

## Weseleskey, Allen U.S. Navy

[00:00:15.09] ALLEN WESELESKEY: I was born in Tarentum, Pennsylvania at a hospital. My mother was lucky to make it there. I'm the first child, first male child, of a Russian set of immigrants. My grandparents and parents who were children came from Russia, the Ukraine area. They came with the clothes on their back and one suitcase. Initially starting out in Paterson, New Jersey.

[00:00:53.00] Grandfather Huss, who was my matriarchal grandfather, started out in the zinc mines, as did my other grandfather, Jed Weseleskey. He ultimately migrated from the Russian community in Paterson to the Pittsburgh area where grandfather Huss went to work in the steel mills, grandfather Weseleskey into the coal mining industry.

[00:01:32.51] The coal mining/iron industry had patches of houses they built for the immigrants that came. And they were literally indentured servants because they lived in a company house as long as they were working. They used the company store to buy their groceries, which was held on a credit account and subtracted from their pay. There was a company doctor.

[00:02:12.09] There's a good book written about the particular area that I grew up in. It's called The Ragman's War-- subtitle, Bucket of Blood. I have a copy of that at home. I don't recall the author. And it talks about the coal and iron police and how they had absolute authority. And the sheriff knew that he constitutionally could not enter into the coal mine area housings. But the coal-- the iron and coal police could walk into your house without knocking on the door, frequently raping a lot of the women while the men were in the shaft.

[00:03:01.84] We had well water in a community well. We would pump our own well water. We had outhouses. I was lucky, we had a two-holer. It's unusual to be sitting in the outhouse and have Grandma come in and plunk down next to you. But it was an accepted way of doing things. I had all of the catalogs from Sears, and Spiegel's, and Penney's. And that was our toilet paper. Life was very simple.

[00:03:35.81] The men got to eat the meat. Any leftover meat was thrown into the soup pot, which was on the coal stove. And that was the general heat for the whole house. In the winter time, they would keep that stove going. There were registers in the ceiling that permitted hot air to go up into the bedrooms. We had a slop jar poopy pot in each bedroom. So if you had a nature call in the middle of the night, you went in the pot and that was emptied in the morning. So it was typically European.

[00:04:13.51] I have since gone back to Russia and have witnessed very much the same except now Russia's modernized. They may have a cold water faucet in the kitchen, but they still have the outhouse and the garden.

[00:04:33.96] JOE GALLOWAY: How did you enter the service?

[00:04:37.29] ALLEN WESELESKEY: I had a outing with my father. Our relationship was combative, let's put it that way, from when I was born. I got shipped around to grandparents. And

when I was 14, he said you're going to pit. And he didn't mean the University of Pittsburgh, he meant the coal mine pit.

[00:05:08.35] I refused to go into the coal mines and went to work at 14, Allegheny Ludlum Steel Mill. And I worked up to be a third helper on an open hearth steel making furnace. I would bring the paycheck home, the old man would beat me up, take the paycheck and go gambling and drinking. He was a gambling addict and he was an alcoholic addict.

[00:05:35.89] By time I was reaching almost 16, I finally said, that's enough. I won't do this anymore. We had a knockdown drag out fight. And he tossed me out of the house. So at about 16, I became a street person. I fortunately along the way became a fairly good musician.

[00:05:56.23] And I had a mentor at Springdale High School who was my band master. I had to then been fairly good academically. And he said, look, I can't adopt you, but I can help you get ready and take an audition at a military academy for a music scholarship. And he helped me prepare for that. I hitchhiked to Philadelphia to Valley Forge Military Academy, took a audition in music. They made me take college boards to see where they could place me. And I won the scholarship.

[00:06:39.18] Amazingly enough, my old man was also a philanderer-- when my mother had left him and gone to Arizona with her parents after a nervous breakdown-- was making it with his best friend's wife. And I happened to walk into the house with my cousin while they were having an affair on the bed.

[00:07:04.51] And when I won that scholarship, I had to come up with \$500 earnest money. The scholarship though covered room, board, academic factors, uniforms, the whole works. But I had to come up with \$500 to anchor that.

[00:07:27.05] Well, I knew the old man wouldn't give me the money. So I headed down to best friend's wife and showed her the letter of acceptance at Valley Forge. And she said that's wonderful. Your dad must be very happy. I said, the old man is not going to help me with anything. He's just a sperm donor. I said, but maybe your husband would prefer not to know about your affair with my father. And she came up with the \$500. And off I went to Valley Forge.

