

## **Stratton, Richard USN**

[00:00:17.01] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, I was born in Quincy, Massachusetts, in 1931. And was told by my parents that I had caused them to go bankrupt because I was a late birth, and they had left their money in the bank, and the banks closed before I came. And so that was my contribution. I started out behind the power curve. Went through the Quincy public school system, and it was an absolute delightful place to grow up. It was a good education. Neighborhood was great. I had a brother older than me. And I had a cousin come to live with me, a gal who was probably six years younger than we, and she, in effect, was my sister.

[00:01:09.46] I decided that I would try out the priesthood, so I went into a religious order for about six years. And that's only germane because six years in the seminary is good preparation for six years in prison. There really isn't much difference, OK?

[00:01:23.62] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:01:24.85] RICHARD STRATTON: Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a very fine group of men, great sense of humor, doing good work, and absolutely nothing wrong with them. It was something wrong with me. I didn't have a vocation, but I gave it a shot. Quincy, Massachusetts, is the home of presidents-- John Adams and John Quincy Adams. It was a seafaring town. We-- Fore River Shipyard built any of the combatant ships from World War II, specifically.

[00:01:55.54] The Squantum Naval Air Station was the first Reserve naval air station and trained aviators during World War II, both from the United States Navy, the Canadian Navy, and the Royal Navy. They used to be crashing all around us in the marshes and stuff like that. And you could ride your bike on a high point of land in Squantum, Massachusetts, overlooking the air station, and watch them try to learn how to land aircraft, which was always exciting.

[00:02:25.12] There probably-- in my four-block area in the section of Quincy where I grew up, there were 12 people who were in World War II. The commander of the second atomic bomb drop, Charles Sweeney, was our newspaper boy. A very good friend of ours was a fighter pilot for the Navy, shot down two Jap heroes. My friend's brother was in the Merchant Marines and made a of horrific trips to Murmansk, the convoys that were taking 50% losses and stuff like that. So these people stood up and were counted. These were your role models.

[00:03:09.07] Never get stationed because there's a basic rule in the Navy that you can ask for what you want, and they send you in the opposite direction. I was always asking for Squantum and then, eventually, Naval Air Station South Weymouth. And I was getting Alameda, California. So that's just a basic rule. I wish that I had been stationed there because I had a delightful time.

[00:03:33.53] In fact, Quincy had the first Vietnam memorial for its sons and daughters. And it was an interesting thing because they had a Marxist-Leninist ex-nun who was running around Boston, and she painted a picture of Ho Chi Minh on one of the gas tanks overlooking Squantum in our part of town. So the Connolly Brothers decided-- they were in construction-- that they

would build a monument that would face down Ho Chi Minh. And it was a clock tower, and it was very well done.

[00:04:09.39] JOE GALLOWAY: It is.

[00:04:10.66] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, we were a town that started out-- our economy, other than the farming, or the Adams, was digging up granite. We built-- most of the buildings on the East Coast were built of Quincy granite. And the first railway in the country was hauling granite down to the Neponset River. So monuments, we got monuments all over the place. I had to pause for a minute when you said there's a monument there.

[00:04:39.40] RICHARD STRATTON: First love was the Navy because we lived right next to a naval air station. Family had a tradition of being in the service. My father was a seaman in World War I and a first sergeant in the Massachusetts State Guard in World War II. My brother volunteered for the Marine Corps. As soon as I got my college degree, I volunteered and enlisted in the Navy as a naval aviation cadet. I was commissioned under the Aviation Officer Candidate program, and commissioned in the Ready Reserves. Upon getting my wings, I ended up getting a regular commission in the United States Navy.

[00:05:18.58] So I've come a long way from-- when I was in high school, I had joined the National Guard for a year. And from a private in the National Guard to finally ending up retiring as a captain in the Navy was not too shabby whatsoever. I came home from Vietnam as a commander. And it's my preferred title because it sounds more imposing, very frankly, unless you were the captain of a ship. Commander sounds very commanding.

[00:05:46.36] I was a career military guy. The Vietnam War was my war. So it wasn't a matter of whether you volunteered or not. You went when it was your turn to go. No qualms about the Vietnam War whatsoever. It was the right war at the right time and the right place. It was just fought in the wrong way. And we had won it three times. It was the Congress that decided that they wanted to walk out and lose it, so a pox on their head. I have absolutely no regrets with my participation in the war, the people I served with. And I have no complaints whatsoever because I shot myself down. They didn't shoot me down. So it's all on my shoulders.

[00:06:35.32] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, you were carrier-based when you went to Vietnam.

[00:06:39.04] RICHARD STRATTON: Indeed I was. On the USS Ticonderoga.

[00:06:42.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about your ship and your shipmates and what your daily life was like as a fighter pilot flying off of a carrier.

[00:06:51.70] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, I was a light attack pilot, not a fighter pilot. And they make a distinction. We are better than fighter pilots because we can do more than one thing, you see. But that's a little thing between ourselves. The Ticonderoga was launched, oh, in 1943, I think. So it had gone through a of modifications. And it had a shorter deck than the Forrestal-class carrier, which kind of made things exciting and really was a pain in the rear end for the

troops who had to push the airplanes around, make room for us to operate. It was very difficult to operate from. But they did a marvelous job.

[00:07:33.64] I had a euphemistically called stateroom. There were two of us in a cubicle underneath an expansion joint backed by the arresting gear, which guaranteed that when there were flight ops, you were going to get no rest whatsoever. An expansion joint is the-- flight deck was made of teakwood. The main strength member was the hangar deck. And the ship would indeed flux back and forth, twist, and turn. So rather than have it break apart, they had joints that would overlap two of them on the flight deck, where the ship could move back-- the deck could move back and forth as it would twist and turn.

[00:08:11.98] Difficulty was, when it rained out, the water came down through the expansion joint. And well, you didn't have to worry about showers because you had your own fresh water shower right there, so that was good.

[00:08:22.93] Virtually on line 40 days, off line for maybe two weeks was the normal pattern. I got out there in October-- we left San Diego in October of 1966. We went on line right before Thanksgiving, and we spent 40 days out there. The ship routine depended on what your operational sequence was. So when you were on the line flying combat missions, the average with the pilot were two and a half missions a day. You'd fly two hops, and you'd man a spare. You may or may not get launched. But it averaged out that you were flying two and a half hops a day.

