20 minute standby one day and all of a sudden a young Spec 4 comes in. Captain Markiewicz, Captain Markiewicz, go get in an aircraft, come up on this frequency, go up to about 10,000 feet or however high you can go.

[00:42:20.35] Well, yeah? And? OK. Just-- that's your instructions. So I did. I climbed on up. I went alone. I didn't bother taking my copilot or anything. Climbed up about 8,000, 9,000 feet. And listening, listening, listening, listening, listening. Nothing. So I came back down, went to operations and said, OK, guys, what's going on? What's all this about?

[00:42:45.16] What had happened was is I-- I studied Russian. My minor in college was Russian. At that time, it wasn't that long since, so I could still speak it, I could still understand it. I had three years of it in college. And they had picked up somebody speaking in a Slavic language on the radios, on the FM. On the short range FM radio.

[00:43:09.22] Well, we saw a guy-- we were flying along one time real low level in one of those villages out by Hiep Duc, and the crew chief in the other aircraft was almost as big as I am. We saw this guy who-- the aircraft commander put it down-- a fire team lead put it down. This guy goes out and the guy that we saw, if you married it up, was bigger than my crew chief. We figure he was Chinese.

[00:43:38.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:43:39.67] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: But the thing on the Russian, I never did--

[00:43:42.64] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't hear it?

[00:43:43.54] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Didn't hear it. I was listening for a Slavic language, I was told. That's why I was picked.

[00:43:48.61] JOE GALLOWAY: Amazing.

[00:43:51.10] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, it was kind of strange war.

[00:43:53.20] JOE GALLOWAY: Strange stuff happened in that war.

[00:43:54.60] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yep. I had contact with my parents. The mail went good to my parents. For some reason or another, the mail never got from my wife to me for about three and a half months. And I was writing back to her saying, hey, how come you're not writing? And one day I got a mail dump of about three and a half months worth of mail. Well, in that, the relationship got pretty badly poisoned.

[00:44:33.48] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:44:34.89] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: You know.

[00:44:35.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:44:35.70] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And needless to say, when I did get home, she was nowhere to be found.

[00:44:39.87] JOE GALLOWAY: She wasn't to be found.

[00:44:41.46] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. So that was something that wasn't good. That, I just can't justify under any circumstances.

[00:44:50.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:44:51.83] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Especially when I was getting it from my folks. So somebody--

[00:44:55.14] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:44:55.77] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: But I got a stack of mail one day about that big.

[00:45:05.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Did she write them all on one day, or--

[00:45:06.95] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No.

[00:45:07.31] JOE GALLOWAY: No?

[00:45:07.46] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No, no, no. These are all--

[00:45:08.90] JOE GALLOWAY: She had been writing all along.

[00:45:09.71] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Writing them all along.

[00:45:10.97] JOE GALLOWAY: The Army.

[00:45:12.35] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Screwed it up.

[00:45:13.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Screwed it up. I'm told that occasionally they do.

[00:45:16.88] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yes, they do. So that was that. I did get a MARS call in, OK? And I got a MARS call in and I got my father and I told him what had happened, that I got knocked down over in Laos and that-- and this was right afterwards. When I got back, he and I were talking one day and he said, when you got shot down, he says, my mother called me the night before and said, something bad has happened to Ron. But he's alive. She said something very bad has happened to him, but he's alive.

[00:46:05.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Now you're talking 1968. Back home things are--

[00:46:10.39] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Crazy.

[00:46:10.75] JOE GALLOWAY: --antiwar demonstrations, and assassinations, and riots in the streets of Detroit, and other places like Washington, DC. Any of that social tension or turmoil come over to where you were?

[00:46:26.95] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: OK, let me tell you. OK, down in Tuy Hoa-- so in September-- late September, early October the Firebirds and the Rattlers stood down. OK, so I had about 90 days left to go. And so I was going to another unit. I didn't fall within the magic 60 days. So I was going to another unit. Wound up-- here I am in Tuy Hoa, I get sent to the 1st Aviation Brigade, and here I am back in Tuy Hoa. So I said, gee whiz, let me see if I can stay here and fly with the 134th. And I did. I flew with the 134th. And it was interesting. It was night and day, absolutely night and day.

