

Trefry, Richard US Army

[00:00:16.02] RICHARD TREFRY: I was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts. My mother came from Newburyport, and my father came from Marblehead. So I tell people, you want to be very careful how you pick your parents. And I happened to be the son of a couple of people who love history. And so I was brought up with a great interest in history.

[00:00:40.59] JOE GALLOWAY: When were you born?

[00:00:43.11] RICHARD TREFRY: 6 August, 1924. I had one sister. She passed away three years ago. She was a registered nurse, and was very well thought of in the nursing field up there.

[00:00:57.96] My father was a politician for a few years. He was in-- the house of representatives of Massachusetts is called the General Court, and he was in that for four years, I guess. And then he was in the state senate for, I think, four years.

[00:01:23.03] And then he became a county commissioner, building the roads, and bridges, and all that stuff. And he got beat in the 1934 election, when President Roosevelt took over. He was a very arch Republican, no question about that. In Massachusetts.

[00:01:42.72] JOE GALLOWAY: I didn't know there were any of those.

[00:01:45.02] RICHARD TREFRY: There's a few. And then he was appointed to the bench. He was a trial justice. And he had that job until he died. And--

[00:01:57.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Was he a lawyer?

[00:01:58.28] RICHARD TREFRY: He was a lawyer, yeah.

[00:02:00.64] JOE GALLOWAY: And you consider Newburyport, Massachusetts your hometown?

[00:02:05.68] RICHARD TREFRY: No, because after I was born, my mother was in the hospital, I guess, for four or five days, and then I came to Marblehead. I went to all the Marblehead schools. But my grandparents lived down in Newburyport. And it was a very close family.

[00:02:23.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:02:29.50] RICHARD TREFRY: I graduated from high school in '52-- or '42, and I went to Dartmouth for a year. And after November of '42, you may remember, everybody was going to go be a medic, or a cook, or something or other. We weren't getting any infantrymen.

[00:02:53.77] And so people don't remember this, but after November 10th, I think it was, '42, you went into the draft. You couldn't enlist. You had to go in through the draft. And they

determined where you went. You had to fill out a form that went into what kind of work had you done.

[00:03:17.38] Well, in my high school years, I was very interested in the weather. And I got a job up on top of Mount Washington for a month while I was going to Dartmouth over Christmas. They were short one guy, and I went up and had a wonderful time up there.

[00:03:37.03] And then I worked for Blue Hill Observatory as a night observer, and there were night watchman. And I did that for, oh, I think a month and a half. And then I entered-- I got sworn in on the 21st of June, 1943.

[00:03:57.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Into the Army?

[00:03:58.30] RICHARD TREFRY: Into the Army. And I got sent to Westover Field. And I was there about four months. I went to work right in the weather station. And then I got transferred to Republic Aviation.

[00:04:16.90] They had an airfield down here in Farmingdale, Long Island, where the pilots would come in and pick up their airplanes, and then take them back to the squadron. The interesting part of that was I never drew a weather map while I was there because The New York Times had a transmission machine, called a fax.

[00:04:36.07] And so when we wanted the weather map, we just turned the machine on and get the latest weather. It was great. Then I got sent to school down at Washington National Airport. You can see, I had a rough time.

[00:04:48.26] JOE GALLOWAY: Rough war you fought.

[00:04:49.27] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah, really. And I went to school down--

[00:04:54.20] JOE GALLOWAY: What's your rank by this time?

[00:04:56.08] RICHARD TREFRY: I was a PFC.

[00:04:57.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:04:57.82] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. And the Army had a way of humbling one. I got sent down to Washington National Airport, and I went to radiosonde school, and Ray Winson had this little radio that they put on a balloon and send up. And I paid for my easy life. I ended up on the northeast coast of Greenland.

[00:05:26.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my.

[00:05:26.79] RICHARD TREFRY: The furthest north that we were, just a little bit short of the Arctic Circle, but in a place called Ikateq, Greenland. And it was a fascinating experience,

particularly around D-Day. There were four stations on the east coast of Greenland, Ikateq, Comanche Bay, Adelaer, and Cape Farewell.

[00:05:52.92] And there was a-- I know there was one ship out there, a weather ship. And the Germans torpedoed it, and it just disappeared. But if you look at the D-Day maps of weather, the weather station that's furthest on the north side of Greenland, that's us.

[00:06:12.96] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. How did you come to be commissioned in the U.S. Army?

[00:06:19.78] RICHARD TREFRY: Well, I had tried a couple of years to get into West Point. My father gave me a set of four books when I was eight years old, Dick Prescott's First Year at West Point, right through the four years. Jeez, I would like to go to West Point. But I was-- I thought I was too dumb to do it. And so I went to Dartmouth.

[00:06:46.39] But then I found out Greenland Base Command had one vacancy. And so I took the exam and I came in second out of four. That was enough to send me back to the prep school the Army ran at Lafayette College. And I didn't make it that year.

[00:07:07.83] But after the 1st of July, a whole bunch of guys quit and I got a call from my congressman wanting to know if I was-- he said, the war department has told me that of my four cadets, all of them have left.

[00:07:28.41] And oh God was he mad. And he said, I'll tell you what, if you promise me you won't quit, I'll give you a principal appointment. And I said, I may get kicked out for being dumb, I may get kicked out for raising hell, I won't get married on you and I won't quit. He says, the appointment is yours.

[00:07:49.71] JOE GALLOWAY: So you were class of-- ?

[00:07:51.39] RICHARD TREFRY: '50.

[00:07:52.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Class of 1950. You're a lucky guy.

[00:07:55.17] RICHARD TREFRY: Yes. We lost 42 classmates. As a matter of fact, eight months after we graduated, I had lost both of my roommates.

[00:08:03.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Wow.

[00:08:04.33] RICHARD TREFRY: One guy in Korea and one in a plane crash. He was in the flying cadets.

[00:08:10.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, did you do Korea?

[00:08:12.43] RICHARD TREFRY: No, not until '59. I went over in '58, '59. I left the advanced course in the artillery school, and I went to Korea, and I converted an 8-inch outfit in the old Pentomic Army for Honest Johns. And I had the Honest John Battery in the 7th Division.

[00:08:41.41] JOE GALLOWAY: You were artillery branch?

[00:08:42.91] RICHARD TREFRY: I was field artillery, yeah.

[00:08:49.99] JOE GALLOWAY: When did Vietnam come on your scope?

[00:08:53.53] RICHARD TREFRY: Very early. I went to Armed Forces Staff College in class 39. And I stopped over at personnel and asked them if they had anything in mind, and they said, no. They said, what would you like to do? I said, I'd love to activate a battalion and take it to Vietnam. This is '66.

