

## McKay, John USMC

[00:00:17.72] JOHN MCKAY: I was born in Denver, Colorado. So, mother, father, two brothers. My father served in World War II as a Seabee. My two brothers served in the Marine Corps. My other brother was also very badly wounded. And my youngest brother was a Cobra pilot.

[00:00:43.12] JOHN MCKAY: It's a long story. So I enlisted to get out of the house. Mark Twain's old adage that I was absolutely amazed at my father's stupidity when I was 17. When I returned four years later, how much he had learned. So I enlisted in the Marine Corps. I actually tricked my parents into signing the consent.

[00:01:04.78] And I enlisted to get away from home. And I enlisted with the intention of going to the Naval Academy. So I spent almost three years enlisted, participated in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. In fact, deployed for that crisis. And came back and got picked up for the Naval Academy.

[00:01:27.56] JOE GALLOWAY: Right, after three years as an enlisted man.

[00:01:30.14] JOHN MCKAY: I was-- I enlisted in January of 1962, and I got picked up in August of 1964. And went to NAPS and-- Naval Academy Preparatory School. And then went on to the Academy and graduated in '68.

[00:01:46.94] JOE GALLOWAY: '68. You were commissioned at that point?

[00:01:49.67] JOHN MCKAY: Yes, sir.

[00:01:56.71] JOHN MCKAY: The Marine Corps, as you will recall, was losing a lot of lieutenants. And Basic School at Quantico had been cut from six to five months. We trained on Saturdays. Definite orientation towards guerrilla warfare, Vietnam. All of our instructors were veterans. Most of them have been wounded.

[00:02:21.48] But the emphasis was on guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency. At the tactical level, we're not talking about political, economic, hearts and minds, and all that sort of thing. But it was-- I thought it was good training, but no matter how good the training it's never enough, so-

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[00:02:42.01] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. When were you deployed?

[00:02:53.85] JOHN MCKAY: The first time I was 23.

[00:02:56.04] JOE GALLOWAY: A lieutenant?

[00:02:57.24] JOHN MCKAY: No, I was a midshipman. I was on a special program.

[00:03:00.51] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah.

[00:03:01.47] JOHN MCKAY: There was 200 of us from the Academy that were hand-selected to spend the summer supposedly on ships. I was on the USS *Ault*, DD-698. The commanding officer, Commander Brady, very early discerned I was not going in the Navy.

[00:03:21.85] And he says I'm going to break policy, and I'm going to break regulations, I'm going to put you ashore. So in late June of 1967, I went ashore. I worked with a Combined Action Platoon, Marine platoons, in northern I Corps. And then later in July, about the third week of July, I got on the Swift boats, and I worked Operation Market Garden from--

[00:03:48.73] JOE GALLOWAY: As a midshipman?

[00:03:49.72] JOHN MCKAY: As a midshipman.

[00:03:50.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Still in the Academy?

[00:03:51.37] JOHN MCKAY: Still in the Academy.

[00:03:52.23] JOE GALLOWAY: Wow.

[00:03:53.05] JOHN MCKAY: It was a special program. There was 200 of us. I went back to Vietnam in December of 1968. I mean, there was no surprise. I mean, they were oriental, obviously, instead of Latinos. The smells, the sights, not unfamiliar. The chaos was. But-- and, of course, the big joke going into Da Nang, you had the kids coming out that looked like they were a hundred years old. And we were all in new uniforms and probably looked about three years old.

[00:04:32.40] But yeah, I mean. I was apprehensive. I was extremely curious. I wasn't scared. I didn't know enough to get scared yet. And I was looking forward to it. But as will come out I think later on-- at least I hope it does-- I was very opposed to the war.

[00:04:53.37] By that time, my brother had been wounded twice. And it wasn't because he was wounded. I just-- I had an opposition to the war. I'd written in my senior year at the Academy, my last semester, I wrote a paper, *Why We Shouldn't Be in Vietnam*. And I think the only thing that kept me from getting a lot of guff was the fact I was going in the Marine Corps, so--

[00:05:17.55] The objection was that we were fighting the wrong war. The just war concept didn't come until later. It was, we were just in the wrong place. We called the shots wrong. And I had come to disbelieve in the myth of monolithic communism. I felt that there was a very strong split between the Soviet Union and China that had been occasioned in part by the Korean War.

[00:05:49.18] And the other thing that I really, really objected to, and this came out when I was there in 1967, was we didn't have anybody over there who knew what the hell was going on. I mean, in the sense that you had people that could speak the language, were attuned to the culture, had a good grasp of what the history of the country was, and what we're really involved in.

[00:06:13.78] And it seemed to be this bigger anti-Communist-- if we don't stop this country from falling, the domino theory was going to go into effect. That's all been disproven. And I mean, we could spend all day why I was opposed to the war, but I was against it.

[00:06:35.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:06:42.84] JOHN MCKAY: Within three days I was-- I got fired on in the helicopter going out to my command. The night I joined my platoon in Hotel Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, we got probed. We didn't get hit. I didn't know any better. I lost two men that night. That was--

[00:07:07.11] JOE GALLOWAY: That's your first 24 hours on the ground.

[00:07:10.65] JOHN MCKAY: That's first 72 hours. We were in Da Nang. We had an orientation, which was nothing. But 72 hours from arriving at Da Nang, I was under fire. We were on Operation TAYLOR COMMON and MEADE RIVER had just finished up. And we were in the jungles west of An Hoa, of the An Hoa basin above the Song Thu Bon river.

[00:07:40.79] JOHN MCKAY: Hell. I am not being dramatic here. We would run patrols-- in the jungle it was usually platoon-sized patrols, get back behind the rice paddies, company-sized-- but every time you left the wire, I took casualties. And very early on, I think before 1969 even began, my prayer was don't let anybody die.

[00:08:13.26] And it was not so much booby traps because we were going against NVA. But it was the sniping-- ambushes, I only fortunately got caught in a couple of ambushes. But it was the sniping, the night probing. And you would-- I mean, you just didn't sleep because of the activity around you. And we'd killed enough. We knew they were NVA units. They were good.

[00:08:45.84] And it was just that incessant-- you're going to lose the wire, maybe you'd have somebody wounded that you could bring back, maybe you had to go through the drill of lowering the Neil Robertson because somebody got shot in the spine. I mean, it was that type of pressure.