[00:47:09.13] I remember on one of the first missions that I flew with the 134th-- gunship missions I flew with 134th, as we took off and that, I'm waiting for the crew chief to close my armor plate. And I'm waiting, and I'm waiting, and I'm waiting. And I hear-- so it didn't happen. I looked around and I said, when we take off, would you please close my armor plate? And he muttered something about, oh, I Corps heroes. And I said, son, see me when we're done.

[00:47:49.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:47:50.70] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: And I said, don't you ever pull that shit again. Don't you ever pull that shit again. I'm telling you as a commissioned officer in the United States Army that you will close my armor plate when we take off. Do you understand me? And there was just some laxness down there. Well, there was the S & S battalion, and just before I got there, there had been major riots at Tuy Hoa. And some of the crew chiefs, these guys would just-- and it was racial. It was a real racial thing. You remember the Dap?

[00:48:32.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:48:33.12] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: You remember the Dap.

[00:48:34.13] JOE GALLOWAY: Stand there for 15 minutes.

[00:48:35.24] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yep. 15 minutes. You know, da-da-da-dada-da-da. And so what we would do is two officers and a driver would patrol until 1 o'clock-- yeah, about 1 o'clock in the morning. If you had to fly the next day, you had to fly the next day. Tough shit. And--

[00:48:54.03] JOE GALLOWAY: You were patrolling your AO there?

[00:48:56.55] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Patrolling our AO, and especially at where the two--

[00:49:00.84] JOE GALLOWAY: Met.

[00:49:01.74] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: The two met in that area.

[00:49:03.79] JOE GALLOWAY: You needed, obviously, a big resupply of concertina wire to put between you.

[00:49:09.78] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, we had-- we were given .45s-- we used-- no. No, no, no. I take that back. We had pistols. We used our .38s. We were authorized to use the .38, if necessary. We carried them. And that was-- that whole experience of the 134th, they've called me a few times and said, hey, would you like to come to one of our reunions? I said, don't call us, we'll call you.

[00:49:37.19] I mean, that was not a pleasant experience. That company was GS, general support of the whole II Corps, whereas when the 71st was in direct support of the 196th. And then we would-- then occasionally, as necessary, pull GS missions. But you got with a unit, and you knew the unit, you knew who was good. You know where things were bad. You got to know everything. But in the GS, and they didn't fly that much, and then you had all of these racial issues, and horrible drug issues. Horrible, horrible drug issues.

[00:50:24.01] We had one drug issue when I was with the 71st. My crew chief, he nodded out on me on heroin. I just said, hey, you're going to jail, son. And he did. We had-- and of course he nodded-- the mission he nodded out on, that was the one we had a misfire on the rockets. And luckily it was on the door gunner's side, so he could pull the lanyard and get rid of the rocket pod. Because I don't know what would have happened if it'd been on his side. But we went back and said, you know--

[00:51:00.18] JOE GALLOWAY: This guy goes.

[00:51:01.53] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --have him tested. We had him tested and he was court-martialed. He spent his time at LBJ. But routinely, drugs weren't that bad in the unit. The crews, they'd smoke some grass. But hard drugs, no.

[00:51:23.61] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:51:24.66] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It was only that one dude. Drinking was another story.

[00:51:29.21] JOE GALLOWAY: That's another story.

[00:51:30.19] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That was another story. We had a very interesting system in the 71st, a morale system, where twice a month we would have a party. We had a system where the pilots, if you screwed up and another pilot caught you screwing up, he would call \$10 or \$20, and it would all go into a kitty. In the middle of the month, it was booze only and pilots only.

[00:51:57.58] At the end of the month when the crews were running out of money, it was booze, we'd go up to Cu Re island and get lobsters. We'd go to the mess Hall and get steaks and hire the Nugyns to come down and cook the steaks and that. And that-- and we would just-- the pilots and crews would just eat, drink until-- that was it, until you kind of passed out and had to crawl to work the next day.