[00:09:09.96] And on top of that, I was the maintenance officer of the squadron, which was a good job because you were working with some wonderful people. Chiefs did all of the hard work. And your job was to protect them so they could get their job done and get them the stuff they needed. But that was time-consuming because it was the largest division in the squadron. Our squadron probably had about 140 men at that time, had 26 pilots. Probably, 100 of those men I was responsible for in my division.

[00:09:46.68] So in effect, you got no rest. You took your sleep wherever you could get it when you were on line. And it was not-- the only thing that really kept you going was realizing that the poor Sailors on the deck were working more, harder, under worse conditions than you were. And if they weren't complaining, there really wasn't much reason why you should complain. So you had it good. At least you were dry. You weren't out there getting dumped on.

[00:10:19.61] RICHARD STRATTON: The missions at the time I was out there-- any target that was worthwhile was coming from the basement of the White House. Secretary of Defense Robert Strange-- notice that middle name, Strange-- McNamara and Lyndon Johnson used to meet in the basement of the White House, have lunch once a week, and release two or three targets that were worth anything in Vietnam. They did not trust the commander in chief, Pacific to do the targeting.

[00:10:48.69] JOE GALLOWAY: Tuesday noon, lunch.

[00:10:51.19] RICHARD STRATTON: Yeah.

[00:10:51.72] JOE GALLOWAY: They picked the targets.

[00:10:53.70] RICHARD STRATTON: You got it. And they would drift down. In the meantime, we were out there flying missions and chasing water buffalo up and down trails. We were chasing bicycles, bicycles probably that were worth \$3.50. And we were firing 20 Mike-Mike-- 20-millimeter cannon shells at them that were probably a minimum of a buck apiece. The bombs were a buck a pound. So you were dropping 500 pounds bombs on bicycles. It was a very frustrating period of time because to be able to see them and chase them, you had to put yourself in harm's way.

[00:11:30.76] It did not appear to be a very fair trade. But it was exciting. And we were not hired to figure out what was going on. I was a very junior lieutenant commander, and there probably is no more useless rank in the officer ranks than a lieutenant commander. At one time, in the days of sailing ships, it was a lieutenant commanding, and it was a big deal. You had your own ship.

[00:11:56.49] But a lieutenant commander-- the best rank in the officer corps is lieutenant. You have all of the authority, none of the responsibility. The chief does all the work, and all you do is fly airplanes. And it's great. But a lieutenant commander, you're not a senior officer. You're not a junior officer. Everybody walks around you like you have a bad smell. So it's an in-between, but it's a stage you have to go through.

[00:12:21.01] So I went out there, and I flew 22 missions that we could count. We were flying missions in Laos. And at that time, it was classified that we were flying missions there, so you couldn't even put them in your logbook as a combat mission. We spent the Christmas period standing down. As we did during that war, we idiotically turned around-- good Christians, gave them Christmas off. We went off and worshipped the new babe. And they went out and reloaded with all their ammunition, and they were back to battery.

[00:12:59.61] So after Christmas, we went back on line. And I went out and took a mission. My best friend called me up early in the morning and asked me to take his hop because he had to attend a meeting. He was the operations officer. I volunteered. And you recognize right there, I violated a basic rule. My drill instructor-- God love my Marine drill instructors-- when I was in preflight, said, Stratton, don't volunteer for nothing. I volunteered. And sure enough, I went out there, fired a defective Aero 7D rocket pack, the rockets collided in front of the aircraft, the debris went into the engine, blew the tail off the aircraft. And I ended up spending six years in jail.

[00:13:48.76] But I did it to myself, so I really can't complain.

[00:13:51.05] JOE GALLOWAY: So you literally shot yourself down.

[00:13:52.82] RICHARD STRATTON: Absolutely. I think-- I wonder. I sit-- and to this day, when the doorbell rings, if it's not United Parcel Service, it may be the GSA with a bill for an airplane I destroyed. And I hope it's the Navy saying I finally get a Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down an airplane.

[00:14:10.34] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:14:16.70] RICHARD STRATTON: I had the highest respect-- and my best friend-- it's interesting, are all one. He was a fellow by the name of Mike Estocin. He was the operations officer of Attack Squadron 192. They were affectionately known as the World Famous Yellow Worms. Actually, they call themselves the World Famous Golden Dragons, for they flew part of the flight sequence in The Bridges of Toko-Ri picture. That's why they were world famous.

[00:14:51.56] That was his second combat tour. He was a good mentor to me in the squadron-- how to negotiate myself, even just get around a ship with the bureaucracy on board ship, how to deal with the senior ship's company, the senior officers in the air group, and stuff like that-- all kinds of pitfalls for new people. And he saw me all through that. When we weren't flying, we went to mass and communion every day together, he and I, up in the fo'c'sle when we weren't flying. So we had that kind of a bonding. Our families were close back in Lemoore, California.

[00:15:30.15] He would take the toughest missions, which was basically flak suppression, anti-SAM missiles. And of course, we were flying A-4 Skyhawks. They were subsonic. They were not designed for the missions that we were doing. They had no afterburner. And to effectively run against flak sites and surface-to-air missile sites in an A-4, you had to literally fly down the gun barrel and let loose whatever weapons they happen to design to give you to suppress the flak. And he went out and did that time after time.

[00:16:09.00] He ended up-- after I was-- after I went on leave and took my shore leave there, he got shot down outside of Haiphong Harbor probably the week before the squadron left the line. And usually, when you get shot down, you get a couple of days off. They don't make you go right back-- usually. And so he had no reason to be flying. And they had one last mission to go. And they were going to put some new ensign, some new kid, on a flak suppression, and Mike shook his head and says, you can't do that. That's not right. I can do that on my sleep. I'll take it. I'll do it. And he never came back.

[00:16:50.03] JOE GALLOWAY: He was not taken prisoner?

[00:16:52.03] RICHARD STRATTON: No, no, everybody-- he was last seen exiting-- after suppressing the SAM site, last seen inverted, going into a cloud deck about 2,000 feet off of Haiphong Harbor. And just no chance of him making it. And his name, unfortunately, got into the system. He was so popular. As soon as somebody got shot down, you'd tap on the wall, and you ring them up and say, has anybody seen Mike Estocin? Anybody know anything about Mike Estocin? And his name got into the system in that manner. And it gave undue hope to some of his family. But he ended up with a Medal of Honor. So I pick my friends well.