[00:09:06.56] The platoons rotated. We didn't do it seven days a week. But I think the average platoon, because of our strength, which was way below T/O, we were running-- four days out of seven we were running patrols. And if you counted night actions, listening posts, outposts, yeah, it was seven days a week. Some days just weren't as busy as others.

[00:09:31.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Then when you were back, you were on guard duty,

[00:09:35.03] JOHN MCKAY: You had listening posts, and you had OPs. And they had to be manned. And if the other platoon or platoons were gone, you had it, then you had company perimeter.

[00:09:46.81] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your living conditions like?

[00:09:49.66] JOHN MCKAY: Primitive. I mean, we get there in December, January-- monsoons. We were sleeping in the mud. We were sleeping in the water all the time, and we were always wet. And I remember when we went out the second time, we did go back to An Hoa for three days. That was the only break I ever had.

[00:10:14.38] But when we went out the second time, we went for almost five weeks with no clothes. I mean, the heels and soles on our boots were coming all off, uniforms were tatters, and you had all the-- we were back in the rice paddies by then, so you didn't have all the scratches and stuff that got infected, but you had infected feet, you had immersion foot. I mean, it was primitive.

[00:10:41.23] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:10:46.94] JOHN MCKAY: Very little. We worked twice with a couple of ARVN units that I was not impressed with. We linked up once with the Australians, and that was a fluke, really. I liked them a lot. We worked with an element of the White Horse Division from Korea, in fact, right before I lost my eye. And normal stuff that Soldiers do, trade C-rations, and stuff like that. But no, I had no real interaction.

[00:11:18.93] JOE GALLOWAY: No, not--

[00:11:19.84] JOHN MCKAY: No. I mean, you'd go into villages. And I was very, very sensitive about atrocities, war atrocities.

[00:11:30.66] JOHN MCKAY: Outstanding, outstanding. I mean, I'm still in touch with my first company commander. Actually, I'm in touch with all three of my company commanders. I'm in touch with a lot of the enlisted men of my platoon. Hotel 2/5 has a yearly reunion. And Ron Drez, the first company commander, he always shows up. Bill Fite, and-- the other fellow's name-- Charlie McDonnell, they've never showed up. There's a lot of reasons for that.

[00:12:06.31] And yeah, we get together once a year. We get together this year in Nashville, so-- I joined the platoon. The-- excuse the language, shits and grins-- was taking years. They hadn't had an officer since Hue City. And I put a stop to that.

[00:12:28.64] I knew marijuana use was going on. And what do you do when your best machine gunner is his best when he's high? I mean, kid from San Francisco, Woody Woodson, and the best machine gunner I've ever seen, but he was high all the time.

[00:12:47.17] JOE GALLOWAY: High all the time.

[00:12:49.40] JOHN MCKAY: I mean, really, I was blessed in the sense that we weren't in civilian population. So I didn't have to worry about rape. Didn't have to worry about VD. But there was no-- I mean, we were staying alive.

[00:13:08.83] And I had-- my brother, as I told you, had been in Vietnam. I'd get periodic care packages, and they'd pack the whiskey in baby bottles, so they couldn't get them on the X-ray or

the scanners. And when those things came in once every five weeks or something, that was recreation. We'd have-- I'd bring the troops in, watch the consumption, and every now and then we'd get a beer pack, but--

[00:13:38.25] JOE GALLOWAY: And the hot beers per man.

[00:13:39.75] JOHN MCKAY: And hot beers, two per man, that was it.

[00:13:43.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Good old Pabst Blue Ribbon.

[00:13:44.68] JOHN MCKAY: Pabst, or Old Milwaukee. Something that I don't I think that-- I think it eludes most civilians, and it eludes some military people, in an environment like that it is incumbent upon the officer to gain the respect of his men. And part of that respect is comprised of the officer knows what he's doing, and he's going to do everything he can to keep us alive. That doesn't happen by flipping a switch.

[00:14:22.40] That doesn't happen from day one to day two. it's a process. And I think because of the way I was brought up, I was probably older than my years, I was able to do that. And I think that's one of the reasons these men, we still get together today because I established and maintained that respect and admiration.

[00:14:50.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Three years of prior service as an enlisted man help you in that?

[00:14:55.50] JOHN MCKAY: Oh, well, I mean, certainly in the ethos and the institutional culture of the Marine Corps, absolutely. But having grown up in Latin America. And my father was very much a product of the Depression. And he was chief engineer of a very, very big American copper mining company in Peru and basically, number three man. And the company had its own railroads.

[00:15:25.13] And from age 8, he put me to work on the shops in the railroad, no pay. And I always thought he was a son of a bitch. And I look back now. And he was a smart man. I mean, that's where I learned Spanish.

[00:15:44.39] Eight, nine years old, one of the big things -- and even today, in Peru, homosexuality is pretty rampant in the Andes and with the Indians. And I'm, say what? And these are things that you don't learn out of textbooks.

[00:16:03.80] And by 11 years old, he had me working on the summer. The company also had large, large haciendas where they grew sheep or raised sheep to sell to the miners and to the workers. And I went to work on the haciendas at age nine in the summers.

[00:16:23.39] And I was on horseback the whole time. And I was living with Indians. I learned Quechua. And without going into details, I learned about life real quick. Now, I think I was 11 when I saw a guy kill another guy. And the whole atmosphere was, jeez, well, this happens.

[00:16:48.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah?

[00:16:48.33] JOHN MCKAY: And everybody went on with their life. And I'm going, Holy cow. [LAUGHS]

[00:16:58.54] JOHN MCKAY: I missed Hue City by a couple of months. I was nothing in there. MEADE RIVER was bad. TAYLOR COMMON wasn't too bad. MUSKOGEE MEADOWS, which followed TAYLOR COMMON, not written up much. Marine Corps history as it is, but it was up in Arizona Territory, the area that Jim Webb wrote about in Fields of Fire. And that's where I got both my Purple Hearts, and--

[00:17:27.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Bad country.

[00:17:29.51] JOHN MCKAY: That was real bad country. And again, it was all NVA units. I mean, I think I ran into Viet Cong a couple of times, but I'll say, like Kipling did with Gunga Din, I'll take my hat off to you. These guys were good. And I'm very anxious to go back. I've got a tremendous amount of respect for the Vietnamese.

[00:17:59.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Got plans?

[00:18:01.25] JOHN MCKAY: My brother's been back. And yes, I don't have plans yet, but I am going to go back. And I very much, like I said, I've got a great admiration for the people. I like the people. And I respect them.