[00:07:58.78] So I finished my high school at Valley Forge and two years of junior college. And at that time The Bridges at Toko-Ri was the ongoing movie. And I decided-- I knew I wanted to be a pilot, but a naval aviator was something special. So I went out to the air base at Willow Grove Naval Air Station and talked to the folks out there and enlisted in the Navy Reserve.

[00:08:31.73] And that was my entry in July 5 of 1955 to the U.S. Navy. They wound up shipping me down to Pensacola, Florida where I was able to enter the Naval Aviation Cadet Program. Getting through that in 1955, I was in Class 2255, was academically challenging and very satisfying. Because I was in the Naval Aviation Cadet Choir, I didn't go to the initial primary station, which was Whiting Field. But they shipped me off to Corry Field where they kept the choir and the drill team, which were used for public display for promotions to recruit.

[00:09:28.14] And I got my solo at Corry Field, and acrobatics, and then moved off for flight formation flying to Saufley Field. From there on to Barren--

[00:09:46.50] JOE GALLOWAY: This is fixed wing.

[00:09:48.18] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Well, the SNJ was a T-6, fixed wing. All naval aviators are fixed wing people, even before they go into helicopters, unlike the Army or the Air Force. And then off the Barren Field for gunnery and bombing. Now I happened to be pretty good at bombing. So by then I decided I wanted to fly the AD, which later became designated the A-1 Skyraider by Douglas, and put in a request to extend for active duty if they would send me to Spad school down in Corpus Christi, which was Cabaniss Field.

[00:10:35.08] ALLEN WESELESKEY: You may want to cut this part. I had trouble with my eyes because the instrument flying pre advanced training was pretty strenuous, as was the academics. And for some reason I couldn't seem to pass the eye test. So after five days of flunking the eye test, going back every day, the corpsman said, well, looks like you're going back to being a white hat.

[00:11:05.29] And I thought about that. And one of my choir buddies who was very close to me said, hey, they give the eye test on Saturday mornings. You get hold of your records off the captain's desk and I'll take the eye test for you. And so Saturday morning he took the eye test.

[00:11:25.73] They stamped my orders, completed. And I executed my orders to Corpus Christi, Texas, where my buddy also followed me. He became a Spad pilot, too. And I went through bombing and gunnery there. Got my commission on March 1st, 1957. And that was wings and commission.

[00:11:52.02] The Navy was hard up for pilots at that time. I had already carrier qualified in the SNJ. And so my orders were to an All Weather Attack Special Squadron, AD-5N VA(AW)-35, formerly VC-35. Our mission was sand blowers, low level. It was nuclear delivery. We had a crew. And therefore we could always observe the two-man rule for nuclear weapons.

[00:12:30.40] Schooling for the nuclear weapons program was extensive and difficult. You had to memorize and know the inner workings of every nuclear device that you were going to carry. And then later we got to carry them, both as shape weapons with the approximate weights. And then later during our carrier deployment in Hawaii, got to actually carry a weapon, arm it, disarm it.

[00:13:10.73] Sadly while in the training phase at VC-35, three of us were from the same group at Cabaniss Field, very tight group. And we were assigned to the same detachment. Each detachment had three AD 5N aircraft. We had an APS-35 radar hung on one wing station. We carried all the weapons that the average AD carried, bombs, rockets, the whole works.

[00:13:44.60] And if we were carrying a nuclear weapon, that was in the center fuselage. And it was deployed by doing what we called the idiot loop. And we had a computer program installed in the aircraft where you ran in at a low altitude high speed, and you literally did a over the top.

And when you reached a certain point, two 10-gun-- 10-gauge shotgun shells kicked the bomb off. And it was a rocket propelled nuclear weapon called the BOAR. And that was our primary lay down item.

[00:14:32.16] We were assigned specific targets in Russia and China. I was later--

[00:14:39.42] JOE GALLOWAY: This is flying an A-1E?

[00:14:41.35] ALLEN WESELESKEY: AD-5N.

[00:14:43.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Navy version of the A-1E.

[00:14:46.00] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Navy version in that it was side by side, the pilot on the left. To the right was an ECM operator. And behind the pilot was a radar operator. So we had a three-man crew. But they would send us off on a--

[00:15:04.06] JOE GALLOWAY: It must have fit pretty tight.

[00:15:05.77] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Very tight. You're strapped in for the duration. And when they launched you off a carrier, it might be for a 10-hour mission. And you don't get to get up and walk around. The box lunches, you'd rather eat the box and throw away the sandwiches. That was my start into naval aviation.

[00:15:27.06] Now during this evolution, I was still a Reserve officer. And I decided I'd like to make it a career. So I kept applying for regular USN commission. But again, I was former enlisted. I already had a associate of arts degree, two years. And I kept getting turned down.