[00:17:36.94] JOE GALLOWAY: You do.

[00:17:37.48] RICHARD STRATTON: Yes.

[00:17:37.96] JOE GALLOWAY: You do.

[00:17:43.99] RICHARD STRATTON: I was about-- when the rockets' debris went into the engine, all kinds of lights came on-- fire, lights, and this, that. And the engine was-- where air was supposed to come in, fire was coming out. And where thrust was supposed to be coming out was passing gas. And it was rumbling. And I turned. I was going to try and get back over the water because I had a good chance of recovery. God love the Sailors out there and the helos and the destroyers. They'd pick you up in a minute, at great risk to their own lives.

[00:18:18.49] And it just dawned on me that I wasn't going to make it. I had enough time. I had over a thousand hours in the airplane. I knew it just like I knew my own body. And it was not going to last. And I used the alternate ejection handle-- 2,200 feet altitude, 220 knots, used the alternate ejection system. And everything apparently worked all right because the next thing that I was aware of, I was hanging in a parachute, trying to steer the parachute so I'd get closer to the water. Also, I was climbing the riser, not only to steer it, because they were shooting at me, which I was trying to get as far as I could from that. And I successfully-- you ever had a bad day?

[00:19:07.11] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:19:07.53] RICHARD STRATTON: Yeah. I successfully steered myself into the only tree behind the only house in 5 square miles.

[00:19:13.59] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:19:14.64] RICHARD STRATTON: I landed in the tree, and it was a rather small tree. And the parachute's up on the top, and my feet are just barely touching the ground. Before I had my helmet off, there were about 18 Vietnamese, very angry Vietnamese, standing around me with old blunderbusses and machetes and stuff like that. And they had me down. They stripped the clothes-- they literally cut the clothes off me to the point where I was afraid of losing the family jewels. I mean, they cut the laces off my shoes without even leaving a mark in the tongue of the shoe-- and pretty adept.

[00:19:51.87] And then we all piled into the ditch next to the rice paddy that was there because my wingman came by, John Parks, looking for me. He flew low enough over the rice paddy that he left a water sprout behind him, a rooster tail, which scared me as well as the Vietnamese, so we were all huddled in this benjo ditch, figuring crazy John is going to do us all in. And he saw the chute, but the airplane-- you're sitting on 1,200 pounds of fuel in an A-4. So to eject from an A-4 is an extraordinary action on your part. And I grew up in the old church, the old Catholic Church. You did not have to take extraordinary means to save your life, right?

[00:20:37.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:20:38.22] RICHARD STRATTON: And that's extraordinary means. And then I got to thinking about-- my wife said to me just before I left. Her dying words to me, farewell words to me, were don't you dare die and leave me with these three little kids. And that's a threat.

[CHUCKLES]

[00:20:56.68] JOE GALLOWAY: I thought the first rule of pilots in a wartime is don't bail out where you just dropped your bombs.

[00:21:07.09] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, if any-- I heard the same thing from my ordnance chief. Once again, if you ignore the advice of your chief petty officer, you're in trouble, I've always found. Hey, Stratton, don't land in the same place you just got through bombing and strafing.

[00:21:17.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, yeah.

[00:21:19.46] RICHARD STRATTON: And so you couldn't very well be very angry at the people that captured you.

[00:21:23.26] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:21:24.52] RICHARD STRATTON: They were angry. What would you do if somebody got through bombing your house and dirtying the laundry you're wearing, as well as the laundry on the back line? And then you're going to go out and meet them with a soda pop or a beer and say, welcome? No, I don't think so. No complaint with the people that captured me. They were pushing me, beating on me, and stuff like that. Hey, if you can't take a joke, you shouldn't have been in the business in the first place.

[00:21:52.69] My quarrel started when I got into the hands of the hard-line communists in the prison system. Nothing wrong with the Vietnamese people. A lot wrong with the communists.

[00:22:03.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did you come down in relation to Hanoi?

[00:22:08.38] RICHARD STRATTON: About 65 kilometers south of Hanoi. And I was-- I went down about 7:00 in the morning. And I got up into Hanoi maybe 7:00 the next morning. I must have walked in my barefoot feet and skivvy shorts, probably through midnight or sometime like that. Eventually was put in the back of a truck and driven the rest of the way into Hanoi and then tossed into the reception room [CHUCKLES] to await their pleasure.

[00:22:45.76] But that was-- they dug a grave and put me in a grave and shot me. And I think, on reflection, that that was crowd control. They were losing control. They were stirring up the people. You'd stop in every village and hamlet. And they'd say, hey, we got one. Come on out and have free whacks. But they-- we were valuable as hostages, so they had to bring us in. At that stage of the war, we became really valuable as hostages.

[00:23:14.62] So they dug a pit-- they didn't tell me; I'm blindfolded-- and had me kneel in this grave. It was the right size. And next thing I know, I hear a shot go off. And of course, my wife can explain everything. She said, sure, went in one ear, out the other ear, didn't touch a damn thing. So they were staging it.

[00:23:37.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Where were you shot?

[00:23:38.92] RICHARD STRATTON: Pardon me?

[00:23:39.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Where were you shot?

[00:23:40.69] RICHARD STRATTON: I wasn't shot.

[00:23:41.53] JOE GALLOWAY: They didn't shoot you.

[00:23:42.53] RICHARD STRATTON: They fired a rifle off someplace. I'm-- like I say, I can only imagine what was happening. They wanted to stage an execution, then push me down in the hole so that people would disperse and that they'd be able to carry on and move me out of there. That's the only thing I can think of.

[00:23:57.30] JOE GALLOWAY: You were still walking at that point.

[00:23:58.99] RICHARD STRATTON: Still walking at that point. And I was blindfolded, so there was no sense that you weren't trying to scare me because I didn't see the rifle or whatever it was. I have a marvelously big nose. And in a blindfold, I can look up underneath the blindfold, and I could see a lot. But I couldn't quite see enough to figure out what they were staging there.

[00:24:21.24] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:24:21.93] RICHARD STRATTON: And then on the truck, you'd go uphill and down dale, and they had a couple of 55-gallon drums there. And the two guides that were sitting in the back-- this was a 2 and 1/2 ton state truck-- they'd roll the drum down on me. And of course, I'm blindfolded. The first time I didn't catch what was happening. It ran over my foot. That was my first injury. And then I figured out what they were doing, so then, once again, lift up and watch it along the beak, and when it came down, then I'd kick it back at them. So we spent most of the time, going in Hanoi, running that thing back and forth at each other.