[00:18:23.87] JOHN MCKAY: I'll get emotional here. This was shortly after we returned to the rice paddies, so it would probably have been about January of '69. Not sure where they were coming from. But they were Air Force F-4s, and they had not been able to jettison all their napalm. And they were coming back from Laos, I think. And one of those canisters fell on my platoon.

[00:18:56.62] JOE GALLOWAY: How many did you lose?

[00:18:57.97] JOHN MCKAY: 14.

[00:18:58.99] JOE GALLOWAY: 14 men? Killed?

[00:19:01.92] JOHN MCKAY: Yes.

[00:19:03.18] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my God.

[00:19:05.38] JOHN MCKAY: And to this day, I still smell burning flesh.

[00:19:12.73] JOE GALLOWAY: I know what--

[00:19:14.17] JOHN MCKAY: It's bad.

[00:19:14.66] JOE GALLOWAY: --you're talking about. It's bad.

[00:19:16.60] JOHN MCKAY: Everything melts.

[00:19:18.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. And 14 must have been half of your platoon?

[00:19:25.88] JOHN MCKAY: It was a little more than that. I was running at 29 at the time with guns attached. And they don't die right away.

[00:19:39.49] JOE GALLOWAY: No.

[00:19:42.10] JOHN MCKAY: So that's probably one of my most vivid memories.

[00:19:52.49] JOHN MCKAY: Staying alive. It was every day.

[00:19:54.62] JOE GALLOWAY: Every day.

[00:19:55.61] JOHN MCKAY: No, I'm sure it's-- all right. I mean, you could-- the material things like letters and your care packages, yeah those were important at the moment. But the best day was if I went out on patrol, or if we were on a company op, one-on-one battalion op, which was just a bloodbath. A good day was coming back and not having a KIA to report and write up, and write the letter. That was a good day.

[00:20:40.24] JOHN MCKAY: The battalion op I was referring to was-- and you'd have to report to a bridge in the An Hoa Basin. There was a place where 1st Battalion, 5th Marines was permanently stationed, static position, called Liberty Bridge. It was a bridge across the Song Thu Bon River. And I can't remember. I mean, it was sea stories, barracks talk, but supposedly that bridge had been destroyed seven times. When I was there, it was a timber bridge. Engineers had built it. And when they'd knock out a span or something, they throw down platoons-- agh, platoons-- pontoons.

[00:21:20.62] But I remember. I think Jim Stemple still had the battalion. We swept through Liberty Bridge, and we were going battalion on line to sweep Go Noi Island all the way to the railroad embankment. Which would have meant if we stood-- never got there. But if I stood on the railroad embankment, I probably could have seen the South China Sea. That's how close it was. it was close to Highway One. The old railroad ran parallel to that.

[00:21:53.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Street Without Joy.

[00:21:55.71] JOHN MCKAY: That was a little further north, but yes. Jules Roy, Street Without Joy. And we got on Go Noi Island, we'd been taking fire. Again, these guys were good. I mean, they'd hit, they'd fall back. You couldn't see them. And I had the right flank of the whole battalion, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines. And I had a heavy section of tanks.

[00:22:23.55] I was considered an experienced, lucky lieutenant. And I remember talking to a lieutenant from the tank platoon. I was up there on the turret, and I just-- I'm screwing around.

The whole battalion. I mean, it must have been at least a kilometer front. And we had the heavy section of tanks on the right flank. And I don't know if the light section was in the center. But I was up there shooting the shit with the lieutenant.

[00:22:54.55] And I'm looking through my binoculars and I'm going, Holy Christ. And there, from the railroad embankment, there was a pole, probably bamboo, because you could see it, it was flexing, but it must have been 30 feet high and it had an NVA flag on it. Not a Viet Cong flag, but an NVA. This is broad daylight for crying out loud. We had air on station, we had 8-inch howitzers at An Hoa. We had 155s, and these guys are flying their bloody flag.

[00:23:29.71] JOE GALLOWAY: They had some cojones.

[00:23:31.15] JOHN MCKAY: And I'm saying this is going to be a bad day. And then all of a sudden, I mean, it's one of those surrealistic moments. We're not going forward. And you see the left flank, you see a company start wheeling to the rear. And the word comes down, Liberty Bridge got overrun the night before. We've got to go back and reinforce. That was probably about the worst eight to ten hours that I had. Because I had the--

[00:24:11.12] JOE GALLOWAY: Retrograde movement.

[00:24:12.05] JOHN MCKAY: Well, they swung the battalion out. I can't remember which company had the lead. I was in Hotel, we had the right flank. But we were tail end Charlie. And I was rearguard, my platoon was rearguard. I lost five men, wounded-- I mean casualties, not all killed. And I'm convinced, I'm convinced that the NVA left people behind us.

[00:24:39.91] I lost one kid from a spider hole. And then, just as we got to Liberty Bridge, we got across the river. I mean, we had to come across the river because Go Noi Island is up there by Arizona Territory. And I had the tank. I was trying to get the last tank into the perimeter. It was dark, and of course the bloody motor's running.

[00:25:03.88] And there was this black kid. I can't remember his name. He goes, god, that was shit, Lieutenant. That was shit. And I said, yeah, it sure was. And all of a sudden, this horrendous explosion. And he's gone. He was standing right next to the tank. It was a command detonated, and the clever little bastards, they figured the tank was on the mine. But it was just off, and this kid took it. We found his helmet. And we found a bent M16 rifle.

[00:25:37.56] JOE GALLOWAY: And that was it?

[00:25:38.64] JOHN MCKAY: That was it.

[00:25:44.99] JOHN MCKAY: I was very impressed with the Koreans. I thought they were good. They had a, I think, well-deserved reputation. Don't screw with them.

[00:25:53.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Don't mess with them.



[00:25:54.89] JOHN MCKAY: Right. And they killed a lot of people. The Australians, I thought-- I was only with the Australians about three hours. And that was shoot the shit more than it was, how do you do your tactics type.

[00:26:10.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Have a beer, mate.

[00:26:10.87] JOHN MCKAY: Yeah. that. Unfortunately, they didn't have any Foster's. But I was impressed with both of them. Not so much the ARVN.

[00:26:26.45] JOHN MCKAY: I suppose that should be my worst day. I feel lucky I'm alive. I thought it was a pretty good day. But we had linked up the day before with the Koreans. We knew we were in-- this was Arizona Territory. Bill Fite was the company commander, great company commander. And I mean, and we billeted in old bunkers, NVA bunkers because we were sure we were to get mortared during the night.