[00:09:28.27] And I didn't hear another word until about a week before graduation. And I got a call and they said, do you still want to do what you said you wanted to do? I said, what did I say I wanted to do?

[00:09:42.94] They said, you wanted to activate a battalion and take it to Vietnam. And I said, sold. And they said, well, you're not going to be able to take any leave. That's all right. And I said, what caliber is this? And they said, 175s.

[00:10:07.98] And I was supposed to go in down around Saigon. I reported out to Fort Sill on the 26th of June. We activated the battalion on the 9th of July. We took the battery and battalion test combined from the 20th of August to the 26th of August, and we came in that afternoon and started to ship to Vietnam.

[00:10:37.38] JOE GALLOWAY: Shipped all your stuff and all your people.

[00:10:40.08] RICHARD TREFRY: All except the advance party, which I led. There were 15 enlisted and 10 officers, including myself.

[00:10:48.27] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, in your artillery battalion, how many officers and men?

[00:10:54.33] RICHARD TREFRY: It was, I believe, 540.

[00:10:56.46] JOE GALLOWAY: 540 men and officers?

[00:10:58.80] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah.

[00:11:05.13] JOE GALLOWAY: They were taking ship, or flying the troops in, or how did it work?

[00:11:10.53] RICHARD TREFRY: They got on trains, and shipped to Oakland, California. And got on board a transport, named the Eltinge, E-L-T-I-N-G-E, I guess.

[00:11:26.03] JOE GALLOWAY: And this is a military transport ship?

[00:11:29.21] RICHARD TREFRY: Military transport.

[00:11:30.35] JOE GALLOWAY: And you were taking your men, your officers, and your guns all at once?

[00:11:35.14] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. The guns went on the Drake Victory, and all the trucks. And as I say, I was supposed to go in around Saigon. I had nine officers, plus myself, and 15 enlisted men, and we went over in a 130.

[00:11:51.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Almost as slow as a ship.

[00:11:54.98] RICHARD TREFRY: Well, Travis, Hickam, Wake, Guam, Mactan, and finally, Saigon.

[00:12:04.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Finally, Saigon.

[00:12:05.57] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. And I got there and they said-- I was given the maps and stuff I was supposed to learn around Saigon. They said, don't unpack anything. There's a meeting right now, the Marines are in desperate straits up there. It's the only war going on. This was the 3rd of October.

[00:12:28.07] JOE GALLOWAY: 1967?

[00:12:30.56] RICHARD TREFRY: Six.

[00:12:31.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Six?

[00:12:32.09] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. And sure enough, they told me, we'll come and get you at three in the morning and--

[00:12:42.87] JOE GALLOWAY: We're going north.

[00:12:44.16] RICHARD TREFRY: --we're going north. And that turned into one of the wildest adventures a guy could have. And how I got there was, the Marines were really in tough shape, and they had one division up there.

[00:13:00.45] And General Westmoreland wanted to protect Khe Sanh. And I had the only guns that could reach Khe Sanh from Dong Ha. And the Marines and I built and christened Camp Carroll.

[00:13:19.10] And I became under the OPCON of the 12th Marines, which is the DIVARTY of the 3rd Marine Division. And the S-3 of the 12th Marines was a guy named Al Gray. And he and I struck up a friendship both professional and personal that lasts to this day. And--

[00:13:47.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Good man.

[00:13:48.78] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh, wonderful guy.

[00:13:50.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, was Lew Walt still the commanding general?

[00:13:53.35] RICHARD TREFRY: Lew Walt was the commanding general.

[00:13:55.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Another great man.

[00:13:56.27] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh, sure was. I'll tell you a funny story about him. I'd been up there a week and the only thing I didn't get when I shipped was the air section. On the TOV, I was authorized two airplanes, a tank truck, a couple of Jeeps, and that was it. And it said--

[00:14:21.54] JOE GALLOWAY: These are L-19-type spotter planes?

[00:14:24.66] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah, yeah.

[00:14:25.01] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:14:25.69] RICHARD TREFRY: And it was lined out web talk when authorized by the theater of overseas commander. So I landed in Da Nang, and they took me over to III MAF headquarters.

[00:14:42.18] And John Chaisson was the three of III MAF and he said, Colonel, how many vehicles do you have? I said, well, if you count the trailers, 232. He said, Jesus. He said, that's more than the Marines have got in all the III MAF.

[00:15:04.31] Well, we had it easy until March. On the night of 6 March, we got hit by everything. As a matter of fact, this was the first time they used 122-millimeter rockets. And on the tail-- the tail fins were spring loaded, and very crude launching thing. And all the lettering was acrylic.

[00:15:31.55] And of all the nights, if you can imagine, on the field telephone calling Saigon. And my old DIVARTY commander in the III MAF was Ben Reed, and he had gone down there to be the G2 at III MAF.

[00:15:50.69] And I said, we got holes up here that you can't believe. And he said, well, we'll be up in the morning. Well, here comes Lew Walt and the whole entourage.

[00:16:05.06] JOE GALLOWAY: You've been on the ground there a week?

[00:16:08.18] RICHARD TREFRY: No, a little bit-- it was about five months. And General Walt, he comes up and says, is there anything I can do for you? And I said, well, everybody has told me that you want my air section. And he said, do you know General Westmoreland? I said, yeah. I was a TAC at West Point when he was the superintendent.

[00:16:37.56] And he came up the next Sunday, and Walt was there. And General Westmoreland says, is there anything I can get you, Dick? And I said, yes, sir. I was supposed to get an air section, and they cut me loose.

[00:16:53.35] And he says, gentlemen, I sent this battalion up here to save you guys, and I find he's been here a week or ten days and hasn't even registered. And I look at Lew Walt and I'm saying, my career is over.

[00:17:11.17] Well, Westmoreland goes to get in the chopper. And Walt comes up to me and says, if you got any more complaints, I'd appreciate you tell me and not crumbless MACV.

[00:17:22.00] Well, luckily, they went down to Dong Ha, and the guys-- from Woody Kyle, who had the division, on down-- they said, he just did what the hell we asked him to do. So I just went out for two or three hours, I didn't think I was going to last.

[00:17:37.57] But the next week, Lew came up, and jeez, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth. And I took him over to see battery. I had a kid who could make Berliners, these things stuffed with jelly.

[00:17:51.39] And the Marine patrols would come in two o'clock in the morning and go out. And this kid would make these Berliners for them. Walt says, Berliners on a field stove? Yeah, have one.