[00:15:53.51] So realizing I wasn't going to make it a career, I figured I'd go into aviation as a career. And I would go over to Lindbergh Field and take my examinations for FAA certification as a pilot. And I wound up with a commercial ticket, fixed wing. I later was to transition to helicopters since I realized, hey, you're not going to make it, fixed wing. And they were phasing out the SPADs. It was going to be an all jet carrier air wing, attack and fighter. But the fighters never fought. It was always the attack role.

[00:16:47.18] While deployed with Hancock in the '58, '59 era, we had Matsu and Quemoy being shelled by the ChiComs. And Hancock had just entered port at Hong Kong. And a third of the crew went off on liberty. All of a sudden we went to general quarters while at anchor. And Admiral Ramsey was the flag. The word came from the captain that-- prepare to get underway. Tried to recover all the people that we could that were ashore. And we left the anchorage, headed for Snowball, which was the south tip of Taiwan.

[00:17:43.54] The CODs picked up the people left behind. And one by one they struggled-- and straggled in. Pilots were told to man the ready rooms. W Division, Weapons Division, was told to report to their duty station. They were assembling bombs.

[00:18:03.67] I had a specific target in China. It was one of three targets that I had. And when we got on station along the Taiwan southern area, we were told the Davis Line was the line that was equidistant between China and Taiwan. And we were to fly patrols north, south and back to the carrier. And there was another carrier at the northern end.

[00:18:36.99] We were attached as a three-plane detachment to VA-155, a straight SPAD squadron AD-5s-- no, AD-6s. And their CO, we called Baron von Braun. He was Commander Brown. And as a torpedo bomber in World War II, he sunk some heavy task groups from the Japanese. And he wound up being a Navy Cross recipient.

[00:19:11.38] And it was odd because the first launch was at night and the Baron took his division, four plane aircraft-- two planes are a section, four planes a division. And they kind of got lost. They couldn't find her way back. So Admiral Ramsay decided that for all missions after that, that one of the AD-5Ns would be the pathfinder.

[00:19:39.79] And so as an ensign, well, I made JG about that time. I had four wingmen. Usually a lieutenant commander was the senior guy. And I was the leader of the mission. And it might be a 10-hour mission. That pretty well calmed down. And we were then moved up into the North Pacific. And I had a couple of targets in Russia.

[00:20:12.41] Uniquely, not too long ago I was walking through a Lowe's hardware store and I heard these three young beautiful women speaking in Russian to this little old lady. And I went over to them and addressed them in Russian to ensure that they were from Russia. And they confirmed that they were. And I said, where? And they said, Siberia. And I said, what town in Siberia? And they mentioned the town. And I said, I know that town. Oh, you've been there? I said, well, not exactly. I said the town lays out like this. And the church, the Orthodox church is here. And your main downtown is here. So really a village.

[00:21:02.10] And they said, why yes, that's exactly where we're from. We girls live here in the States. Mom just came for a visit. I said, so nice to talk to you. What I didn't tell them that their village was my initial point for run on a Russian target. I thought that-- not to disclose that because that kind of tears up relations.

[00:21:36.42] Knowing that I wasn't going to be a naval officer forever, I requested helicopter transition. And that was granted. We came back from deployment and I was sent to Ellyson Field to transition into helicopters. Coming back-- oh, by the way, the Hancock trip was supposed to be five and 1/2, six months. 11 months later, we came home. I had a new son by then. And I missed that long part of the bonding.

[00:22:13.23] But off we went to Pensacola. We transitioned and I was ordered to HU-1-- Helicopter Utility Squadron 1, which tail number is Uncle Peter-- UP. And-- like up. And son of a gun, I was on a detachment to go back out with Hancock to redeploy again because I was the numerical guy to take up that job.

[00:22:45.03] I said, hey, wait a minute, I've been away from my family quite a bit already. So I called my detailer and said, what have you got that's overseas? And he said, well, we need

somebody at Kwajalein. Would you be willing to go? I said, sure. He said, wait a minute, are you married? Yeah. Do you have any children? I do. In fact, we have one on the ramp and another one in the hangar bay. Sally was pregnant with our second child. And he said, well, wait a minute, let me call you back. And he looked around and we wound up with a set of orders to Guam, NAS Agana.

[00:23:30.62] That was pretty interesting because I was still deploying with HU-1 off Midway, Hancock, Oriskany, in short detachments while they were doing workups, getting ready for their combat deployment. So off we go to Agana, Guam. They wanted me immediately. Sally was too pregnant to travel. So I sent her home to Pittsburgh with her family. And I flew into Agana, Guam and started operations there.