[00:52:25.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my. Oh my.

[00:52:27.55] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: But it worked. It was a good morale-- it was a really, really good morale effect. RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Well, needless to say I didn't have a wife to go to. And I'm from Massachusetts, and I got treated like dog shit.

[00:52:45.23] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about that. You land where? San Francisco?

[00:52:47.57] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Boston.

[00:52:47.72]

[00:52:48.73] San Francisco and-- No, I landed at McChord.

[00:52:53.19] JOE GALLOWAY: McChord.

[00:52:53.95] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: McChord.

[00:52:56.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Got to change civilian airlines.

[00:52:59.33] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. And--

[00:53:01.22] JOE GALLOWAY: That was a pretty tough airport to walk through in uniform.

[00:53:04.73] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, it was. And I didn't have any civilian clothes. So I had to go uniformed the whole way. And then I had to stop in Chicago. I was bombed by the time I left McChord. Got to Chicago, and then Chicago to Boston. Got to Boston at about 3:00 in the morning and just got the evil eye.

[00:53:27.07] And-- because I had the short hair and everything like that. I actually-- they gave you 30 days of leave? I left after about 10, 12. One day I was packing my clothes and my dad walked into the bedroom and said, where are you going? I said, I'm going to my next duty station down at Fort Stewart, which was right outside of Savannah. I said, hey, look. I'll get treated better there than I get treated here. I'll get treated better in the South than I get treated up here. I got treated really badly.

[00:53:58.33] JOE GALLOWAY: So you gave up your leave and went to--

[00:54:02.08] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Went to sign in. Yeah.

[00:54:03.11] JOE GALLOWAY: Fort Stewart.

[00:54:03.82] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah.

[00:54:04.69] JOE GALLOWAY: Now did you do a whole lifer tour, retire out of--

[00:54:09.61] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, I retired as a major.

[00:54:10.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah? You did the 20?

[00:54:13.69] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: 20 years and 11 days.

[00:54:15.31] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah. Did you have any difficulty readjusting to life after combat?

[00:54:25.18] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah, I did. I was a wild child.

[00:54:29.20] JOE GALLOWAY: I'm shocked.

[00:54:31.09] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Shocked. I'm shocked. Very interesting, I was with my daughter this weekend down in Portsmouth area. And she looked at me and she said, Daddy, she says, I don't know anything about you before I was born. She said, would you do an autobiography for me? And I said--

[00:54:48.67] JOE GALLOWAY: No.

[00:54:49.71] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No, I didn't say no. I said, if I do-- I said, and I'm not saying that I will, I said, because I got some things in there that you're not going to like. And I said, you're not going to open it until after I die. I said, if I do, because oh man. I went through some-- I went through some women, and-- I never really got-- I never got into drugs. I never got into the drug scene, but I mean, I liked to drink and party. I still like to drink and party, but now it's reasonable.

[00:55:27.71] JOE GALLOWAY: It hurts too much when you're old as we are.

[00:55:30.35] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I know. Yeah, I know. But I did some damage.

[00:55:35.45] JOE GALLOWAY: You just can't afford to get commode-hugging drunk anymore.

[00:55:39.89] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: We-- yeah. And those billion brain cells don't come back.

[00:55:44.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, they don't. They don't and we're running short.

[00:55:46.94] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yes. So yeah, I had-- a matter of fact, and it's only within the last four or five years that I've had the talk with myself that yeah, I really did have the post-traumatic stress. I said, no--

[00:56:05.22] JOE GALLOWAY: How could you not?

[00:56:06.51] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. And really. But it's not--

[00:56:10.35] JOE GALLOWAY: When the fire--

[00:56:10.89] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: But Joe--

[00:56:11.78] - JOE GALLOWAY: -is melting your boot laces.

[00:56:13.89] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: But-- yeah. Right. It's not what you have, Joe. It's what you make of it. And I made a good life. Even with all the problems and that. And like I said, I--

[00:56:28.02] JOE GALLOWAY: It's how you fight it.