[00:18:06.89] JOE GALLOWAY: We need that man in the general's mess.

[00:18:09.29] RICHARD TREFRY: He turns around and says, write this kid up. And they did. But from there on in, Lew Walt, there wasn't anything he wouldn't do for me if I asked. And Al Gray-- like I say, Al Gray and I have stuck together all these-- as a matter of fact, he's the guy who got me on the board at American Military University.

[00:18:35.58] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your first impressions on arriving in Vietnam?

[00:18:40.92] RICHARD TREFRY: I corresponded with one other kid who had 175's. I was the second battalion in 175's. The 2d of the 32d was the first one over there, and I knew him. And I talked to him on the phone a couple of times.

[00:18:58.95] But we were up there all by ourselves. There wasn't any other Army stuff up there. They brought the 1st of the 40th up, which was a 105. And then they brought an air defense outfit up there. And they all came in after I got there.

[00:19:18.87] But we all got along with the Marines. And you can imagine some of the stuff that was going on up there. The Marines only had about five battalions up there all together.

[00:19:31.35] And the night of 6 March, we really got hit. And Lew Walt and the boys came up the next morning and he says, Dick, show me these holes you're talking about. So I said, there's one right across the street here.

[00:19:54.09] So we went over. And there was no rocks on Camp Carroll, it was just solid loam. It's just loam fused, it was like porcelain. It was 8 foot across and 8 foot deep.

[00:20:10.38] JOE GALLOWAY: This is a 122 rocket hit?

[00:20:13.03] RICHARD TREFRY: This was the first time they used those Russian rockets. And the next morning, the place was covered with blue from the Air Force and civilian jumpers. And everybody came to see these holes and the remnants of what we had. It damn near shredded every sandbag we had.

[00:20:31.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:20:31.74] RICHARD TREFRY: It was a wild weapon, I'll tell you. And then we started really getting it. And I was very fortunate in the period of time I had the battalion, I had seven killed and 80 odd wounded.

[00:20:47.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, I'm assuming you're digging down deeper as these things hit.

[00:20:55.41] RICHARD TREFRY: I insisted that everybody wear a flak jacket and a helmet. And the boys didn't take too kindly to this. But starting the 7th of March, you can't believe the number of shovels that were going back and forth, though.

[00:21:13.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, what does it take to dig in a 175 howitzer?

[00:21:18.82] RICHARD TREFRY: Not much. The biggest problem we had was mud. And Lew Walt brought up a MCB 7, a CB outfit from New Orleans.

[00:21:32.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Lots of bulldozers.

[00:21:33.35] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh, let me tell you. They came up and-- timbers, and they built gun pads, which became the authorized gun pads for Vietnam across the board, no matter what caliber they had. And they served a very, very useful purpose.

[00:21:53.05] And I kept a record of ups and downs. Every time we would fire 300 mills left or right, anything more than 300 mills, the gear housing on the elevation wheel and on the deflection wheel would break and all the lubricant would come out.

[00:22:15.83] Well, I brought the CB commander out to-- I said, you got anything that could fix this? And he said, yeah. He brought out some steel they were using to repair cruisers and battleships over there. And he built housing, and we never had another leak.

[00:22:34.31] JOE GALLOWAY: Never had another leak. JOE GALLOWAY: What responsibilities consume most of your time as a battery battalion commander?

[00:22:49.74] RICHARD TREFRY: I would say making sure that everything was running. So maintenance was a real problem. And I did something that I learned with the 70th Field in Germany.

[00:23:06.90] I controlled all the fire direction centers, and I had them double teamed, 12 hours on, 12 hours off. And pretty soon, everybody was copying what we did.

[00:23:22.84] And there wasn't much survey up there, so I took the survey team and converted them to fire direction center people. And I had the only radiosonde outfit on the DMZ, and we provided upper air observations to all the Marine missions that they had.

[00:23:52.72] Yeah. It was really-- we really did our share. And the net result of that was I still remember a hell of a lot of Marine battalion commanders, several of them made general. Al, of course, became commandant of the Marine Corps.

[00:24:19.62] JOE GALLOWAY: P.X. Kelley was a battalion commander up there about then?

[00:24:23.43] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah, yeah. He had left. Al was telling me one time, he said, do you think I'm ever going to be the commandant of the Marine Corps? And P.X. says, no. And he says, why not? He says, you're not married. Al's mother had been sick, and she had a nurse. Next thing you know, Al is married to the nurse.

[00:24:52.67] JOE GALLOWAY: He married his mother's nurse. [LAUGHTER]

[00:24:55.43] RICHARD TREFRY: And became the--

[00:24:56.42] JOE GALLOWAY: He waiting for the Marine Corps to issue him a wife.

[00:24:59.38] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. Wonderful guy.

[00:25:03.32] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your living conditions like?

[00:25:05.81] RICHARD TREFRY: I had a little ZP tent and--

[00:25:09.35] JOE GALLOWAY: Sandbagged, of course.

[00:25:10.72] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh, right up to as high as we could go. Yeah, as far as we could go. And the Marines didn't have this stuff. We did. And I was kind of worried.

[00:25:25.90] I didn't know whether to go ahead and put those things up or not. And General Kyle came up and I told him, I said, I can build these hooches, but you guys don't-- you're not authorized them. And he said, you go ahead.

[00:25:43.77] JOE GALLOWAY: The Marines were in shelter halves.

[00:25:46.02] RICHARD TREFRY: If they had that.

[00:25:46.95] JOE GALLOWAY: If they had that.

[00:25:47.97] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. I mean, it was a shame because they treated those guys-- the only break you got, if they got down, I would say to about 65, 70% strength, they'd pull them off and send them to Okinawa and bring another battalion down from Okinawa.

[00:26:10.26] JOE GALLOWAY: And then wear that one out.

[00:26:11.80] RICHARD TREFRY: And then they'd wear that one out. And my A battery went down with the 11th Marines, which is the Marine DIVARTY in the 1st Marine Division. And I would get down there once a month to check and see what was going on.

[00:26:33.30] They had a very unique situation. They were in position just south of My Lai, but in about 25 klicks. And so they had some info that a North Vietnamese ship coming into one of the beaches there. These guys got some info and sunk the ship.

[00:27:04.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh my.

[00:27:05.26] RICHARD TREFRY: So they asked me if they could--

[00:27:07.68] JOE GALLOWAY: A naval gun battle.

[00:27:08.89] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. They asked me, could they paint a ship on the guns? I said, you're going to light it up. It's OK with me. But that was a very unique--

[00:27:20.69] JOE GALLOWAY: Indeed.