[00:24:15.07] During that tour made about 25 rescues, helicopter-wise. But I also learned how to fly seaplanes, the UF-1 Albatross, which is the 16-- UF-16, R5Ds (Beechcraft), and of course the helicopters that came through.

[00:24:39.97] A couple of the missions were very interesting. Two survivors from Japan still fighting the war. And we extracted them. Not together, but one at a time. Because we caught the first one and it took a while for him to open up to tell us there was another one. And we brought him out as well. But first thing they wanted to do was-- when the ground people got them, they wanted to go up in this thing that goes round and round. And that was pretty exciting. And I also covered the bathyscaphe Trieste when it made its dive in the Mariana Trench.

[00:25:24.67] From there I got a set of orders that were puzzling to an outfit that did not exist. I also was promoted to lieutenant. And I got after the fifth try a message that said, you've been augmented to the regular Navy. Will you accept?

[00:25:44.64] And I, in the meantime, had put in the transition to the Army as a warrant officer with a Reserve commission as a captain. And while that paperwork was going through, they discovered they had lost half of my paper jackets. The officer corps then had two paper jackets detailing education, correspondence courses, performance. And one of those had gotten lost. And they had discovered it. So I got a regular commission and a set of orders to an outfit that did not exist, GCA Unit 51.

[00:26:31.38] So off we went to Olathe, Kansas for ground control approach training. So I became an air traffic controller. We would school half a day and fly half a day. And that permitted us to exercise live control. Following that, the orders finally materialized. I was to go to the presidential helicopter unit at Anacostia, which is where they stage the White House helicopters from Quantico so that they are only minutes away from the White House. And I became the assistant officer in charge.

[00:27:16.20] Suddenly one day the phone rang and my boss answered. He was a lieutenant commander. I was a lieutenant. And he said, yeah, he's here. Well, I'll let you talk to him, but I'm not so sure I want to do that. So the guy at the other end happened to be a detailer. He said, you've been selected to go to undergraduate school. Would you like to go to college? And I said,

you betcha. And he said, well, we know you own a house near Andrews Air Force Base. You better think about what you're going to do with that.

[00:27:48.43] And two weeks later, I was on my way to Monterey, California for a bachelor of sci-- I'm sorry, bachelor of arts, international relations. Completed that two-year course and wound up in HS-3 here in Norfolk, my first East Coast duty. I became maintenance materiel officer, quality control officer. And then safety officer because I had completed the prerequisite safety course.

[00:28:28.05] While deployed on Randolph with an ASW exercise, a message came out confidential. They were looking for pilots to start up a new squadron called HA(L)-3. And they were looking for volunteers. Well, three of us from the squadron volunteered.

[00:28:50.10] And the admiral at that time was Admiral Outlaw who had just been fired while on the Asiatic frontier. And the admiral called me in one day and he said, look, I admire you for volunteering for this, but don't extend. He said, you'll get caught up in a grinding machine. And he was pretty straightforward with his comments.

[00:29:22.59] Oh, by the way, while with the presidential unit, that's when the Cuban Missile Crisis happened. We had a dining in. Admiral Anderson, then the CNO, was to be the guest speaker. And he was late coming to the dinner. And he finally arrived and he said, clear the room except for the officers here. They took out all the serving staff. And he said, I've just come from the White House. The president has determined that we are going to blockade Cuba. And I would recommend if you have family in the area that you perhaps consider placing them elsewhere. Because we knew Washington D.C. was targeted.

[00:30:15.23] Our mission at the heliport was to make sure the president, and staff, family, were evacuated. A neighbor and I were the only two to have bomb shelters on our area. And we had water and food ready for about a six-month underground situation, if that came. My wife determined she wasn't going to leave, said we're going to stick it out here. And so we did. Then came the orders to Monterey.

[00:30:48.47] While at Monterey, President Kennedy was assassinated. That caught all of us. I can remember precisely where I was standing in the great Del Monte Hotel, which would now become classrooms. Getting through the training for Vietnam, we transitioned to helicopter gunships with the Army at the Army Infantry School. And that was pretty exciting.

[00:31:23.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Fort Benning.

[00:31:24.34] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Fort Benning. The jump school was there. I was surprised we had good instructors that had combat experience. And we went through all of the weapons systems, even enemy weapons systems so that we could disassemble, clean, and put them back together in case we needed them. And recommendations on what weapons to carry. I always carried a .38 Chiefs Special, a Colt sidearm. And that was with me wherever I went. And it was in my survival gear.

[00:32:05.26] The Army tended not to have the kind of survival gear the Navy had, which kind of surprised them. To us it was a regular thing. I'd already been through survival school. And we completed that with rocket attacks, machine gun attacks. Having been a former attack pilot, I pretty well knew how to handle the weapons, and how to get them on target and easily destroyed tanks and trucks that they had laying out on the battlefields.