[00:25:08.30] RICHARD STRATTON: First months were horrific. Probably, the first two weeks were intense. I think the euphemism today is enhanced interrogation. And what they did was-- they weren't looking for military information. They wanted to know what the next target was. And of course, we were not privy to it since we weren't invited to the noon White House luncheon, so we didn't quite have that information. And I think by the time I was shot down, they realized that at least-- and once again, they realized lieutenant commander was one of the stupidest ranks going. So you weren't privy to much. [LAUGHS]

[00:25:51.62] And so they would try. What's the next target? So what are you doing when you're in a case like that? Once you figure out they're not going to kill you, once you give more than name, rank, and serial number, and date of birth, even that's bad. Stop and think about it for a minute. You give your name, your rank, your serial number, thanks to Mr. McNamara, was your Social Security number.

[00:26:19.60] In most cases, 90% of the cases, you can tell what state you're born in by your Social Security number, the first three digits. So right away, you're giving information away.



Take your ring off. I've been wearing this ring for 55 years. I mean, you can go and sit in a bar without your ring, and any woman can see this mark that's indelibly put in here. I mean, so you're married.

[00:26:43.09] You're carrying a Geneva ID card, which has your payroll signature. So it doesn't make any difference whether you sign anything or not. They could forge your signature. Your ID card has your rank and has your payroll signature, too. I mean, the whole thing-- name, rank, serial number, date of birth-- is an ideal. But of course, we were taught it was an absolute. And you tried that, which, in retrospect, in terms of resistance with those kind of people, it's a waste of time. If they want to turn you over to the Red Cross Geneva Conventions, they will find a way because they already have the information.

[00:27:24.67] I maintain you shouldn't say anything. You walk in for an interrogation. To hell with what your training says. Say nothing. If you couldn't tell that I'm from Boston in the first five minutes we were in here, you weren't listening. You're giving away stuff left and right. So just keep your mouth shut, which is a pretty simple rule. You don't have to remember even Ten Commandments. Just shut up. And then if they're going to torture you, they'll torture you. And then let them work for a name, and let them work for rank. Let them work for serial number. Let them work for each and every item.

[00:28:01.11] JOE GALLOWAY: It's kind of hard on the old bod, though, isn't it?

[00:28:03.84] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, you learn to disassociate. It sounds easy now. An it took a while to learn that going through the sequence. But you move off someplace else. Why do it in the dull sermon in church? I go in there saying some of the dumbest sermons in my life. You listen to them yak. I go off someplace else. I just go out-of-body experience, and I have a wonderful time and let it go.

[00:28:25.59] The bod is saying, I hurt, so you'll do something about when you stop and think, why did God give you pain? Gave you pain not to punish you. Gave you pain so you'll do something. You'll take an aspirin. Or you'll drink less booze or something-- there's a reason for that-- and say, OK, I got the message body. You hurt. [CHUCKLES] Bad things are happening. So suck it up. And you talk to yourself, and then you just go someplace else. Sometimes, it works better than others.

[00:28:54.16] JOE GALLOWAY: What were some of the things they were doing?

[00:28:57.18] RICHARD STRATTON: The main thing-- they try everything they could. The main thing that they did to-- up through 1969-- I got to be careful because people challenge you on this. Up through 1969, 95% of the people were tortured. 95% of us in North Vietnam were made to give more than name, rank, serial number, date of birth. We're not proud of it. It's just the way it is. And it was what we called the rope trick. They would truss you up with your arms behind your back. You'd put them back to back. They'd put cargo strap or a rope around you, and they'd pull in your elbows until they touched. This is behind your back.

[00:29:38.16] First of all, your elbows don't naturally touch. Second of all, it has the effect of disjointing your shoulders--

[00:29:45.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:29:45.94] RICHARD STRATTON: --your arms from your shoulder, but not quite. It just sort of rides it back and forth. If they make a mistake, it pops out. But if they do it right, it rides it back and forth, and then it collapses your rib cage on your lungs.

[00:30:02.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:30:03.40] RICHARD STRATTON: So you start suffocating. It's better than waterboarding in terms of suffocation. You have the sense of suffocating.

[00:30:11.19] JOE GALLOWAY: It's just pressuring your lungs till it'd have no ability to inflate you.

[00:30:16.23] RICHARD STRATTON: You can't-- you want-- your heart is demanding more air, more oxygen, to withstand the stress, and you're incapable of even giving it a normal amount. And that works against you. And then when they get tired-- torture is labor-- torture is stupid. People that torture, even in our country, I'll say it, is kind of stupid because you're never sure of the quality of information you get.

[00:30:38.25] Like I said, they wanted to know the next target. I made up the next targets. I gave them the three targets that we were told that we would never be able to hit because there were Russians or Chinese there. So here's the next targets. So you get bum information.

[00:30:53.55] You may luck out and get one or two things if you have dedicated people. If you have wimps-- and we had a few here on the 9/11 stuff. We had a few of those people that basically I consider were cowards and wimps. And they'd give up in a minute, which they did. It was useful to run them through the wringer, just as an aside.

[00:31:16.27] But it's labor-intensive. It's tiring. So when they got tired, they would have your feet in shackles, with a bar across them. They would tie a rope around your neck loosely, tie it to your ankles between your feet, and then back to between your wrists. So if you dropped your arms, you were strangling yourself, or you'd kick out your feet with a spasm. And they could have a cigarette while you were doing it to yourself. And it came-- like George "Bud" Day. Lord, rest his soul. He just died. Medal of Honor guy from the prison system. They hung him up from the meat hook on the ceiling in between times, which, once again, does a real job on your shoulders.

[00:32:03.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:32:03.66] RICHARD STRATTON: And it may not sound like much until you actually experience it. But there are other things-- "torture" that are enhanced-- kneel on a broomstick. Put your hands up against the wall up high and then kick your feet out until you're just barely

hanging on and then try that for 24 hours with a bayonet underneath your-- there's all kinds of, like I say, enhanced methods of asking you questions, but the rope trick was the most common.

[00:32:46.16] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Now, you were known for your resistance to them and your attempts to forestall what they were trying to do to make mockery of their propaganda. How'd you go about that?