[00:27:22.21] RICHARD TREFRY: I'll tell you what, when we left, we got the Navy Presidential Unit Citation, A battery got the Presidential Unit Navy-- Presidential Unit Citation for being with us, when they came back up, and one from the 11th Marines. Two.

[00:27:39.46] JOE GALLOWAY: They got two.

[00:27:40.24] RICHARD TREFRY: Yes. I was mad as hell.

[00:27:42.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, this was '66, '67. Any social tensions or turmoil in your outfit?

[00:27:50.35] RICHARD TREFRY: No.

[00:27:50.74] JOE GALLOWAY: None.

[00:27:51.67] RICHARD TREFRY: See, they were-- everything north of the river was part of the National Forest of Vietnam. There was no habitation there at all. And Route 9 from Dong Ha to Savannakhet in Laos was blocked off. It wasn't until just about the time I left the battalion that we could get stuff over the road on Route 9 to Khe Sanh.

[00:28:22.45] And later, I remember the day I left, I came off of Camp Carroll and there was a French marker. And Savannakhet was something like 223 kilometers. I said, well, I'll never see that. I ended up replacing Jack Vessey as the defense attache and head of the Mill Group. And I would go to Savannakhet very frequently.

[00:28:54.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Quite often, yeah.

[00:28:55.99] RICHARD TREFRY: But I never traveled the road.

[00:28:57.72] JOE GALLOWAY: You never got to drive the road. What did your troops do for recreation or off duty if they had any?

[00:29:05.97] RICHARD TREFRY: They didn't have any. And it was boring doing sandbags and stuff, but they did it. But after we got hit that night of 6 March, I had no problem.

[00:29:21.31] And then we started firing. I went through 120 gun tubes. And that was a real problem because they flew one gun tube up in a 130. And the airfield at Dong Ha was pierced steel planking. And you see a little hump moving about ten feet ahead of the nose wheel on the 130.

[00:29:49.88] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, no.

[00:29:50.58] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. So they had a ship called the Alaskan Sun, or some damn thing. But it was a civilian outfit, and we put the tubes on that and ran those up by water. And then we met them down in Dong Ha. And I had guys who could change a gun tube in about two hours and pull the old one off.

[00:30:19.85] And the old tubes, they said, no, no. We're not going to evacuate those. They make great shelter half roofs. And I don't know whether anybody's ever gone up there and dug them up, but we just buried them.

[00:30:35.64] And the only thing the Red Cross did for us, starting about the 10th of November, we started getting pretty-- showered with Agent Orange. And that lasted from about the 10th of November to about the middle of April. And every morning-- most every morning, three 130s would come over in echelon. And jeez, we thought we were getting a free shower.

[00:30:58.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:30:59.51] RICHARD TREFRY: And we were-- and it took a tremendous toll on my battalion. Spina bifida with kids. Most everybody had prostate trouble. I had a radical prostate in 1993. And there was no question in my mind that the Agent Orange, or the stuff that went in it, was devastating.

[00:31:32.51] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe significant actions that your unit provided gunfire for?

[00:31:40.22] RICHARD TREFRY: Well, there were several instances at Gio Linh, where you could fire a 175 at about-- a target about 100 to 150 meters. They get up that close, and you could--

[00:31:56.43] JOE GALLOWAY: You could knock them down and give them-- did you have flechette rounds?

[00:32:00.62] RICHARD TREFRY: No.

[00:32:01.49] JOE GALLOWAY: No.

[00:32:01.88] RICHARD TREFRY: The 175s didn't have that. But we had plenty of fuze quick. And we-- I think we took care of ourselves pretty well.

[00:32:15.68] JOE GALLOWAY: I would think.

[00:32:16.52] RICHARD TREFRY: I've seen some pictures of-- I was up there one day when Al went up there to command them, and you could hear the gunfire from up north.

[00:32:28.70] And so you had about 30 seconds to get under cover. And they had us zeroed in. It was like living on a base point is what it was. I rotated the batteries one month, and that's it. But despite--

[00:32:45.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, were you shooting back at these North Vietnamese guns?

[00:32:50.50] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh yeah.

[00:32:51.02] JOE GALLOWAY: You were having an artillery duel?

[00:32:52.76] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, anytime they--

[00:32:56.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Who was winning?

[00:32:58.58] RICHARD TREFRY: We never lost Gio Linh. We never lost Con Thien. And we never lost the Rockpile. RICHARD TREFRY: The first thing is, the first few months we were up there, no one knew we were there. And that made life very easy for me because I didn't have to worry about night spots and attractive Vietnamese women. There was nothing there.

[00:33:33.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Nothing there. And an absence of higher headquarters is wonderful.

[00:33:39.98] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh yeah. Then, nobody wanted to come up there. And we had-- I remember, we had a guy-- two guys came up, one was a full colonel and one was a lieutenant colonel. And they came out of I Force-V And later on, I saw that they had given themselves Bronze Stars for just coming up there.

[00:34:01.45] JOE GALLOWAY: For coming up and having lunch?

[00:34:03.37] RICHARD TREFRY: Not that long, just about 20 minutes on the ground.

[00:34:08.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, it's a good thing there wasn't any incoming, they would have got Silver Stars.

[00:34:11.90] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh God, yeah, at least. RICHARD TREFRY: The best day I had. I guess, the night of 6/7 March was when we really got hit, but that's the first time they used the Russian rocket. And we had-- Chinese rockets were solid, and they just-- they were peeled back. But these Russian rockets were insidious.

[00:34:45.48] And luckily, the whole-- after that, the casualties I took were people challenging the system. And you hated to see it, but like I say, seven guys got killed.

[00:35:07.42] And pretty soon, Lew Walt and Cushman followed him. They always brought people up to-- Lew Walt would say, these are my Big Berthas. But that-- I would say, that night of 6/7 March, I was proudest of that outfit.

[00:35:35.34] RICHARD TREFRY: The day I left. I had a month to go. The tour was six months, and I had 12 months. And they took me out. I didn't want to go. But they threw in a couple of things that I didn't know about, but they brought me out.

[00:36:01.50] And I remember, the guy down at I Force-V artillery, the deputies. I said, I wish you guys had left me up there so I could complete a year. And he said, we didn't want to get you killed.

[00:36:16.65] But he said, we got something for you to do. We want you to analyze around Nha Trang if you were a North Vietnamese rocketeer, where would you position yourself to be most effective in hitting us?

[00:36:33.99] And so I put a little team together, I guess about five or six guys. And we did a hell of a map scan. And it ended up-- everybody wanted one. But because of that, I got sent to the Malaysian Ministry of Defense in Kuala Lumpur. And they were very interested in the rockets and the rocket attacks that we had.