[00:26:59.12] And if I'd been smart enough, I'd have realized something was the matter because we didn't get mortared. And we knew they were out there. But we got on line. I mean, we came out of the bunker. We got on line and we dropped our packs. And we were on line to assault. And this was about 05:10. I mean, it wasn't quite light.

[00:27:20.88] And here come the mortars. I've never been mortared in daylight before. And that started our day. And we moved forward, the whole company, on line. There was a canal between myself and 1st Platoon. They got held up, and it was just bunkers. The same thing that you see in the World War II. Lay down your base of fire, try to get somebody around, try to find the entrance to get a satchel charge in.

[00:27:55.85] And every bunker, I was losing a couple of kids. And we came up against, I think it was the 5th, it might have been the 4th. I remember we had overtaken one. And I was really feeling good because I had one kid that got shot in the hand. He was crying like a baby. And he kept yelling, corpsman up, corpsman up. And I said, you're not fucking hurt. I-- sorry to say this. I had to kick the shit out of him and move the platoon forward.

[00:28:31.14] Got up on top of that bunker, because I knew more or less where the next bunker was. We were already taking fire. Deployed the machine guns out forward of my position on top. And I remember coming up on top very low because, I mean, they were good. They never shot high. They knew where to shoot.

[00:28:57.26] And I came up, and all of a sudden, this black thing starts moving in front of me. And it was an NVA soldier. He'd obviously been wounded. And he was trying to come out of his fighting hole with his weapon. And I mean, it just-- I wasn't scared, I wasn't-- I just took my .45, and I emptied it into him. Then I rolled down on the defensive side of the bunker, so I'd be up front again for the next bunker.

[00:29:31.07] And we got up and got some cover, and the fire was very heavy. And I had authorized the machine guns to do a crossfire, so we could try to get the satchel team around. And they were ready to go. And the one gun on the right quit. And I looked over, and I could see

the A gunner. Why the hell he got up, God only knows, but he got up to flip the lid to put another belt in.

[00:29:57.56] And, as I said, these guys were good. The guy shot him right here, bullet went in above his flak jacket, went into both lungs. And what-- again, the surrealistic aspect of battle. I kept saying to myself, why the fuck doesn't he tip over? I mean, he's bleeding from his mouth.

[00:30:19.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:30:20.48] JOHN MCKAY: And, I mean, the gunner's looking up and he's frozen. And I didn't even crawl. I just ran over there. I knocked the A gunner down, re-fed the belt. And just kicked the kid in the-- I was laying down as much as I can. Start firing the goddamn gun. And I rolled, and I was crawling. I knew the son of a bitch was out there.

[00:30:45.78] And I think, I can't prove this, I think he had a bead at me right below my helmet. And I couldn't find my .45. And I turned my head. The bullet went in here and came out down here, and went into my shoulder. And, unlike the A gunner, that picked me up and threw me on my back. I remember it was, again, the surrealism of battle. The minute the bullet hit, I mean, that is just clear as day. It was like in the '50s when the TV sound went off, and you had those sound screens.

[00:31:26.71] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:31:27.47] JOHN MCKAY: And the thing got smaller, and there was a "zzzt" that real high buzz. And that's what it was. And as it got smaller I said, you're going to die. Then I landed on my back and couldn't breathe. It took out all my jaw, my sinuses, my nose. It hit my good eye. I was very lucky. And when I landed on my back and I rolled over, then he shot me in the hand. Then my right guy killed him.

[00:32:02.57] But, I mean, the thing that-- and I'm going to write about this, but it is the absolute serenity that I felt. I'm going to die. And I'm not, never have been, probably never will be, a religious person. There were no visions. There were no angels. There was, you've done your job, my son. Come and join me. There was none of that crap. There was, I'm going to die. OK, fine. Let's go. Life will go on.

[00:32:32.57] Then laying on my back, couldn't breathe because all the blood's going down. And I rolled over and then he shot me in the hand. And I never lost consciousness. The right guy, then the platoon sergeant, grabbed me and pulled me back into the cover. And again, I'm still in touch with him Rick Wackle. He was my platoon sergeant then. And Joe Hatton was the right guy. I just talked to Joe last week.

[00:33:03.53] But these guys, I mean, that was the initiative of the Marines. The lieutenant's unfucking the gun, go with the assault. And they'd already sent the satchel charge around. And by the time they drug me there the "fwoom". And they got me up next to that bunker because the bunkers were in crossfire. And I remember, brand new corpsman, he panicked, gave me morphine, which you're not supposed to do for lung wounds or head wounds.

[00:33:34.97] And I remember reaching up and feeling my eyeball. But I couldn't see. I couldn't see out of this one. And then they got me to the company. I can't remember. The company position was-- it probably wasn't more than 25, 30 meters from where we were. I mean, the company commander. And we were still under mortar fire.

[00:33:57.93] And I remember him talking to me. I remember Hatton and Wackle, they both said, oh, shit, the lieutenant's gone. And my old corpsman was the company corpsman, Doc 250, he's still alive. And he said, I'll tell you Lieutenant-- he said, I just thought you were going to die before the helicopter ever got in.

[00:34:21.33] And, of course, it was a hot LZ. And Bill Fite, the company commander, put me in an 8-inch shell hole because-- I mean, they were just raking the area. And I was told later-- I remember the explosions, but I couldn't see. I could feel the heat. Two of the helicopters were shot down, coming in. And that day, they were taking only emergency medevacs. There was no routine.

[00:34:53.10] I hurt. My hand hurt worse than my head. I knew I was bleeding horribly. I tried to put some bandages on me. And I remember Bill Fite came when the chopper came, they couldn't even land. And the rotor blades are going. You could hear the guns on both sides. And I remember he took me, he got me up to the ramp. And, I mean, I was ambulatory. And somebody grabbed me.

[00:35:21.42] And the thing that scared the shit out of me was there was so much blood on the deck and I kept slipping. And they didn't put me in a litter. I sat in the canvas seat. And the trip from there, I mean, the first time I was wounded, what did it take? 20 minutes or something. But that's a blur. I'm sure I was going into shock.

[00:35:46.20] I remember landing at NSA in Da Nang. They kept saying-- oh, I remember on the flight, a flight surgeon, he came by. He was yelling because-- I mean, all kinds of noise. And he said-- he said, I'm a flight surgeon. Open your eye, open your eye, and I couldn't. And he goes like this, and he goes, he said, you're going to be blind for the rest of your life. And left me alone.