[00:32:42.13] We then flew out to Coronado, California where we went through amphib indoctrination. They didn't have uniforms for us. They gave us money and said go to the surplus store and buy your uniforms. We went to weapons training with the Marines at Pendleton. We went up to Camp Onofre, and got to throw grenades. Went through all the weapons one more time.

[00:33:16.39] That's the first time I remember the staff sergeant saying, now look, if you want a Navy Cross, when you pull the pin and you drop it, it's going to be about this tall and this wide, and made out of concrete. So let's do it right. And that was the admonition that if you had a grenade, it was a live bomb. You better throw of the hell out of it. So we did.

[00:33:44.24] The drilling was very intense. And we felt very comfortable with it. Now, we-- that was 22 officers, half of us were second tour pilots, the other half were fresh caught ensigns out of Pensacola, helicopter types. The CO, PCO-- prospective commanding officer-- was Bob Spencer. He was in that group, as was Con Jaburg, XO, and Ron Hipp was the operations officer. I was a senior lieutenant commander at the time. So I would be an O in C eventually.

[00:34:30.46] We went through survival school again. Even though I had been through it twice. They said, no, you're going back. Well, this time we gained weight instead of lost weight. The first day of survival school, they take you out to Coronado Naval Air Station, and put you in a boat, take you out to sea, and toss your butt over. And throw a raft in after you. You spent a day or two at sea. And then you make your way to the beach.

[00:34:59.35] Well, being somewhat aggressive, one of the JOs, a Naval Academy graduate, and I spotted a seal laying on the beach. That is a seal animal, not the combat commando. And we decided we were going to take it out. And that was going to be dinner tonight. And so I had my survival gear. And we ran up to the seal and it didn't try to get away from us. And an instructor came running after us, stop you can't do that. They're protected. So are we. Slit it's throat. And so we had seal that night.

[00:35:48.65] Following two days on the beach, we went up into the Lincoln National Forrest. And we did our land escape and evasion tours there. While on one of the drills to get from A to B via C, a cow wandered out on the range. Well, survival. One slaughtered cow. We gained weight with that group. The instructors weren't too happy about that. As we got into Vietnam, that training came in handy.

[00:36:37.15] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your first impressions on landing there?



[00:36:40.38] ALLEN WESELESKEY: It was hot, humid. We were to be put up in what was called the Annapolis Hotel, which was like a parking garage, open sides, big barracks type of thing. The senior officers, the commanders and above went to an air conditioned Army hotel.

[00:37:10.04] We were pretty much on our own for food. I still had my personal weapon. And during that introduction we were given two sets of jungle fatigues and one set of boots. I drew a .45. I wanted an M14 because the M14 uses the same ammunition that the M60 machine gun uses. And therefore if you went down somewhere, you'd have plenty of ammo.

[00:37:40.82] Ultimately, we were flown down to Vung Tau after about a two-week indoctrination. Vung Tau was the R&R capital for in-country relaxation. Strangely, the VC used Vung Tau-- the Viet Cong-- for R&R. And so did our forces. And it was kind of a neutral zone. Nobody bothered anybody. But I consistently kept my shoulder holster .38 under my fatigues. The Army gave us an office building. And there was nothing there. We had no accounting data to buy things, so we resorted to midnight requisition of crating long term items.

[00:38:44.45] ALLEN WESELESKEY: There was a mess hall that we could use. We had-- somebody had contracted for BOQ outside the base and we were just establishing the squadron, we had just commissioned. And they had to replace the guys who had come from HC-1, which was the old Uncle Peter group.

[00:39:14.76] They were on LSTs. And there was a couple detachments shore-based. The base Dong Tam was being established. They were trying to stabilize the soil there. Pumping sand and mud out of the My Tho River up to the hill where they could establish a high ground. And I was designated O in C of Det-1 to fly off LST Harnett County.

[00:39:50.70] Now we used Army, what, C-7 Caribou to get from place to place. The Air Force decided they didn't like the Army having fixed-wing aircraft. But on the initial part of my tour, the Army could land those mothers anywhere. Rough terrain, didn't matter. They could do the job.

[00:40:18.45] So we wound up in Binh Thuy where we were picked up by our helicopters, HC-1 Seawolves. And the group I relieved was Rocky's Flying Squirrels. Rocky Rockwell was the lieutenant commander who was O in C. That was a group they initially brought in to try out helicopter gunships off LSTs. Why did they wait? Why wasn't the Army doing the mission? Well, the Army tried the mission, but they had problems with instrument flying. And flying off a LST usually got them wet. They weren't that successful.