[00:33:07.28] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, we had-- first of all, we had great leadership. James Bond-- notice the middle name. James Bond Stockdale was the senior Navy guy. Robbie Risner was one of the more senior Air Force guys. Those two guys really were our leaders within the prison system. And they basically taught you that this is-- think of this as a game, a card game. You learn the rules. First of all, what game are you playing? Five-card stud? Texas Hold 'em? What's the name of the game? What are the rules of the game, and then how do you beat that game?

[00:33:48.48] Put another way, Jim Stockdale would say, what is it that they want? Deny it to them. Very simple. It doesn't make-- you may think it's stupid what they want. But the fact they want it is enough for you as a military guy. Deny it to them. They certainly are not your friends. They're not going to do anything good for you. They're just-- there's nothing to be gained. And so you turn around and say, what are they after?

[00:34:17.85] It turned out that they were after a statement from any aviator that they caught end of January of 1967 to admit to bombing Hanoi. Lyndon Johnson said we didn't bomb Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh said we did bomb Hanoi. Both of them lied. Hanoi was like the District of Columbia and Georgetown. There's Hanoi, like Georgetown, within the district of Hanoi. We had bombed the district of Hanoi but not the city of Hanoi. A little grain of truth there, but it didn't make any difference.

[00:34:58.93] They had a very impartial group from Sweden in to investigate-- notice the title, "the impartial group--" the Committee to Investigate American War Crimes Against North Vietnam. So they wanted a statement for the head of that group. And I was the first one caught. And here I am, crew cut, big nose, pot belly, ding-toed, knock-kneed. I'm just the perfect caricature of-- any time they wanted to draw a cartoon of an ugly American, it would have been me because that was it. And they had me.

[00:35:34.83] So they-- once they got you talking, they had a guy who would sit there. You would-- they'd have you write. You were virtually crippled from the manacles and stuff like that, but they'd have you write, write, write, and have you talk. And they had this guy we called the Rabbit in the background, and he's listening. He picks up the-- and he writes a confession.

[00:35:58.33] And it came to me about a month after things had quieted down, and he put it in front of me. He said, what do you think of this? And it was hilarious. It had me out there with more weapons on my aircraft than a flight of B-52s could carry. It had me identifying pregnant women from 20,000 feet and killing them and distinguishing between churches and pagodas and attacking them.

[00:36:27.16] And he just-- he went on for everything they could think of to put in there, and he said, you're going to give this to the public. You're going to make this statement. And I said, it's not going to happen. And by this time, I'm learning what the name of the game is. And I turn around, I say, I speak five languages, and I'm going to tell everybody in five languages exactly what you did to me. You put me in front of somebody. I said, I promise you. Doesn't make any difference. You can't do any more to me.

[00:36:59.99] And of course, every lie has a grain of truth. I speak English. I took and failed Spanish. I took and failed French. I took Greek. And I took Latin. So I got five languages. And they don't know because this was something that you had to work on, too, is you save your Christianity for Christians. And my daddy said you don't lie, cheat, and steal. If you want to survive in prison, you lie, cheat, and steal. And so you say, how do you do this? You put all of this together.

[00:37:31.38] So finally, they recognized-- They had me tape-record it. And I did it in such a way that I thought no one would ever recognize. You would think that I was from Lower Slobovia or Texas rather than Boston by just working that problem. And one day, they hauled me out, bayonet point, didn't tell me anything, drove me downtown. And I'm sitting in the wings of a stage. And I hear a tape recording go off. And it's my "confession." And I listened to it, and I realized I didn't screw it up enough. It-- my mother would know it's not me. My squadronmates would know-- Third World. It's just another Yankee Air Pirate. It was obviously an American. I've got to do something.

[00:38:21.95] I was told that I would go out at some point and give a polite bow to whoever was out there. Well, it turned out it was the assembled press and diplomatic corps of Hanoi, as well as the Swedish investigator. And I was supposed to give a polite bow to the head table and then to whoever else was out there. Boy, I took one look out there, and I said, boy, [CHUCKLES] this is bad.

[00:38:49.32] And I remember-- Manchurian Candidate. Why don't you pretend that you are drugged and act like that? And I said, well, I don't take drugs. I don't. [CHUCKLES] How the hell do you pretend to be-- ? But I said, OK, fine. So I bow 90 degrees to the head table, which, in effect, has me mooning the guard who was over there. I bow to the audience. And then I bow to the guard, which, in effect, is mooning the head table. And then I bow to the back wall, mooning the whole crowd, and then stand up.

[00:39:23.06] And this is before mooning was popular. I mean, I'm really doing a breakthrough here. And I'm on a roll. And the guard who was with me-- whose clean name was Dum-Dum. Dum-Dum yells, bow. Oh, I love this-- Boy, he's the perfect straight man.

[00:39:41.24] So I box the compass again. They get the hook. They haul me off. And there was a guy from Life magazine there on contract. And he-- well, the only pictures that he took-- while he was there on his own hook. The Vietnamese Army took all the rest of the pictures that he was contracted for and then gave him the cameras back. They didn't want any bad pictures. That was the only picture he took, and he got a picture of me bowing.

[00:40:05.54] And he had-- he was kind of an ultraliberal guy. But he had-- Lord, rest his soul-- he had the honesty to turn around and at least say, there's something wrong over there. Like, duh, but OK. And they asked me afterwards-- and sometimes it was--

[00:40:23.79] JOE GALLOWAY: I remember that film. And it was-- you did it like a robot.

[00:40:30.04] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, absolutely. I figured that that's the best I could do. So they said to me afterwards, why did you not bow prettily? Because they realized-- they didn't realize how bad it was, but they knew that it was not right. And I said, you didn't tell me there were cameras out there. And I'm afraid of cameras, which in their society, most of their people don't like cameras because it steals your soul. It's part of that-- the peasant part of them understood that. So that was their fault.

[00:41:05.80] So I reverted back to my ancient Roman Catholic custom of doing a profound bow. Well, there are a heck of a lot of Catholics still in Hanoi. And they recognized. They did strange things there in that church in Hanoi, so they said, OK, that's what-- it gave them something. But this is part of the Stockdale thing. Give them something to go back to their superiors with, no matter how stupid it is, and get them off your back. So there was an interesting enough rationale that they could go and--

[00:41:38.29] But you learned after a while. They'd say to you, OK-- torture you-- how tall is the radar, the TACAN, on an aircraft carrier? Well, duh, it depends on what size the carrier is, what the loading of the carrier is-- and so the answer is 50 feet. If you ever get tortured, the answer is officially 50 feet. And they tortured people until they came up with the true answer. So you'd rap on the wall and tell people, when you get this question after they work you over for a while, then finally give up and say, I'll tell you, it's 50 feet. And every aircraft carrier has a swimming pool and a hangar bay, too. Some Air Force guy planted that on them-- on the ship.