[00:36:58.21] And then I guess they heard about us down in Singapore, so I got delayed in Singapore for three days with the Singapore Ministry of Defense on how they used rockets.

[00:37:10.76] JOE GALLOWAY: You became the rocket expert.

[00:37:12.81] RICHARD TREFRY: I became the rocket expert, yeah. RICHARD TREFRY: Up on the DMZ, I had-- the only contact I had was with the Vietnamese. I didn't have any Aussies up there.

[00:37:34.13] We had an Air Force outfit up there, called Tally Ho. And they were taking photographs. They had some L-19s. RICHARD TREFRY: I was fortunate. I had-- the division commander of the Vietnamese division up there.

[00:38:00.69] JOE GALLOWAY: First Division I think.

[00:38:01.59] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah, the 1st division. That division commander was the best one I saw.

[00:38:07.89] JOE GALLOWAY: He was the best one in the South Vietnamese Army.

[00:38:10.13] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah, he was. And he was a great guy. He was a true professional. And fortunately, he is the only one I had to deal with.

[00:38:21.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you have any dealings at all with civilians? There weren't many up there.

[00:38:26.11] RICHARD TREFRY: No. Civilians were prohibited from Vietnam. They wouldn't allow them up there or anywhere. When they cleaned out the DMZ to put in Rumsfeld's--

[00:38:40.33] JOE GALLOWAY: McNamara's--

[00:38:42.94] RICHARD TREFRY: McNamara's 9-mile fairway. That was a death trap. And you sent somebody out there to do some work, and they'd be out there 15 minutes and the incoming would start.

[00:38:57.70] But it was so stupid because when you came in about 15 miles, and here's a couple of mountains. And from there on in, it was mountainous terrain to Laos.

[00:39:13.83] JOE GALLOWAY: No way you're going to dig a trench--

[00:39:15.51] RICHARD TREFRY: No way.

[00:39:16.38] JOE GALLOWAY: --through there.

[00:39:17.13] RICHARD TREFRY: No, no. And they just kept moving further west.

[00:39:26.87] JOE GALLOWAY: You got a wife and kids back home?

[00:39:29.15] RICHARD TREFRY: No. I was a bachelor.

[00:39:30.83] JOE GALLOWAY: You were a bachelor?

[00:39:32.67] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. I met a girl when I was at West Point as a TAC. And you ought to get her to tell the story sometime. And she was a supervisor of hostesses for TWA.

[00:39:53.29] And so she flew to Europe a couple of times a week. And while I was there in Vietnam, she was flying in Europe. And she was considered part of management. She could fly as far west as Hawaii, and then she had to go back. So I never saw her while we were over there.

[00:40:12.72] But when I came back, she wasn't ready to get married yet and I couldn't figure out why until the summer of '59, and I had the DIVARTY down at Fort Hood.

[00:40:31.05] And she called me up and said, are you still serious about having me as a wife? And I said, yeah, but I wouldn't get you down to Fort Hood in the summertime. And she said, well, I'm coming down.

[00:40:45.39] And what I found out was she was the second oldest of eight brothers and sisters. She made sure that every brother and sister got through school, and she bought a small farm for her mother and father. And then, and only then--

[00:41:06.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Then she was ready.

[00:41:07.72] RICHARD TREFRY: Then she was ready. And we got married at Fort Hood.

[00:41:11.64] JOE GALLOWAY: And still are.

[00:41:12.83] RICHARD TREFRY: Still are, yeah.

[00:41:15.96] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, she picked well, and so did you.

[00:41:19.41] RICHARD TREFRY: Let's say, she lost, I gained.

[00:41:25.89] JOE GALLOWAY: Were you keeping an eye on the news from home? The demonstrations were starting, the antiwar feelings were at least cranking up.

[00:41:37.61] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. We kept pretty much-- a lot of guys had radios. And we picked up AFN. That was about all we could get, was AFN.

[00:41:47.91] JOE GALLOWAY: Get a Stars and Stripes now and then.

[00:41:50.46] RICHARD TREFRY: Now and then, yeah.

[00:41:52.77] JOE GALLOWAY: Did the news have any effect on the morale of your troops who just--

[00:41:57.09] RICHARD TREFRY: No. I was very lucky. Well, two weeks ago, we had our 17th battalion reunion. And they went down to-- I tried to indirectly entice them into going to Gettysburg again.

[00:42:17.32] We went up there twice, and they loved that. And I got them up to the War College. And then we went to Williamsburg twice. And then they told me they'd had enough history. They wanted to get into Pigeon Forge.

[00:42:33.23] JOE GALLOWAY: And that's a spiral downward, and they'll end up in Branson, Missouri.

[00:42:38.27] RICHARD TREFRY: That was the first two places, Branson. And then Tupelo in Mississippi, that's nothing but casinos ten miles apart, jeez. RICHARD TREFRY: Very inquisitive people.

[00:42:57.53] They wanted to know really what happened, what was really going on over there. And I was invited to speak at a lot of Rotary Clubs, and Lions Clubs, and that kind of stuff.

[00:43:11.55] And at the War College, I was part of a team that went out to talk to-- I remember, we went to Penn State, a lot of high schools-- senior classes in high schools. And I've got to say, I was always treated with great deference and dignity.

[00:43:31.61] JOE GALLOWAY: This is early in the war years?

[00:43:33.68] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh yeah, well, this is '66, '67, yeah.

[00:43:36.95] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, but--

[00:43:38.18] RICHARD TREFRY: It was just beginning--

[00:43:39.56] JOE GALLOWAY: It was going to get a lot worse.

[00:43:41.42] RICHARD TREFRY: It sure was. It sure was.

[00:43:43.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about your immediate assignment after the Vietnam tour, where did they send you to?

[00:43:50.78] RICHARD TREFRY: The Pentagon.

[00:43:51.34] JOE GALLOWAY: The Pentagon.

[00:43:52.64] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah, this was my first tour in the Pentagon. And I was-- I'm just trying to think. I was in morale and services. And I had some very interesting things there.

[00:44:20.59] I did the paper on who's eligible to be buried in Arlington. I rewrote the flag FM. We got into metallic insignia. That caused a lot of discussion. And gee, there were so many things like that.

[00:44:49.75] You remember the old character guidance program? That was beginning to turn into a religious exercise, and I had to go up and see the vice about that one. And I told him, I said--

[00:45:01.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Can't go there.

[00:45:02.64] RICHARD TREFRY: We should not go that way. And he fell off. And he'd been a big promoter of that. And that solved that problem. That was really beginning to cause a stir.