[00:36:12.61] [LAUGHTER]

[00:36:14.23] JOE GALLOWAY: Thanks, Doc. [LAUGHTER]

[00:36:16.13] JOHN MCKAY: And then we got to Da Nang. And then, obviously, I was in shock. And I remember they tried to put me on a litter, and I fought that because I couldn't breathe because of the blood. And why I say the first corpsman panicked, he should have given me a triage-- I mean, not triage-- a trach, tracheotomy.

[00:36:44.11] Then it's very, very clear when I was in triage. Because I thought I was going to be put in the corner. You have to remember, I'd been there before. And those that weren't going to make it weren't worked on. And I'm saying, why the fuck aren't they cutting off my boots?

[00:37:02.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:37:02.84] JOHN MCKAY: And I remember my dog tags said, no preference for religion. And there was a Catholic chaplain. He gave me last rites. They had a rabbi there. I don't know what the hell for. And there was another chaplain. And these guys are mumbling and all this crap. Finally, I remember, I couldn't see. I open my eye, I couldn't see. And I remember the-- in the name of the Father, and I knew I was getting last rites. And then somebody started cutting my boots off. And I just said, to be gone with you guys. And then they try to shave my mustache. And I wouldn't let them.

[00:37:37.10] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:37:38.21] JOHN MCKAY: And that's when they put the trache in. And then, I mean, the x-ray was very painful when they moved me around, but I don't remember. And the OR was so bloody cold. And then I was out. And I was in surgery over 7 hours. I think I was in NSA, I was told, so I could stabilize.

[00:38:02.66] JOE GALLOWAY: In Da Nang.

[00:38:04.08] JOHN MCKAY: Da Nang, yeah. NSA, Naval Support Activity. I was there for at least two weeks. And I knew-- I've got a picture of myself, General Jaskilka decorated me for my actions that day. And I-- I remember it really upset the doctors because, I mean, I had tubes in and my whole head's bandaged. And I said all I could do is write. I couldn't talk. My jaw was wired. I couldn't see.

[00:38:39.81] And I said, I will stand up. And they said, no, no, no, no. And I had a very good friend, Bill Nadler. I'm still in touch with Bill. We were classmates. He had the MP platoon at NSA. And I wrote a note. I said, when the general comes, I said ADC, Assistant Division Commander, I will stand up. And Bill helped me. And I've got a picture of General Jaskilka decorating me standing there in my bloody hospital stuff, and my head all bandaged up and everything.

[00:39:11.33] JOE GALLOWAY: What'd they decorate you with?

[00:39:13.58] JOHN MCKAY: I got a Bronze Star for that action. So 5th Marines was very chintzy on-- I had my first platoon sergeant, Al Bresser, he did some phenomenal stuff right after I joined the platoon. And I said, if he had been an officer, he would have been a Navy Cross or a Medal of Honor. And they gave him a Bronze Star. And I came back, and when I got returned to duty, I fought that and I got it upgraded to a Silver Star.

[00:39:46.32] But no, I didn't come in the Marine Corps for medals. I was happy to be alive. General came down, OK, fine, that's great.

[00:39:57.65] And I remember, right before they took me up to Tachikawa, 249th Field Hospital. I knew I was getting better because of bedsores and stuff, they'd massage it. And there was one nurse, and boy, she had a really sexy voice. And I was already having fantasies, excuse me. And

then Bill Nadler told me, he said she was ugly as sin. [LAUGHS] I couldn't see. So anyway, I went--

[00:40:27.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Because you were blind.

[00:40:28.24] JOHN MCKAY: I was blind. I mean, I still had the bandages on my head. So I got medevaced to Tachikawa to the 40-- I've been told that 249th was at Camp Zuma. But the bandages came off. They wouldn't take the packing out of where my sinuses had been. Of course, my jaw was still wired. And I had to trach, which was a pain in the neck. I mean, what's his name, Bob Timberg describes having that trach and all the goop that gets in there and has to be cleaned out.

[00:41:07.61] And if you wanted to talk, and your jaw is wired, you had to plug up the trach, and you talk like this, and it was-- and what impressed me or depressed me the most, I was in a ward that was-- I don't know what it had been before the war. It wasn't a hospital ward. It was an open bay. And I mean, my curiosity, my interest and everything that-- all that was coming back. And I was starting to get some sight back and so I could start writing without somebody else correcting me.

[00:41:48.10] And I remember one nurse who was very, very nice saying that at any one day, there were 75 patients. And they were all neuro cases in that bay. And somewhere in there, I think it was towards the end, they brought in a black kid that had been a tunnel rat that got caught below. And he lived, but he was messed up. And I remember they had to shackle him to his bed, and he screamed the whole time. He was only there for a day or two, but I mean just laying there at night.

[00:42:27.67] And you could hear the chains rattling, and he's just carrying on and on. And I know they gave him sedatives and stuff, but-- and yeah, I mean, there was guys that had been shot in the spine. They were paralyzed. And I was one of three or four that was actually ambulatory. And I helped feed them and do that. The nurses were overworked.

[00:42:54.89] JOE GALLOWAY: And you were there at Tachikawa how long?

[00:42:57.66] JOHN MCKAY: I think four weeks, but again, I'm not too sure.

[00:43:08.21] JOHN MCKAY: Well, that was a screw up, too. And then I guess I was getting the old, the vernacular today is mojo, which I hate, but I was getting my devil side back. And they said, well you're definitely a litter case, and I said I'm not going to fly on a 141 for 17 hours in a stretcher. So I went UA, and went down to Marine liaison. I stole a uniform. I hid it, and we were supposed to leave at 0400.

[00:43:44.20] And I put the uniform on, boots that didn't fit me, and I went out and got with the ambulatory patients. And of course, in the rush to get the plane loaded and get it out on time and everything. The fact that there was a litter case missing and there were one over on ambulatory never came to anybody's attention. So I rode back in a seat. I didn't ride back in a-- and actually

the nurse on the plane-- different nurses now-- said, what the hell are you doing? You should be a litter case.

[00:44:13.07] I just don't understand it myself. I was told I was going to be a litter case. But anyway, and the screwup was my parents, I wasn't married. My family, they all lived in San Francisco. And the Navy screwed up and sent me to Balboa and San Diego. And I landed at Travis. My parents came, my brother-- my parents came up to see me. My girlfriend didn't. And then I went to Balboa.