[00:41:08.73] And so CNO decided to have this special group. And that became HA(L)-3, Helicopter Attack (Light) Three. Your helicopters were old UH-1Bs, which should have been really sent back to Corpus Christi for overhaul. The Army had already transitioned into the C model, which was more capable, had better flight capabilities, and more modern weaponry, machine guns. They had the TAT-101 General Electric Vulcan gun, a real spinner.

[00:41:51.74] So we were stuck with this old tired UH-1B which had quad M60s on a gimbal hydraulic thing. There were two M60s on each stub. And then a rocket pod of seven on each

side. So we had 14 rockets and the four machine guns. The machine guns were controlled by the co-pilot with a sighting. And he could maneuver that. He could plunge down, left, right. There were stops on them. And the aircraft commander had control of the rockets. We had two enlisted machine gunners directly behind us.

[00:42:35.90] So we initially relieved the first guys ever to be there who took over from the Army. The Harnett sailed off and the Garrett County came in. And we moved our detachment to it. We were on the Bassac River, the lower river of the Mekong tributaries.

[00:43:06.62] Things got exciting there. We worked with the SEALs. They would come in and they would become trees with all their camouflage. Larry Bailey was one of the guys who led a SEAL platoon. And they would go off onto the Long Tan secret zone, which was a coastal area of mango groves and fishing villages. And very often they would make enemy contact and we would be called day or night to go fire cover them.

[00:43:48.70] And then on one operation, 5th Army Special Forces came on board the LST. And they had I'd say a mixture of Cambodians and Hmongs in their enlisted group, U.S. Army officers and sergeants, but the combatants were foreign per se. And they were making a major thrust into the Long Tan.

[00:44:20.56] And during one night mission, we had heavy overcast at about 300, 400 feet, completely solid. And these guys got discovered and were being hammered badly. And so they called for fire support. And we launched-- scrambled our aircraft into a kind of dark night because there was no moon. And we knew that we couldn't get high. Get it to 300, 350 feet, and you were in the goo.

[00:44:58.24] So we also called Smokey, the DC-3 dragon ship. And he was coming to us from Binh Thuy. In the meantime, we kind of located the 5th Special Forces and put in some strikes around them. They were being overwhelmed. And they said, we're not going to make it until you bring your fire in closer. And so by that time, Smokey had arrived. I said, give us some light. And he launched flares. That gave us illumination on the ground, but it also illuminated us. So we became prime targets to be shot down by the enemy.

[00:45:45.62] So I had the officers gather their people, put together a bunch of flashlights, point them upward, and put their heads against the flashlights. And that way I could find out where they were. And we went in and brought fire-- machine gun fire between 10 and 20 meters away from them. One short episode we wound up apparently wounding a friendly or two. But we managed to evacuate them out.

[00:46:23.27] That happened one night. And two nights later, a similar situation occurred. And being on the watch that night, we had to bring in a Dust Off medevac. And, again, overcast, Smokey couldn't get down. And we were trying to coax the Dust Off into the area. And he made a pass-- we were laying down perimeter fire-- and missed the target. He said, I can't see. There's no way I can land. So he went off.

[00:47:05.84] In the meantime, we were draining our fuel trying to stay on station and keep fire on the enemy. And I determined I was going to go in and try to make the rescue. Smokey got reoriented and came back in. And the lieutenant in the 5th Special Forces said, this guy is not going to make it unless you get him medical help immediately. Soc Trang wasn't too far away. So we were close enough to get to good medical help immediately.

[00:47:41.82] And so I brought the Dust Off back in. By this time, my wingman is screaming I'm going to run out of fuel, I'm down to just a few pounds. And we got the Dust Off into the area, landed, got him out of there. And I switched leads and let my wingman take the lead, so he could be the first guy to land back at the LST. I just about ran out of fuel the same time.

[00:48:16.01] Those two episodes-- one of them we were put in for a Silver Star, the other one a DFC. They both turned out to be DFCs. And I've left you the data on both of those. We wound up having problems with so much combat that we were wearing out our weapon systems. We couldn't get parts for the M60 machine guns. We needed maintenance from time to time. We would have to send the aircraft back to Vung Tau. And they would be repaired there and/or replaced and brought back to the unit.

[00:48:56.09] So not being able to get machine gun parts, the squadron commander said, call Saigon. Imagine trying to pick up the phone on a ship in a river downstream, and there's combat everywhere in the country, no such deal. So I sent a message off, info-ing the CO of HA(L)-3, but to Naval Support Activity, Saigon, that we needed munition support. And they came back and said, OK, we are going to increase the support for M60 machine guns for the LST, the PBR river patrol boats, and your HA(L)-3 unit.