[00:45:20.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about Laos.

[00:45:21.56] RICHARD TREFRY: Well, after--

[00:45:25.01] JOE GALLOWAY: You were sent there what year?

[00:45:27.56] RICHARD TREFRY: '73. I got out of the War College in '69 and I went down to Fort Hood, and was the DIVARTY commander of the 1st Armor Division. And then I went up as the chief. When they brought the Cav back, they sent the 1st to Germany and we became the Cav.

[00:45:43.31] And I was the chief of staff there, and I came out on the BG's list. And there were eight guys from Fort Hood made BGs that year. And everybody got orders, but me.

[00:45:55.85] And I'd ask them, what do you want me to do? What do you want me to volunteer for? He said, no, no. You just say right the hell where you are, you got some time left at Fort Hood.

[00:46:12.02] Well, finally, they broke down. I was trying to get an apartment in Washington up in back of the Iwo Jima Monument there. The lady who was running it gave me a week and I said, I got to know something. And they said, well, the big decision is as to whether or not you're going to be Westmoreland's speechwriter. I thought, no, I don't want to be a speechwriter.

[00:46:38.01] Well, about two days later they called me and they said, we got orders on you. And the corps commander wants to see you. He can't tell you where you're going over the telephone.

[00:46:55.31] Well, Phip Seneff was the corps commander. And I went up and he said, have you got any idea where you're going? I said, no, no idea. Well, he says, you're going to Thailand.

[00:47:04.93] I said, Thailand? What the hell do we have in Thailand? And he said, well, you're really not going to Thailand. He says, you're going to Laos. And I said, what have we got in Laos? I don't know. And he says, I can't tell you. Everything's classified.

[00:47:23.32] And then he says, and you've got to be there in a hurry. He said, they want you there immediately. Well, I said, Jesus, I just got married. Well, that's all right. The State Department insists upon you have your wife with you. And I say, what in the hell is this?

[00:47:40.69] And so they gave me a week. They frocked me. And the list came out, I think, on the 12th of January, somewhere around there. And I got frocked immediately.

[00:48:05.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Explain to our viewers that that means you put your star up, but you haven't been confirmed.

[00:48:11.27] RICHARD TREFRY: But you haven't been confirmed. And you can't have anything to do with the job you left. So I took some leave, and gathered up my wife, and went up to her family's house and mine. And then we started the great migration east, west.

[00:48:30.64] Dick Stilwell was the 6th Army commander and he'd been my boss at West Point when I was a TAC. And I stopped to see him in San Francisco on the way, but he got called out, so I talked to Don Bolton.

[00:48:55.12] And then I got to Hawaii and I was told to go see Admiral Gayler. The deputy was an Army three-star, an engineer, and I said, I'm supposed to see the CinC. And he said, he doesn't want to see you. As a matter of fact, he won't see you. He said, Admiral Gayler was really ticked off because the ambassador won't let him in country.

[00:49:24.99] JOE GALLOWAY: In Laos.

[00:49:25.62] RICHARD TREFRY: In Laos. And he says, so you're on your own. And he says, you're going to be put in some very funny situations, and it's up to you to work your way out of them. We'll do what we can to help you, but you've got some real adventures ahead of you.

[00:49:43.62] Well, we landed in Thailand, and they met me and we had lunch. And then we got in one of the embassy airplanes and went up to Udorn. And we lived in a hotel for about two weeks, and then they gave me a house trailer right off the runway. And all these F-4s taking off and I thought--

[00:50:18.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Why have they parked you in Udorn?

[00:50:21.54] RICHARD TREFRY: Because my official title was Dep Chief JUSMAG Thai, Deputy Commander Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group Thailand.

[00:50:34.41] JOE GALLOWAY: But you're on your way to Laos secretly?

[00:50:38.48] RICHARD TREFRY: Secretly.

[00:50:39.45] JOE GALLOWAY: All right.

[00:50:40.13] RICHARD TREFRY: My payrolls came out of Omaha, out of SAC. Everything was on the QT, none of my people could go to Laos. And I had to go up there every morning for country team meetings and stuff.

[00:50:57.82] JOE GALLOWAY: You would leave Udorn and fly into Vientiane?

[00:51:01.60] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. You talk about flying, I found out that I was the contract vehicle for Air America, Continental Air Services, Bird Air, Royal Air Laos. And there was one more. Five of them.

[00:51:17.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Every spook airline in Southeast Asia.

[00:51:20.79] RICHARD TREFRY: Every one. Every one.

[00:51:22.71] JOE GALLOWAY: Good God.

[00:51:23.55] RICHARD TREFRY: And I had bailed aircraft from the Air Force. And I had-- we had two logistics installations, one out west. That was Pepper Grinder, and I had Salt Shaker, which was down by the big radio relay intercept station that they had.

[00:51:51.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:51:51.88] RICHARD TREFRY: And the real secret of all that was, the fighting force in Laos was 27 battalions of Thai infantry and five battalions of Thai artillery. And there were five separate armies in Laos, and we provided everything. And my job was to get us out of there. And I did. And that was one of the toughest jobs. The Lao aren't mad at anybody.

[00:52:27.42] The North Vietnamese. You'd go to a party, one of these state department parties. Here's the commies with Betelgeuse coming down from chewing the stuff, and they're clapping each other on the back. And the next day, Jesus, if they get a chance to kill them, they would.

[00:52:46.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:52:46.62] RICHARD TREFRY: I mean, it was wild.

[00:52:48.36] JOE GALLOWAY: Laos was a very strange war.

[00:52:51.17] RICHARD TREFRY: Oh, let me tell you, and nobody's written about it except one guy, one captain. He spent about a month going through some of my stuff. And I'll send you a copy of my after action report.

[00:53:04.42] JOE GALLOWAY: I'd love to see it.

[00:53:07.57] RICHARD TREFRY: I watched Jack. I replaced Jack. Jack was coming back to be the G-3 of the army. And I walked him to the airplane when he was leaving. And we were walking around, walking out to the plane and he's looking around and he says, well, I've been here a year.

[00:53:24.50] And since I've been here and am now leaving, I can say that things have improved thousand percent. And when you leave here, probably next year, just like me, you can say the same thing. And then we'll be barely unsatisfactory. And he was exactly right.

[00:53:45.58] But it was a fascinating job to inform them that the great white father in the sky, sunset was on the horizon. And they didn't believe me at first and they had no logistics system.

[00:54:04.16] We had a bunch of civilians over there, called The Requirements Office. And some of those guys had been there 10 or 15 years. And the CIA was in there thick as hell.