[00:44:49.26] And that was bad because they basically said, well we'll take the gauze out of-- packed gauze out of your sinuses. But you're going up to Oak Knoll in Oakland, and we're not going to do anything for you here. And then I started getting mad. And I was upset. But I had a classmate that was on a DD out of San Diego. And all my classmates knew I'd been hit pretty bad. And he found out I was in Balboa, and he came up, came and visited me.

[00:45:36.41] My youngest brother was a drill sergeant on the drill field in San Diego. And he'd come by when he could. But Dick, my classmate, he and some of the ship's company said, well we're going to kidnap you. We're going to bring you out of the hospital. You've got to remember, my jaw is wired. I've got a trach. My vision is not good. So I went UA again, went down to the ship, and they fed me ice cream through my-- and I came back.

[00:46:07.33] And I remember I should have been court martialed. I remember this lieutenant commander nurse said, Lieutenant McKay, you've been UA. We're going to write you up. And I said, what the fuck are you going to do, send me back to Vietnam? I never heard anything more about it. But finally, I got to Oak Knoll and then tremendous, tremendous care. Dr. Gale Clark was the neurosurgeon that oversaw my case finally. Unfortunately, he's dead.

[00:46:40.11] Dr. Hildebrand was the commander. He retired as a captain, was the oral surgeon. I can't remember who the ophthalmologist was, but--

[00:46:51.38] JOE GALLOWAY: How long were you there?

[00:46:53.55] JOHN MCKAY: I got to Oak Knoll Naval Hospital April. I got there, I remember they let me go home for the moon landing. What date was that? Was that June or July?

[00:47:12.56] JOE GALLOWAY: You got me.

[00:47:13.94] JOHN MCKAY: But it was '69.

[00:47:15.61] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:47:16.69] JOHN MCKAY: And they let me go home because my mother was a practicing OR RN. And I had to wear the scissors around my neck to cut the wires in case I choked. And I still had the trach, and she could clean that out. And I was home for the moon landing, and I was home for the 4th of July. She bid a bunch of authorized food for me. And I was not discharged

from treatment. So that would have been July, August '69. I was not discharged from treatment until March of 1972.

[00:47:57.25] JOE GALLOWAY: So we're talking--

[00:47:58.47] JOHN MCKAY: Two years, put me back together.

[00:48:01.68] JOE GALLOWAY: How many separate surgeries?

[00:48:05.94] JOHN MCKAY: I had two on my good eye. I had two on my nose to try to open that up. I had my jaw rebuilt. I had a cranioplasty, a plate put on my head. And because the two eye surgeries were major surgeries. The rebuilding of the jaw was major surgery, so you had to recover from that before they went to the next step. And then the whole time starting about 1970, really when I was told you can't stay in the Marine Corps. And I said, but I'm going to stay in the Marine Corps. Well, you can't do that. And so I had Bick Balliker, big shot lawyer down in Southern California now.

[00:48:58.02] But he wasn't even a lawyer. He was going to law school. He said, I'll take your case. And I told him, I said you're going to make a hell of a lawyer and keep doing good on delays. And that was the purpose, delay it until I got better. So I could do things and say, hey, I could do that in the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps was outstanding. They kept saying you can't do it.

[00:49:22.37] And the CO of the Marine barracks called by the name of Tom Mulvihill, been in World War Two, Korea, and Vietnam. He's dead now. But I said, you know Colonel Mulvihill, if you get me down to Camp Pendleton so I can demonstrate that I've got stereoscopic vision. I can call fire. I can adjust fire. I can do the rifle range. And he said, I'll make it happen, John. And I did. I got orders. Marine Corps paid my way. I got down there I was treated like a king.

[00:49:57.19] And everybody wrote this all up. He can adjust rounds on fire, three rounds good as any experienced lieutenant, yak, yak, yak. And it all went into my file and--

[00:50:10.75] JOE GALLOWAY: You were a captain by then.

[00:50:11.71] JOHN MCKAY: I'd been promoted to captain when I went up for my final medical board, yeah. And but I went down to Pendleton, I was a first lieutenant. And we got on the board. We challenged the Navy officer off the board, the medical officer, for prejudice. Never been done before. And I kept talking to Dr. Clark, my neurosurgeon, because he was the one that was going to write it up. And he kept saying-- I mean, he was a tough guy.

[00:50:39.73] He kept saying, John, he said, I've seen a guy stay in with his head opened up, and I've seen a guy stay in with his eye gone. But I've never seen a guy stay in with both of them. And he wrote it up well. And I just will backtrack. When I first got to see Dr. Clark, because I was shot so close, they were worried about the brain or the cranium having shifted in the skull. And I had to go through a procedure, you want to talk about my worst day, called a pneumoencephalogram.

[00:51:12.64] They don't do it. They don't do them anymore. You're old enough to know what it may be, but they inject ionized air in your brain through your spine. And then they take x-rays and all kinds of stuff. And I remember Dr. Clark sitting there, yeah, he's a tough old guy. And he goes, it hurts. It hurts like hell. I'm glad it's not me it's going to happen to. And he was right. I mean, oh God, I don't think I've ever felt pain like that before. But anyway, I got better, got returned to duty, so--

[00:51:47.56] JOE GALLOWAY: And finished out a career in the Marine Corps?

[00:51:50.25] JOHN MCKAY: As an infantry officer. Retired as a full colonel. Commanded at every level. Then played cowboy after the Marine Corps with the CIA and DEA.

[00:52:07.66] JOHN MCKAY: Immensely, immensely, and not for the bad. I mean, I'm probably a poster child for PTSD, but I don't suffer from it because I don't let myself suffer from it. Vietnam, number one, I had no intention of staying in the service. After I got wounded, my family was the Marine Corps, and I came to realize that. I mean, I know my mother and father loved me dearly, but there was no connection there. There was in the Marine Corps.

[00:52:39.02] The other thing that it did to me that I have no regrets about, it made me a seeker after that eternal adrenaline rush. My career since then has been predicated on put me in harm's way. And we'll just fast forward very quickly. I was the lead DEA agent on the murder investigation down in Juarez in 2010 and on those three Americans that got killed, got up in a real bad dust up, and another agent with me, and I was very lucky.