[00:42:18.38] So we planted-- with the Air Force guys, there's a bar on a B-52 because the missions are so long from Guam to Hanoi and back again, and the Air Force guys can't fly without alcohol. They really believed that. The part of their thing was no one could do what we do without being drunk. And maybe there's a grain of truth to that.

[00:42:36.67] [LAUGHTER]

[00:42:38.26] So some poor Air Force guy's getting tortured to say where's the bar, what frame is the bar in a B-52.

[00:42:48.79] RICHARD STRATTON: I don't know the answer to that question because they were not permitted. This is an interesting thing you learn about people living in a communist system. If they were not permitted to talk to us, they were given a few code words that they could say to us. For example, they couldn't tell you to get dressed. This was, "Get dressed into your mess dress. They weren't even allowed to say those words. So if they had any inclination to be kind to you, they'd be gone because some people had said to me, oh, some guy was nice to me, never saw him again. So if their inclination was to do that, I don't know.

[00:43:28.33] But let me give you the reverse side of that. There's only one guy that if I saw today, I'd blow his brains out without a hesitation, and he was a political-- communist political senior officer interrogator who thoroughly got pleasure out of torturing people. Obviously. Gloried in it. The poor guy who was tying us up was just some poor corporal or something like that. That was his job. He was just doing his job. He took no pleasure in it, no delight in it. So it's hard-- it's hard to turn around to a fellow soldier and fault him for doing his job. You wished he wouldn't. But people who consciously got pleasure and did it just for the sake of doing it, I only ran across one guy.

[00:44:24.88] RICHARD STRATTON: Tap code was a life rung. It was difficult to figure out what they were doing when I first got there. In the isolation cells, some guy was tapping next to me, and I thought it was Morse code. And of course, we're taught Morse code when we're in preflight, and we forget it the next day. We really don't need it. Maybe 40 years ago, they needed it before I came in the service.

[00:44:55.70] But eventually, I figured out-- I could remember it from Boy Scouts and stuff like that. And it just didn't make sense. It wasn't going. And a good friend of mine from Richmond, Virginia, Paul Galanti, at risk of his life, is washing dishes with some other guy. And he's talking loud as if they're talking to each other, and he's really talking out the back window, the voice coming to me.

[00:45:21.92] And he says, first of all, who's senior? Are you an ensign? Are you lieutenant? Lieutenant commander? You know, oh my God, another lieutenant commander. And then he said, who won the Army Navy game? I didn't go to the Naval Academy. I'm not a jock. I could care less. And here this guy, as we're in the middle of a war, he wants to know who won the Army Navy game. I didn't know that, so that convinced him that I really was stupid.

[00:45:47.36] And then he gave us Stockdale and Risner's rules of survival. Since it was a new ball game we didn't learn in survival school. And then he said, the guys next to you are trying to communicate with you. He said, 5 by 5, American Football League quits victorious. And then the guards got him. Never saw Paul again until I came home.

[00:46:11.74] If you communicated, it was a sign of leadership, and you were tortured. Communicating with another prisoner up through 1969 was a life-threatening evolution on your part. That's why I say great heroism for someone willing to risk that.

[00:46:27.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Tap code your name and rank.

[00:46:30.31] [WOODEN MATERIAL SCRAPING THE FLOOR]

[00:46:30.73] RICHARD STRATTON: Too hard. How about--

[00:46:31.56] [KNOCKING WOODEN MATERIAL]

[00:46:35.56] --"hi"? The interesting part about the tap code was they figured it out eventually. They couldn't believe that we could tap that much. And at times, they would try to get us to come up on the wall and tap, so our call sign was [KNOCKING RHYTHMICALLY] What's that?

[00:46:54.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Bop-bop.

[00:46:55.38] RICHARD STRATTON: Yeah.

[00:46:56.34] [KNOCKING RHYTHMICALLY]

[00:46:56.44] BOTH: (SINGING) Shave-and-a-haircut. Two-bits.

[00:46:59.79] RICHARD STRATTON: You knew you had a gringo on the line. They go,

[00:47:02.48] [KNOCKING] shave and a hair cut two bits,

[00:47:05.85] and wonder why we never come up on line.

[00:47:07.88] JOE GALLOWAY: [GIGGLES]

[00:47:09.15] RICHARD STRATTON: And they just couldn't believe that you could get that much information in. But once he said, American Football League quits victorious, you got the first letter down that side of the box. Then you realized the idiots had dropped the letter K. Why the letter K? Some engineer did that. We have a hard letter in C, so we don't need the K. Wait a minute. We're not talking to each other.

[00:47:37.85] JOE GALLOWAY: [CHUCKLES]

[00:47:41.07] RICHARD STRATTON: And I really fought myself that I knew the tap code before I ever went. The military didn't teach it to me. It's in the novel Darkness at Noon.

[00:47:53.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Huh.

[00:47:54.41] RICHARD STRATTON: It was used by coal miners trapped in coal mines and stuff like that, in various languages, the quadratic alphabet, 5 by 5. But I knew it from reading Darkness at Noon, and I had forgotten it.

[00:48:16.45] RICHARD STRATTON: The Vietnamese communists would release people down south and up north for propaganda purposes. And in North Vietnam, it was usually a reward for a visiting communist peace group, communist American peace group preferably. And they would start grooming people to release. And they-- for some reason, the number three was magical to them. Still haven't figured that out. But they would release people in threes.

[00:48:52.88] And we figured out what was going on, and of course, the order was you don't go. People who took advantage of that betrayed us, betrayed the country, and, far as I'm concerned, are guilty of treason. But that's another story. There were very few that did that.

[00:49:15.12] But realizing that it was going on, we said to ourselves, why don't we-- our rule before Henry Kissinger decided the rule for release was typical Navy-- women and children first. Sick and wounded are the first to go out of here. And then we go out-- the most junior guy goes out, and then the senior guy is the last one out. Unless you're running an Italian cruise ship, the captain of the ship is the last one to go off the ship, right?