[00:54:15.88] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh yeah.

[00:54:17.23] RICHARD TREFRY: And we had a country team meeting every day of the week. And I would fly up from Udorn and I'd go to the country team meeting. And then I'd get in an airplane and fly somewhere where we had stuff, to find out if it was delivered, or how much had been diverted, or what.

[00:54:47.78] I had the seventh largest aid budget in history over there, only exceeded by Vietnam. And I was the contract vehicle for all those airlines and air forces.

[00:55:14.28] I've got an after action report on that too, which is very interesting. I couldn't tell you the difference between a cost plus and a fixed fee contract, but I sure as hell learn fast.

[00:55:25.69] And I got-- a week after I got there, they came up with the idea of having a provisional government of national union, where the commies came in, and pretty soon had everything.

[00:55:47.80] The minister of defense became a communist. He was a communist and a rival. And he called me and wanted to see me, so I went over to see him. And he said, I know you have given us five 123s. We would like 15 F-4s. I said, of course, I'll refer your request to my government.

[00:56:13.47] And I see Charlie Whitehouse and he said, he did what? And I said, yeah. You want to have some fun, we ought to have some fun with this. And I start them off for a couple of weeks. And I said, we have a hell of a shortage of F-4s. We just can't do that one for you.

[00:56:39.25] But life was an adventure in Laos every single day. And I felt so sorry for those guys. And we got several of them out. They're kind of dying off now, the generals and stuff.

[00:56:55.64] And I got a phone call here about a month ago from one of the Lao BGs. He's living up in Providence, Rhode Island. And they think they're going to take over the country again. And my God, it's unbelievable.

[00:57:13.13] And I had to deal with the great Vang Pao. He was the field marshal up in MR2. There were five military regions, and I had one of these guys in every one of them. The best one of all was Soutchay. And he lives right near Dulles Airport. Now, I see him frequently. But it was amazing just to see that stuff.

[00:57:46.87] And I did have some fun with the first Russian attaché. I dealt with him frequently. He was OK. The second guy that came in was a horse's ass. And I come back with the ambassador to Washington for a POM update.

[00:58:08.25] And when I got back, they said, gee-whiz, wait till you meet this Russian attaché. He's a jewel. So that's him standing over there. So I went over there and said, bonsoir mi colonel. He looks at me and he says, I don't speak English. Does an about face and strides off.

[00:58:31.00] Well, we had a guy who'd been the head of the KGB there for 17 years, and we had to warn people when they came in. Everybody thought he was an American. And I went over and said, did you see that? He says, it's got to be personal. It can't be professional.

[00:58:49.78] I said, Christ, I haven't even been in country while he got here. He says, I can't believe this. I said, do you want to try it again? And he says, yeah. I said, well, let's not do it tonight. I said, we got more of these country teams coming up, we'll see how it goes.

[00:59:07.93] So, went through the same thing again. And George says, I don't know where we got this guy. This is the commie now telling me this. I said, I don't know where the hell you got him either.

[00:59:21.22] But then the aides started telling me that-- they said, this guy wants to come over and see the movies all the time. He's asking questions about the United States.

[00:59:36.73] I went over to the head of the CIA in town and I says, I hate to do this, but, I said, this Russian that's in here is the new attache. I got to tell you, he wants to defect, and we don't want him.

[00:59:56.63] Roger looks at me and says, I don't ever want to get across your bow. But he was gone. In three days, he was gone. But it was a great adventure, I'll tell you. And I'll send you copies of those over. If you do, you'd enjoy seeing them there.

[01:00:25.50] RICHARD TREFRY: I never made a big thing out of being in Vietnam when I did. But sooner or later, it would come out that I was over there in '66, '67. And I sort of-- I went to the head of the line of people who were going to go over there. What was it like?

[01:00:47.32] And all I could say was, it's a hell of a lot different. It was different the day I left from the day I got there. And I'm sorry, I don't have a picture, but you'll love this.

[01:01:00.67] When the troop ship came in with the rest of the battalion, I'd been there two weeks and we'd unloaded the guns and everything off the Drake Victory Now, here comes the gang on the Eltinge, which they came in.

[01:01:15.91] There's a picture of me coming ashore. I went out to the ship to meet him, and they had one of these Marine Corps little things. And I started to step off the thing at Red Beach. And this sergeant must have been about 6 foot 6. He says, sir, I ain't going to let you get your feet wet and get athlete's foot. Hop on my back. I think--

[01:01:43.77] JOE GALLOWAY: He carried you ashore.

[01:01:44.58] RICHARD TREFRY: He carried me ashore. I said, I'm humiliated. I got to have a battalion formation and explain this. And you're not going to go anywhere until you make sure everybody knows what happened. Everybody got a big kick out of that.

[01:02:00.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your experience on a combat tour affect the way you think about veterans coming back from combat today?

[01:02:08.67] RICHARD TREFRY: It sure does. I think it was very rough on the kids coming back from Vietnam. It hasn't been that way despite the fact that-- I don't think it was so-- and not having been there, I don't know, but I don't think it was as intensive as it was in Vietnam. If you get caught on a mined road, which we did several times up on the DMZ, that was nothing new.

[01:02:46.43] I think that we did very well. There wasn't the stirring that there was in Vietnam the last four or five years that we were there. I didn't get to see much of Vietnam, but I went to Laos. And I ran the war in Laos.

[01:03:17.36] JOE GALLOWAY: What year?

[01:03:18.98] RICHARD TREFRY: '73, '75. I replaced Jack Vessey. And I had come back--

[01:03:30.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Who was your ambassador?

[01:03:33.31] RICHARD TREFRY: I really had three. I had Mac Godley when I first got there. Wonderful guy. When I was getting my briefings from the State Department, there was somebody in the State Department, he was an ambassador. He'd been somewhere.

[01:03:49.31] But he said, do you know Ambassador Godley? And I said, no, sir. I don't. He said, well, you military-types would like him. And I said, why would I like him? And he said, Mac's idea of a good time is to be up on the roof of the embassy with a can of beer behind a sandbagged machine gun waiting for the natives to attack.

[01:04:12.77] JOE GALLOWAY: That's Mac Godley, all right.

[01:04:14.09] RICHARD TREFRY: That's Mac Godley. Well, he left-- I got there in February, and he left in April. And John Gunther Dean was the DCM, and he took over as the DCM until September, when Charlie Whitehouse came.

[01:04:31.52] Charlie Whitehouse was one of the greatest guys I've ever known. And he did a wonderful job, and then went to Thailand and was the ambassador there. But I had some wonderful times with all those guys. I still hear from them.