[00:53:19.78] And my wife was staying up in El Paso. And I came back, and she knew something had gone down, but I didn't tell her until we got back to Washington. She said knock it off, no more. So that was sort of my last hurrah. Fortunately, I didn't get killed. And I didn't get anybody else hurt or killed. And we did some bad things to the bad guys. So-- but that's the answer to your question. It gave me-- but it also made me think a lot about things like just war, violence, and human nature.

[00:53:59.11] So I came out of Vietnam, I certainly didn't have the worst experience of anybody in Vietnam. I didn't have the best experience. But I came out of there I think a lot more mature. And I've never regretted that experience.

[00:54:17.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans coming home from combat today?

[00:54:25.98] JOHN MCKAY: No, because I've always felt very strongly. I felt very strongly about going to funerals. I think any veteran deserves a proper send off. I've always felt very strongly that my brother, myself, I lost a very close cousin two days before I lost my eye. He was a helicopter pilot. I've been a life member of Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans.

[00:55:00.22] I've been involved in a lot of the work up there with, I mean, guys that are never going to get better up at Bethesda, my wife and I-- and Walter Reed before they consolidated.



I've always tried to give as much as I could on that. But what has changed, and what I do have probably a psychotic problem with is the under or complete lack of appreciation on the part of most of the people in this country for what the Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen and Marines do.

[00:55:36.66] And it's not all their fault, but I do have a burr under my saddle on that one. I really do. One of the reasons we moved out here is most of my wife's family's here. I've got-- we've got a son in Virginia and a grandson. But all of her family's here, and my brothers, both my brothers are on the West Coast. And I go to family gatherings, and same age as the lieutenant commander, same age as the doctor. I won't bless Mark with such a remark.

[00:56:09.74] But anyway, the absolute cluelessness of what is involved in military service and an apparent absolute lack of interest in trying to do something for somebody other than yourself. This is owed to me, I owe nobody nothing, and I don't have to sacrifice anything for what I've got. That does bother me.

[00:56:50.66] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today?

[00:56:59.34] JOHN MCKAY: If it's remembered at all, I think it's remembered as if not a mistake, a debacle. I'm going to start teaching up here at California State University in Sacramento where I've already talked to some of the students. I mean again, it's not necessarily their fault. I mean, we might as well be talking about Thermopylae or the Peloponnesian War. I mean, seriously.

[00:57:28.31] JOE GALLOWAY: It's 50 years gone.

[00:57:29.78] JOHN MCKAY: It's 50 years gone. It's ancient history. And our son, all our sons have served in the service, two of them in the Marine Corps, one of them in the Navy. They have some feel. The oldest boy served in Desert Storm. He was with the 2nd Marines, retook the Kuwait Airport. They have a little bit of feel for it. But we socialize with them and their friends. And number one, none of them had military service, and number two, Vietnam happened, and that's it.

[00:58:13.67] Well, what about the bombing of Haiphong and Hanoi? What? What about the constitutional issue of the president designating targets in North-- What? I mean--

[00:58:27.72] JOE GALLOWAY: What about My Lai?

[00:58:28.29] JOHN MCKAY: Yeah, I mean, there's My Lai. The Marine Corps had their couple of incidences. Philip Caputo, who wrote an excellent book, should have been locked up in Leavenworth for-- and he says in the beginning of his book, A Rumor of War, he said, the Marine Corps had a lot of stuff on me, but they were afraid to prosecute me. Well, the reason they were afraid to prosecute him is the corporal that was going to give government witness--

[00:58:57.87] and he can do this under UCMJ-- decided not to give witness, and they dropped the charges on Caputo. But-- and you talk about the Marcinko Affair with the-- down at-- Even

guys that are in the SEALs today-- and I know a couple of them-- Marcinko? Who the hell is Marcinko? He wrote a book, didn't he, or something like that? But was he tied up in a possible murder thing? Or was he tied up in some really shady dealings? Well, I don't know.

[00:59:29.14] JOE GALLOWAY: About the money?

[00:59:30.46] JOHN MCKAY: Money? [LAUGHS] No, it-- to answer your question, I think the impact has been minimal. Or at least if you judge it by the knowledge, and any attempt at all to try to understand it in the current generation, negligible. And this is the other thing. On a serious note, I was on the all volunteer force, and Andrew has been saying this for years is the all volunteer force gives the president a leeway in the use of state force that he's never had before.

[01:00:08.82] And with the population not being involved, they don't care. It doesn't affect them. At least three of books by Andrew Bacevich, he's brought up what happened that the authorization to go to war has to come from the Congress. Then you start looking, do you realize that we've been involved in five declared wars in our history, and that's it? Five.

[01:00:35.29] JOE GALLOWAY: And we haven't had one since World War Two.

[01:00:38.39] JOHN MCKAY: And we haven't-- and that was the last one, by the way. Yeah.

[01:00:45.68] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah. In the end, what did that war mean to you and your generation?

[01:00:54.83] JOHN MCKAY: That's a very difficult question. I mean, to me personally, I think it brought home both the need and the importance of sacrifice for something bigger than yourself. As I said, I didn't believe in the war. I was against the war. I'm not-- I don't regret having gone one bit. And quite frankly, I went for selfish reasons. I wanted to see how I was going to do. Did I have what it takes? And I do. And that is very important. That's very selfish, but that's very important.

[01:01:35.23] But more importantly, in a very indirect way, I think-- and we're seeing it today-- it woke the nation up to the fact that some people have done-- made some tremendous, horrific sacrifices, and we treated them badly. But then, it's easy to do the stadium thing and put a flag on your car because you've got no skin in the game, so don't worry about it.

[01:02:10.93] And I also have a theory about PTSD. I mean, I've been told by two shrinks, you know, you're a classic case for PTSD. We can't tell you why you don't have it. But the populace is very-- I mean, they can support that because it doesn't affect them. And these poor Soldiers, give it to them. Instead of sitting back and saying, wait a minute. What have we got here? And if we've got it, are we going to treat it with opiates? Or are we going to really find out what it is?

[01:02:49.05] There's no doubt in my mind, Joe, that it exists. I mean, I've read enough history. You can go through the Aeneid. You can go through the Odyssey. And if you read that carefully, some of these guys are pretty screwed up when they come out of the mess or the dustups. And the Civil War, the--

[01:03:09.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Or World War I.

[01:03:10.55] JOHN MCKAY: Well absolutely, World War I, you get shell shock. What's the young gal up at West Point? She's written some very good books. She was, what's called broken heart, that was determined in the Civil War. That yeah, something's the matter with these guys.