[00:49:45.29] So that was our order. So we had access to a guy, a seaman apprentice that fell off the back of the USS Canberra, Douglas Brent Hegdahl III. And I ended up living with Doug for about two months. The guy has a phenomenal memory. For example, he could say the Gettysburg Address backwards. He had memorized 256 names of aviators that we had contact with that were downed in Vietnam.

[00:50:16.52] Some of the names were suspect because of spelling and [KNOCKING ON WOODEN MATERIAL] tapping through the tap code. So you'd get a dog's name or a cat's name, Social Security number, some family item to put next to the name to verify the quality of the name. Rob Doremus from Ohio was in there as Doremus, door muff, and dormouse. But Doremus had twin daughters, and that was enough to identify him within the Navy system.

[00:50:48.11] So Doug had all these memorized. He has them memorized to this day. He sings them to Old MacDonald Had a Farm. Strange. Who would want to keep them memorized? But he has. So we said, why not, if we could get this guy out of here, we give him all the stories about what happened to us-- the story behind the bowing picture, the story behind Paul Galanti on the cover of Life magazine with the inverted Hawaiian peace sign airbrushed out by Life magazine because we're too delicate to see it. Paul's nephews thought that he had lost both his fingers in prison. They were surprised to see him come back with all his digits.

[00:51:28.98] So we worked on him and gave him all the information we could and then said, you may make yourself available. You can't do anything. You can't betray the country-- no treason, no propaganda, and stuff like that. But you can let them throw yourself out of the country because we would say, we'll throw ourselves under the wheels of the truck-- McCain-- I'll throw myself under the wheels of the truck before I go home early.

[00:51:59.04] And that was our philosophy, and they knew it, that we would cause some scene that would make it not profitable. And Doug was not required to do that. Doug could just go along. They thought he was stupid. In fact, his name amongst the Vietnamese guides were, he was the incredibly stupid one. And they eventually sent him home.

[00:52:21.75] And of course, you talk about what was your high point. You talk about the high point of getting into their knickers because our job was to do anything, like Jim Stockdale said, to counter whatever they wanted. They wanted to have good propaganda. They told us, we're not going to try and defeat you on the field of battle. They told every one of us that. We're going to defeat you at home. We're going to make friends with every dissident group in your country, whether we agree with them politically or not. They're going to cause your government to withdraw. And then we're going to become the second Japan of Asia. That's exactly what happened.



[00:52:55.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Worked when they fought the French.

[00:52:59.03] RICHARD STRATTON: Yeah. So that was the name of the game.

[00:53:01.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:53:02.28] RICHARD STRATTON: So we beat them at their own game. We got this home. So that was my high point, was our plan coming together.

[00:53:14.59] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, the best day I had was the day that Doug left.

[00:53:17.14] JOE GALLOWAY: Really?

[00:53:18.10] RICHARD STRATTON: And-- truly. Because I never knew for six months that anybody figured out the bowing thing that I was doing worked. So I could take no pleasure in that by the time we were off on something else. But you talk about instant gratification because you didn't know until the very last minute whether that thing was going to work. And when he was out of there, you talk about a high, saying, boy, we did it.

[00:53:50.65] RICHARD STRATTON: Worst day was the day they made me give more than name, rank, serial number, date of birth. I thought I was the only guy that was a rat fink and too weak, wimp, and everything else. And thank God for Paul Galanti. He said, when they break you, don't feel bad. It's happened to all of us.

[00:54:09.79] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:54:10.18] RICHARD STRATTON: And I said, Paul, it's too late. They already did it.  
[CHUCKLES]

[00:54:18.00] RICHARD STRATTON: 2,251 days, 10 hours, and 20 minutes.

[00:54:22.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you, during that time, receive any message from your family?

[00:54:28.05] RICHARD STRATTON: I got stuff from my family. As a family, they wrote three letters a month. I probably got about four letters. And they sent beer-- peace groups coming in. Women Strike for Peace and folks like that were using their ability to get mail back and forth as a justification for their treason. And for the first three years, I was tortured to write letters. And I would get letters-- I would get a few letters back, which was OK. They knew that I was all right.

[00:55:09.22] So when Kissinger negotiated letters, then there was a group of us who had been tortured to write letters who refused to write letters. So for two years, I didn't write any letters at all. And you talk about one wife being very angry with you when she found out that that was a voluntary thing.

[00:55:29.11] JOE GALLOWAY: How much news did you receive about the war from home other than enemy propaganda?

[00:55:37.36] RICHARD STRATTON: Every new shoot-down. It was part of the reason-- when you tapped up on-- got somebody on line. Was after you found out who was the senior guy and established that, you gave him the rules of the road, what our rules were, and stuff like that, any names that he had because that was critical to bring out names and stuff like that. Then the next was basically the news. And in many cases, you didn't like the news you were getting.

[00:56:06.07] Everybody-- I won't say everybody. A large number of my shipmates would always say, we're going home next Christmas and stuff like that. If anyone thought about it and studied it, as I unfortunately had done, we were going to be there for 25 years. If we did it right, we would have had a military presence in South Vietnam for 25 years. And the North Vietnamese would never let a prisoner go as long as there were Americans down there. So it was going to be a long haul.

[00:56:38.33] So the guys would rap up on the wall and say, we're going to be home by Christmas. And one guy says-- I told a friend of ours, Larry Guarino, I told him, no. He banged off the wall with a danger-- and he wouldn't communicate with me for a year because I brought bad news.

[00:56:54.89] But they'd bring in the good news, and you'd compare it. And then Hanoi Hannah-- they'd piped that into the cells most evenings. And when Hanoi Hannah would say, oh, the economy's going to hell in a handbasket, it just dropped to 750, well, it was 650 when I left the States, so things can't be too bad. And then they'd come up and say, well, America may be able to put a man on the moon, but they can't do this. So we figured out there's a man on the moon. So they were giving away stuff, too.

[00:57:27.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:57:32.68] RICHARD STRATTON: I came out on March 4 of 1973. There were two releases before me. There was a special release for Henry Kissinger. I don't-- very frankly-- there were three flights out that day-- I don't know which of the flights that I was on. But it was-- we never believed that it was really going to take place.