[00:49:47.46] Somewhere along the way, the agreement between the Army and the Navy was the Navy gave the Army four P2V Neptunes with side-looking radar, so they could do patrols up and down-- Air Force was cut out of this deal-- and we were to get 22 helicopters, gunships. And that's how we started the squadron. The Army was to provide logistics.

[00:50:16.83] Well, that didn't filter all the way down to the detachment level. So we were without support. And where do we get help? The CO wasn't happy that I went outside the chain of command. But the aircraft needed some repair work. We had taken a lot of fire. And I sent two helicopters back to Vung Tau to get replacements. And they sent two back.

[00:50:49.47] And we operated in two sections. That is, I had eight officers and eight enlisted guys. We could man the two aircraft with one section. And the other section would stand down and rest, be ground support. Any time we were in action, we were assembling rockets, helping load the machine guns. It was an all hands evolution. Officer, enlisted, didn't matter. Tight combat relationships. And to this day, some of my closest companions are my enlisted people.

[00:51:35.04] So the aircraft come back and all of a sudden there's a scramble. There's an outpost that needs fire support, they're being overrun. So I sent off my other team. And they come back saying, hey, these helicopters are absolutely unsafe. They need to be absolutely reinspected and repaired because they're unsafe to fly.

[00:52:03.70] And I thought about that a second and I ordered my maintenance officer, Jimmy Glover, who was a superb guy, he came with me from HS-3. And I said, take them back to Vinh Long, which was an Army intermediate depot, and let's see what shape these helicopters are in. He comes back with a message saying, I'm going to be at while at Vinh Long. The three aircraft - the two aircraft, one had three downing discrepancies. And the other aircraft, which the lead commander was flying had ten downing discrepancies. They had just come from my parent squadron. How were they released?

[00:52:47.63] So I sent a message off to the admiral, info-ed the commanding officer. I said, we can't handle this. We need to have aircraft that are airworthy for combat and that-- we're not getting that from the squadron. I have those messages. And I have the yellow sheets from those aircraft, copies I have retained. And the CO knew that I kept a log and made notes of everything. Up until that point, I was kind of one of his lead officers, highly thought of by the CO. XO, not so much. XO I had met when I was at Corry Field. He was a plowback instructor.

[00:53:36.44] Anyway, the next message that came across the desk was, Lieutenant Commander Weseleskey, you are relieved. And so I was fired for trying to support my detachment. And I was ordered back to Vung Tau and placed in an administrative job as a assistant admin officer.

[00:54:02.15] When it came time for-- about two months later, Vinh Long area in IV Corps was heavy area that was taking supplies and troops from the Ho Chi Minh Trail, coming down into the Delta. Now the Delta is the rice basket of Asia. They can pretty well do three crops a year. And so that was an area that the North wanted desperately. And I was ordered to go as assistant officer in charge and the helicopter detachment three at Vinh Long Army Airfield.

[00:54:44.78] While there, we had frequent encounters, both day and night. And on my off days, I would fly with the Army to give them relief. Because their pilots were flying 60, 70 hours a month. We were only getting 35, 40 hours a month. And some of those Army pilots had high blood pressure. They were kind of cracking at the seams a little bit and they needed some relief.

[00:55:12.41] And one of the instructors from Fort Benning happened to be the CO of the gunship outfit. So he and I got along very well. And I would fly with him from time to time. In fact, on one mission flying with him, we were at Three Sisters Mountains on the Cambodian border, and we got shot down.

[00:55:34.89] We were trying to resupply, bringing a supply Huey in to a mountain top group that controlled the high ground. And the NVA and Viet Cong were trying to take out this station. And the station was in clouds, so it was an instrument approach. And we made the drop OK, but we had holes all over us. And we were lucky to make it down to flat territory.

[00:56:11.99] ALLEN WESELESKEY: I have a couple. One is the Tet Offensive, January 31st, 1968. The mortars started coming in-- normally we'd get mortar attacks, there'd be maybe eight, ten, maybe a dozen mortar hits on the field. As soon as the mortars came in, we'd head for a bunker. And the bunker was right outside the little hooch that we lived in.

[00:56:47.78] After about ten, it seemed like it was getting more intense. So I-- along the way getting out to the bunker, there was somebody standing at the door with this funny pointed hat. And I knew it wasn't one of our guys. So sleeping with my .38, I blew his butt away. I was hoping that it was the right thing to do, and it was.