[01:03:30.09] JOE GALLOWAY: World War II, thousand yard stare.

[01:03:32.16] JOHN MCKAY: The thousand yard stare. And Patton slapping the kid. I mean, and I know it. I've seen kids, I've seen kids like that. And yeah, there's something there. But let's not throw pills at it. Let's find out something more about it. And the VA is unfortunately, oh, we'll give you a pill for that. I'm not interested in that. I'm not interested in that. Let's stop treating the symptoms and find out the cause and train to the cause.

[01:04:07.70] JOE GALLOWAY: What lessons did you take from Vietnam you would like to pass on to future generations of Americans?

[01:04:20.03] JOHN MCKAY: I'm blowing in the wind, Joe. Study history. Learn other languages, learn other cultures. Because if you can't do that, you don't understand what you're going up against. We did it in Vietnam. We did it in Korea. Korea was a little bit different situation. We've done it in Iraq. We did it in Bosnia, Afghanistan. We did it in Bosnia. I was in Bosnia I was in Sarajevo during the siege.

[01:04:51.03] And the only person I felt that understood it was a fellow that I feel very close to, General Philippe Morillon, who was the French commander of the UN forces. And he's the one that went in to into Srebrenica and refused to move until good old Sir Michael Rose came in. And then you had that horrible thing in Srebrenica. I was there. I was there with General Morillon when they opened up the first concentration camp.

[01:05:22.75] You talk about a worst day, I mean, and they had it hidden, the Serbs had it hidden. You smelled it before you saw it. And I'm convinced that human beings are capable of anything. That was the worst I've ever seen. And I remember two or three days later coming back into the bunker. And the Serbs, they were-- most of them were drunk on Slivovitz all the time, and they were cranking off their rounds. And I remember General Morillon, who was pretty much an upbeat guy. And he was down, he had a glass of wine in front of him. I said, well General, he speaks very good English, but he insisted I speak French to him.

[01:06:11.64] And I said, mon Generale, ça va. And he answered me in English. He said, don't go where I went today. And I said, where was that? He said, the women's camp. The women's camp.

[01:06:28.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, dear.

[01:06:29.50] JOHN MCKAY: He said, don't go. You want to know something? I didn't have the guts to go. I-- by the way, I was in Sarajevo as a NATO officer, not a US Marine Corps colonel. We had two kids that weren't supposed to be there, both of them Army specialists, and they

spoke Serb Croatian. The Army couldn't find anybody else. And these kids, they put him in there under some sort of program. I'm not interested in that. But we didn't have it. We didn't have--

[01:07:09.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Anybody who spoke it and understood it?

[01:07:11.37] JOHN MCKAY: Spoke it and understood it, and had an appreciation of the history and the culture. Everybody-- I remember the Americans at NATO headquarters. What are these people all pissing on each other leg for a defeat that happened in Kosovo back in 12-something or other? Well, these people have long memories. And we don't understand that, and maybe we should before we get ourselves involved. How many people at high level spoke Vietnamese when we went into Vietnam?

[01:07:45.35] How many spoke Iraqi or Farsi in Iraq?

[01:07:48.82] JOE GALLOWAY: Same thing.

[01:07:51.28] JOHN MCKAY: OK, so that's the answer. Study languages, study cultures, study history. That's my lesson to you from Vietnam. Learn that stuff. And we're jumping ahead here. My last command when I had the JTF at Guantanamo Bay, I was negotiating with the Cubans, authorized. I felt very, very proud. I conducted all of the negotiations myself in Spanish. I had a wonderful counterpart, General Perez Perez, and to me, paid me the ultimate compliment if it was not flattery to get something else. He said you speak Spanish better than my interpreter. [LAUGH]

[01:08:35.97] I said, and he headed out, mierda. And he laughed. But that's what I'm talking about. And my predecessor, Admiral Mike Haskins at the JTF commander was bilingual Spanish. And I said, how the hell did they put a Navy aviator admiral down here that speaks Spanish? And he said they really screwed up. He said, I was the last straw. He said two other admirals turn down the post, said it was a do nothing job.

[01:09:13.26] And he said, I just happen to have grown up in Mexico. And I still tease him. I mean, speaks perfect Spanish, but he sounds like a damn Mexican kid. And the Cubans thought that was funny as hell. But where are our Iraqi speakers? Where were our Afghan speakers? I mean, I know Afghanistan's got three or four languages, but where? Where are those speakers? That's my answer, study history.

[01:09:46.65] JOHN MCKAY: Yes, I said I lost a cousin. And I've gone there quite often.

[01:09:51.81] JOE GALLOWAY: What are your impressions when you visit there?

[01:09:56.15] JOHN MCKAY: What a waste. Unnecessary war. Proved nothing. A lot of young men died. A lot of young women died.

[01:10:15.56] JOHN MCKAY: When I was with DEA, I had the privilege of I-- sounded like a Punch and Judy show to me, but I had the privilege of putting together the presentation for the 50th anniversary of the commencement, or 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, I

guess it was. And of all people I-- gosh, I can't think of his name now. Barry McCaffrey. And I'm sure you know Barry. And I got him to come over there.

[01:10:49.51] And he said, yeah. I won't go into the colorful language. He's going, what the hell are you doing to me, McKay? And I said, come on. I said, we got a lot of kids that are going, rotating in and out of Afghanistan. DEA's very good about that. And I said, you know, somebody of your stature, come in here, play the joke, and-- but talk to the kids, will you? And it was broadcast DEA worldwide. And he gave the keynote speaker. I was the guest lecturer.

[01:11:23.67] And that went off very, very, very well. But I mean, even some of the agents, young agents that I thought were educated, it was jeez, was it really like that? No, Barry was a lieutenant. He was a captain there.

[01:11:39.95] JOE GALLOWAY: He was a captain when he was blown up.

[01:11:41.39] JOHN MCKAY: Blown up, when he got his arm all messed up, and still would get in the bear pit with young troopers. But no, it's, I don't know how you commemorate it, Joe. I don't know-- what are you going to do? Nobody cares. So many people don't know about it, don't want to know about it. How meaningful is it going to be? I just wish we would do what we-- I'm involved in several Churchill groups.

[01:12:20.53] But we-- do it with Vietnam. Let's study this and find out why we shouldn't have done it. Since we did do it, what did we learn about it? Make it a learning experience. That's reaching for the stars. I don't think it's going to happen. I just wished it would be meaningful, that's all.