[01:04:49.74] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[01:04:50.56] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah. Mac, of course, is dead, and his wife died. But Mac's idea of a good time, when we'd have a get together, they had one of these barroom bowling alleys.

[01:05:07.94] And they had these little metal disks and you'd pass them down. Well, Mac turned that into carrier landings. And so you take about five or six beers in and they'd run that thing with their wings out, see how far they could slide before they went off the end. You'd be amazed how many airplane crashes we had.

[01:05:29.38] JOE GALLOWAY: I suspect, yeah. It's a wonder they didn't introduce flames in there somehow.

[01:05:35.83] RICHARD TREFRY: Yeah.

[01:05:37.33] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today? Or is it?

[01:05:42.94] RICHARD TREFRY: I would say, it's seldom, seldom mentioned. They don't have-- if you look at examples of force management, it's very hard to dig them out. It's something they would just as soon forget.

[01:06:05.83] And those of us who were there, and there early, most of them are retired now and it's a distant thing in the past. Several of my friends were division commanders over there.

[01:06:25.29] And the thing that I think bothered us the most was the six-month tour in leadership. If you were a commander, you got six months. And that was it. It was terrible. It was really, really terrible. And the NCOs, it was the same way with them.

[01:06:44.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[01:06:45.10] RICHARD TREFRY: And the difference is, I think there was a great deal of bitterness. With what's going on now, the idea that you'd spend one year overseas and two years back, that causes a stir, but it comes from the wives.

[01:07:02.70] And it's easy to understand why. They're home raising the kids. And the idea was one year overseas and two years back. Well, the fact is, it was one year overseas, and a couple of times they increased it to 15 months.

[01:07:26.33] And then they'd come back, and we'd got into this business. We'd reorganized the Army into brigade combat teams. And so they had to start all over again. So here's a guy now ten miles from home, but he's out on the range and the wife and the kids don't see him.

[01:07:45.75] JOE GALLOWAY: They don't see him.

[01:07:46.37] RICHARD TREFRY: And the wife would accept that he's halfway around the world, but it's very hard to stomach when he's ten miles out on the range--

[01:07:54.56] JOE GALLOWAY: And you still don't see him.

[01:07:55.61] RICHARD TREFRY: --and you still don't see him. Well, and you see the other part that everybody forgets was the Balkans and what we had over there in Hungary and in those places before we even got further out, and into Iraq and what have you.

[01:08:15.08] JOE GALLOWAY: What lessons did you take from your Vietnam service that you would like to pass on to future generations?

[01:08:22.61] RICHARD TREFRY: That's easy, Joe. Have you read Cohen's speech before the McCain thing on how we need to improve the Army?

[01:08:38.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[01:08:40.70] RICHARD TREFRY: I was asked to come over to talk to the Indians. I didn't get the big guys, but I got a copy of his remarks. And he had it right-- geez, he stole my stuff. I think that the Army needs to take a real look at itself.

[01:09:06.41] Right now, it's immersed in tactics. They think they're learning strategy, but they're not. And worst of all, they don't understand at all how to build the Army and how to take it down.

[01:09:27.68] If you think about it, from 1776 on, it's like a sine wave. We've been building the Army and we win, and we get rid of the Army. And then we start again.

[01:09:44.56] JOE GALLOWAY: A very costly procedure.

[01:09:47.63] RICHARD TREFRY: Well, not only that, but all we get is tactics. Now, Leavenworth in nine months teaches 16 hours of force management. Force management is how you build the Army and how you take it down.

[01:10:08.66] The school I started down at Fort Belvoir, I was one of the co-founders of MPRI. And I thought, maybe this is my chance. And so I said, give me the school down at Fort Belvoir. And they said, you want to go down there? I said, yeah, I want to run that school. And they let me go.

[01:10:39.68] And I'd gone through this business of building battalions, and DIVARTYs, and stuff. I wrote the artillery section of Exercise Blue Book, when we were trying to put the nuclear Army together. And I thought that the ethics stuff was kind of superficial. And I was told, have at it.

[01:11:22.95] And I had several classes, but one I had for the generals was one week. And that's all I got, was one week. That's all I wanted. And I had a class called How the Army Runs. And I started with the professional ethic. And I used the whole first hour with that.

[01:12:02.31] And then the second hour I would get in: if you want to change your MTOE, if you want to change from a TOE to an MTOE, how do you do that? Nobody knows how to do that at that time.

[01:12:21.51] And I handpicked 25 guys that I knew of, not that they'd been in the business, but I tried to emphasize to all of them, I put 30,000 people through these schools.

[01:12:36.50] And I had 13 courses that we taught. And I would start with a 25-question diagnostic test. And I remember, I had one general officer course, and this guy didn't do too well, but I used to let him go at two o'clock in the afternoon because he had to go to Dulles to get planes to the West Coast.

[01:13:11.46] And this guy was sitting there and I said, are you waiting for a later plane? And he says, yeah. And I said, tell you what, let me give you the diagnostic test that you took on Monday and you can show yourself how much you learned while you were here.

[01:13:29.43] He says, sir, I couldn't do that. I said, you couldn't do that? And he said, no, sir. I couldn't do that. And I said, why not? He said, I can't remember what I guessed at on Monday.

[01:13:47.45] That was a two-star general. I think I've got a lot of those lessons taped. If you ever want to see one, I'll be glad to ship it to you. RICHARD TREFRY: We had a reunion in Washington in '05.

[01:14:12.11] And we went down to the memorial and said we'd like to have a little ceremony. And they did. And I called the protocol guys and asked them if we could get a bugler and a set of flags. And, oh, hell yeah.

[01:14:31.97] And so we ran a little thing. Boy, by the time-- just sort of-- no advertising or anything, and people just opened up. Oh, I just made a few remarks and I said then and I believe now that the real solace we have is these guys will be forever young.

[01:15:02.58] Well, it was tough, but-- the kids that I lost were good kids, no AWOLs. Very interested in what they were doing, and I didn't have to give them a hell of a lot of pep talks.

[01:15:20.22] I think I gained by doing it that way. RICHARD TREFRY: I've heard of it, and I haven't paid too much attention to it. I think that there's too much of an opportunity by rabble-rousers to screw it up.

[01:15:44.36] JOE GALLOWAY: We're not going to let them.

[01:15:45.91] RICHARD TREFRY: Well, don't. Don't.

[01:15:50.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Sir, appreciate it.

[01:15:52.63] CREW: Thank you, sir.

[01:15:53.26] JOE GALLOWAY: Thank you.

[01:15:53.98] RICHARD TREFRY: Sure.