[00:57:59.76] When the first release took place, we wrote letters home on cigarette paper and stuff like that and had those crowd smuggle letters out because we figured they'd release one bunch, and then they'd renege on it, because that had been their habit. And sure enough, they had a special release for Henry Kissinger. And that was not within the system. Those guys didn't want to go. We finally ordered them to go ahead and go out of there because there were a few sick people in that one.

[00:58:31.57] So we figured that if-- at best, they would turn the buses around. At worst, they'd shoot us down on the way over as we went feet wet. So we didn't even acknowledge the fact that we were free until we were feet wet. And the guy finally announced, he says, OK, we're out of range of Hanoi now, and then the whole airplane just went wild.

[00:58:51.79] We were amazed at the warmth of the reception. We thought that-- we were well aware of the experience of the Korean POWs when they came home. Some of them were court-martialed. They were all suspect. They were pushed off to the side. To this day, the country has been brainwashed by that one book, *In Every War But One*, which was a fallacious study of a very few people that they were all a bunch of quitters in prison and stuff like that. That wasn't true in the Korean War. It's a myth that was perpetuated by an Army psychiatrist that we ended up making the head of DOD Medical, but that's another story.

[00:59:37.05] JOE GALLOWAY: When all of you got home, were among you people that you thought should have been court-martialed?

[00:59:52.57] RICHARD STRATTON: We started debriefing as soon as we got on the airplane. They wanted to pump numbers out of us and stuff like that. You had one escort officer. They thought I was dingy, so they gave me two. And well, they didn't know because of that bowing thing. They didn't really in their own heart of hearts whether I was brainwashed or what was going on there, so they weren't taking any chances with that.

[01:00:17.12] But they were doing their job, so they were taking information for you. And stuff that you thought people were performing less than well, they put them on a special reserved debrief that wasn't even generally given in the classified debrief. That was sort of nonforeign dissemination, ESI type of information.

[01:00:41.75] We brought-- Jim Stockdale brought charges against the two senior people who betrayed us. We tried to bring charges against the 12 who went home early-- the 11 of the 12. Doug was legal. The 11 of the 12. One of the Air Force colonels tried to bring charges against a group of about eight enlisted in his camp who were cooperating with the enemy, and the politicians basically said, no. No can do.

[01:01:08.81] JOE GALLOWAY: No court martials.

[01:01:09.86] RICHARD STRATTON: No court martials.

[01:01:10.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Except Garwood.

[01:01:12.68] RICHARD STRATTON: Well, Garwood was a deserter, and so he didn't-- and he came home of his own free will. I guess he got tired of the chow and came home. So he was a different category.

[01:01:26.59] JOE GALLOWAY: How much contact have you had with the fellow POWs over the years?

[01:01:33.43] RICHARD STRATTON: Probably, 2/3 of us keep in close contact. There's about a third of us that didn't ever want to hear or think of the experience again and went off into the woodwork someplace. But we just had a reunion out-- a 40th reunion of release out at the Nixon Library this spring, and there were 200 of the guys showed up, which is about average for our reunions.

[01:02:02.53] But I've kept-- we have about seven people here in the local area that we get together every Lunar New Year, every Tet. And we celebrate the Vietnamese New Year and our freedom. So we keep in contact. We have a NAM-POW organization with a net and that type of stuff. We do a good job in keeping contact.

[01:02:25.93] JOE GALLOWAY: Was it difficult for you readjusting to life after the war?

[01:02:32.82] RICHARD STRATTON: To flying?

[01:02:34.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Like living free again.

[01:02:38.18] RICHARD STRATTON: Oh. Not really. We had-- when you consider the amount of time that we had in jail, and the last two or three years we were in larger living groups, and with the superb leadership we had, we'd worked out most of our problems, our hang-ups because it was basically group therapy. What else you got to do? And we'd come to grips with what had happened to us, what we had done, what we had not done, and stuff like that, ironed out most of what you'd consider to be PTSD-- had that under control.

[01:03:12.80] So the greatest problem was for our family. People don't give any credit to our families. Our families, they hung in there. They worked hard with the National League of Families with the bracelet wearing, the letter writing for better treatment, stuff like that.

[01:03:28.31] Every day, we knew that we were in good shape. We knew you were going to bring us home. We kind of wondered why it was taking so long, but we knew you'd get us home. Our families didn't know that. Every day, we knew we were OK. We knew we were all nuts, so we accepted that and learned to live with it. Our family didn't have the faintest idea. Animal, mineral, vegetable?

[01:03:48.33] My wife saw that bowing picture. She knew I was alive, but she didn't know what I was. And she knew I was goofy when I left, but how bad when I came home. And then the kids. Mine were one, three, and five when I left, Pat, Mike, and Charlie. And I came home seven years later from the time I deployed. The one-year-old had-- I took his girlfriend back-- threw a bag of quarters out in the lawn, put Vaseline on the doorknob. He lost his girlfriend. And it took him a long-- even to this day, his relationship with me perhaps is the hardest getting back into the swing of things. The oldest boy, after six months, asked my wife, when's he going back to sea again?

[01:04:32.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you reinstitute boot camp?

[01:04:36.26] RICHARD STRATTON: The only-- with the hair. The long hair really bothered me. And I like girls. I wish that I had a few girls. All my grandkids are girls, so I got that. But somehow, a boy looking like a girl bothered me. So we went through a flat-- the oldest boy finally said, you keep saying don't knock it unless you've tried it. So he made me grow my hair out. That lasted probably about eight months because mine just goes straight up. I mean--

[01:05:08.01] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[01:05:09.23] RICHARD STRATTON: So that was the only real problem.

[01:05:20.26] RICHARD STRATTON: The Vietnam War is remembered as a failure. It was remembered as a mistaken piece of foreign policy. And the history has been written by people who have a vested interest in downplaying the country, downplaying the government, and don't know what they're talking about. As I said earlier on, we won the war three times with the objectives we had. General Abrams was the last guy-- Tet-- Walter "Crankcase" Cronkite says we lost the war. We had won the war. The Tet Offensive, we had totally defeated the indigenous Vietnamese communists in South Vietnam. You know, they--

[01:05:59.62] We keep winning the war, and some idiot goes and loses it. So they write it up as a bad war, there is no such thing as the Domino Theory, Ho Chi Minh is the George Washington of the country, and all of this. And it's all pie in the sky. But you ask people today, they'll say it was a failure and a mistake. And they all hearken back, and they say, just look at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, and everybody sheds a tear. I say, go look for the Korean War Memorial in Washington.