[00:56:29.97] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I got-- always had-- I got a very, very close relationship with God. I'm not a religious fanatic in any way, and I'm very-- believe in science. I was a project manager for large commercial projects and that. You got to use the brainpower and all that.

[00:56:53.22] But religion, to me, deals with the soul and the smoothness of your life on that side, and that has been helpful. I don't force it on anybody else. I just-- this is just between me and my God. And it's been a good thing for me. And that was initially sparked by that spark that lit that airplane up.

[00:57:20.12] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans coming home from combat today?

[00:57:33.98] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Sure. Of course. Of course. And I-- the first thing is every Desert Storm veteran I see, I thank him. Because he made this country accept veterans again. I was talking to a-- I was at an air show down in Virginia-- down in the Virginia Beach area. I love antique military aircraft. They had a great show. This guy was a ROTC instructor down at Hampton College and we got talking. And that's the first thing I do, is just-- any Desert Storm veteran. They made it acceptable for us.

[00:58:23.72] JOE GALLOWAY: They got the welcome because America felt guilty about what they did to you.

[00:58:31.35] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They got the welcome because they did a damn good job.

[00:58:33.69] JOE GALLOWAY: They did a good job.

[00:58:34.77] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: They did a great job.

[00:58:36.02] JOE GALLOWAY: But they got 10 times the welcome, 100 times the welcome.

[00:58:40.27] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That's fine. That's fine. I never take away.

[00:58:42.75] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:58:43.10] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I don't like to take away from things. And the guys today, they're going through the same thing. We were-- I converted to Judaism along the way. And it's much more in line with my view of the world than Christianity is. And we were watching a movie over at a reform temple, my wife and I, and it was very interesting, because it was showing what the guys were going through at one of the checkpoints. And the moral dilemmas that they had to go through dealing with allowing people in and that. I had a moral dilemma. We were on-- I said that there were two times that I really had to have a moral decision.

[00:59:34.28] One of them was we were on five minute standby at Quang Ngai. And these kids decided that they were going to come through the minefield. You know the path through the mine fields, right? And they kept coming up. And I'm telling them, didi, didi, didi. Get out of here, get out of here, I don't want you near the aircraft. Because somebody had chucked a hand grenade near one of the aircraft recently. And I'm telling them, didi, didi. Finally, it got to the point I looked at my gunner, and I said, shoot over their heads.

[01:00:02.74] For me to say, take your machine gun and shoot over a child's head was-- that's a moral dilemma. That's a severe moral dilemma. I didn't want to do that. It was the right decision and I'll defend it to the day that I die. But still to be put in that box. Life, I know, is a matter of choosing the best of bad decisions. But still, that was one of the other moral decisions that I had.

[01:00:35.27] JOE GALLOWAY: What do you think the Vietnam War meant to you and your generation?

[01:00:41.47] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: There's a schism that's never been healed. And we see it now. The schism between the guys who were like me, who accepted and went and did what the country asked them to do and the guys who went into academia, government, law, not just Canada, but in those--0 and where they're very, very firmly ensconced now. And especially in academia. That's where the real radical left got their foothold in there.

[01:01:15.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. But they're all old and retired now.

[01:01:18.64] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: No, but they're teaching their clones. They've got clones. You ought to-- I was listening to some college classes the other day, what they're teaching and that. It's nuts. It's just absolute insanity. And they're producing their own. And that's what we're not doing, because I was teaching. I used to teach. I used to teach management. I've got a master's degree in management and one in human relations. I used to teach in college, and I got fired because I wasn't-- well--

[01:01:49.33] JOE GALLOWAY: You wasn't one of the members of the club.

[01:01:51.43] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: --I wasn't one of the members of the club. And that's what's happened. I still see that happening now. I can work-- I've been center right all my life with the emphasis on the word center. And I can work with anybody, center left, center center. I can't work with the wingnuts in the lunarsphere on both sides, far-far-far right, far-far-far left. I

have real difficulty with those positions. And that's why I'm so glad to see Mr. Trump, because he is in that middle. He wants to get things done, and that's kind of the way my life has been.

[01:02:32.45] But it has set things up where this country is still pulling itself apart. These guys-- and these old guys that you're talking about, they're trying to relive their glory days of getting Nixon, and stopping the war, and all of that, and they're teaching this stuff. Revolution is crazy.

[01:02:53.63] When I was in college, I had the opportunity to meet a gentleman by the name of Kerensky. Kerensky was the prime minister of Russia between the overthrow of the tsar and his overthrow by Lenin. And I asked him the question, I said, would you do it the same way over again? Keep them in the war, being Western Democratic and that. He said absolutely not. I'd run these guys down and have my secret police kill them.

[01:03:21.51] We've got to-- that schism has never been healed. It was healing until fairly recently, and I think it's really opened up greatly. And that's where I see the craziness going on now. That's just my opinion.

[01:03:48.24] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today?

[01:03:53.88] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Depends upon who you're talking to. If you're talking to guys like me, we recognize those guys who did like they did in the Second World War, and in Korea, in the First World War, where you were asked to go by the country and you went. Civil War all the way back. If you're talking to some left-wing loon, we're evil. We're the personification of evil. And if you're talking to an academic-- my wife's brother is one of the left-wing loons, and boy, we get some interesting conversations.

[01:04:33.63] JOE GALLOWAY: I bet.

[01:04:34.29] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Yeah. Like I say, it depends.

[01:04:39.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Your wife only put out the plastic knives?

[01:04:43.80] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: What's funny about my wife was she was very, very much on the left until she met me. And I never propagandized her or anything like that, but I showed her a good way of life. RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I've read the names of guys that I know who were killed.

[01:05:07.13] JOE GALLOWAY: Tough. Tough.

[01:05:07.84] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: It's tough.

[01:05:13.54] JOE GALLOWAY: And you've heard about the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration.

[01:05:17.88] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Absolutely.

[01:05:18.31] JOE GALLOWAY: You're part of it today.

[01:05:19.35] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I know.

[01:05:19.99] JOE GALLOWAY: What do you think about that?

[01:05:21.52] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I think it's a really good thing. And I appreciate being part of it, I really do. I want to thank you, the whole group here for allowing me to be part of it and to tell my story.

[01:05:38.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you received your Vietnam veterans lapel pin?

[01:05:45.44] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I probably have one somewhere, but I'd like another one.

[01:05:48.26] JOE GALLOWAY: You'd know. Let's see. Could you get one, Devon?

[01:05:52.36] CREW: Right here.

[01:05:53.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Got one?

[01:05:54.28] CREW: Got one right here.

[01:05:55.34] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I would be honored for you to pin it on.

[01:05:57.35] JOE GALLOWAY: I'm going to do that. I'm going to do that right now.

[01:06:00.65] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: So I can prove to my wife that you were doing the interview.

[01:06:04.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. There we go. When my dad and his brothers came home from World War II, they wore what they called the Ruptured Duck.

[01:06:14.48] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Uh-huh.

[01:06:15.08] JOE GALLOWAY: And this is the ruptured duck for Vietnam.

[01:06:18.80] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Oh, interesting.

[01:06:19.49] JOE GALLOWAY: And on the back--

[01:06:20.41] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: That's interesting.

[01:06:20.96] JOE GALLOWAY: --it says, a grateful nation thanks and honors you.

[01:06:26.18] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: I appreciate that.

[01:06:28.46] JOE GALLOWAY: And I'm going to stick it on your lapel here and try not to make it a blood stick. How's that?

[01:06:35.18] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: You mean like my airborne wings?

[01:06:36.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Crunch.

[01:06:37.92] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Crunch.

[01:06:40.04] JOE GALLOWAY: We got it. You're fixed.

[01:06:42.71] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Thanks, Joe.

[01:06:43.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Thank you.

[01:06:43.67] RONALD MARKIEWICZ: Appreciate it. I really do.