[00:57:13.01] But we left the bunker and started running toward the field. And the field was just exploding all over the place. Very intense. It was a couple of battalions easily that were surrounding Vinh Long. And we were kind of warned by the hooch maid who was the senior Vietnamese gal in the area, who was our particular gal that took care of keeping the place clean, and doing all the bits, shining the boots. But she said before she went home that night, you be safe. Kind of a heads up.

[00:58:05.14] And as we got down to the airfield, it was obvious that our perimeter had been breached. The sappers, which were essentially young boys, had bombs, satchel charges. Didn't have shirts on. I have some pictures for you. And they were throwing satchel charges into the revetments where the aircraft were. Fortunately ours did not get nailed. They were on the north side of the field. And I had my M16. I also had an AK-47 that I had I managed to get. And I knew not to fire the AK-47 because that sound is so uniquely different, I would be taken as an enemy.

[00:59:03.19] We get down to the little area where our aircraft are in revetments, and we had a couple of trailers there that we had sandbagged so that they were somewhat bulletproof. And I took count and everybody seemed to be gathering. The O in C was a guy named Gene Rosenthal. He was a lieutenant commander who was the admin officer and was my boss back at Vung Tau.

[00:59:36.12] Gene's mission was to make sure everybody got home alive. He had been passed over for commander a couple of times. And I found that a lot of the officers in the senior structure, Navy in particular, had made their move to Vietnam hoping to get picked up. Spencer, the CO, had never been screened for command. The offer for command had been presented to several people and they turned it down. And by default, Spencer became the CO.

[01:00:15.14] Realizing that the southern border was under the heaviest attack, I grabbed my weapon and went across the field to help the Army guys defend the perimeter. And one of the guys had an M60 that they were having trouble with, so I stripped it down and fixed it. And they were able to resume firing out there. And he said, we got a couple of guys out in the forward area. We're not sure how they're doing. So I went out beyond the fence perimeter to try to locate them and make sure they were OK and they had enough ammunition.

[01:00:55.64] They were OK. They needed ammo, and I gave them quite a few belts of M60 ammo. And then I went about helping clear the revetments. One of my co-pilots, Dick Marts, had encountered a couple of sappers. And he got shot trying to shoot them. He took a shot in the arm that went up and came out his collarbone, took one in the leg. And his M16 jammed. He had it across trying to clear it and he took a shot right in the M16 that saved his life. Dick wound up being medevac'd out of there.

[01:01:41.42] Now as we quelled the initial overrun, I went back to our detachment area. And the O in C was a little livid in anger saying, what the hell are you doing out there with the Army? You're supposed to be here defending us. I said, well, us is all of us. And that became a little bit of a problem between he and I.

[01:02:14.57] One of my co-pilots was having Ho Chi Minh's revenge and wouldn't go in the bunker area when the attack became more intense. That was Lieutenant Tom Crowell. He was a JG. And he was-- he had diarrhea so bad he was defecating all over the place. So I grabbed him and threw him over my shoulder and took him in the bunker. And he said, I can't go in there like this. I said, the hell you can't. I'd rather have you like this than dead. And so we got him bedded down and we finally got him cleaned up.

[01:02:51.36] But the VC were very, very well organized. They were the internal working people from the base. They had cut off our water. They had cut off our electricity. That knocked off the food preparation. That knocked off sanitary conditions. Navy guys aren't used to digging latrines. And that became a problem to these guys. Now I having been through Valley Forge understood what you have to do. And it kind of got messy. We were under siege for ten days and ten nights, constantly. You couldn't walk without being shot at.

[01:03:36.96] By that time we had a third helicopter, which we had mounted a .50-caliber machine gun in, and put it on mattresses and bungees so it wouldn't shake the airframe apart. And on one mission I took the detachment out, three, and we went hopping along around the base perimeter just laying down fire power everywhere. And we called the .50-caliber job, the Seawolf Surprise. That worked pretty well. And it elevated the morale of the guys. I made sure that every man in our detachment and maintenance unit got an award. That to me was exposure.

[01:04:23.89] And we had a briefing with the Army guys. They had already killed-- they had spotted all the senior officers. The CO came out of his hooch, the CO of the base, got his head blown off. He had been Hubert Humphrey's personal pilot. The operations officer got nailed. I was targeted, but I got the guy before he got me.

[01:04:48.83] So we had a couple of majors, and some-- a captain, Army, and Lieutenant Commander Joe Bouchard, who was our maintenance officer. He was a former enlisted mechanic. And he kind of took over as the ground CO. It came to a point where we had a briefing that if they hit us again, we would fall back to the ammunition depot. And we would make our last stand there. Didn't come to that point.

[01:05:31.94] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Best day would be the incident with Jack Jacobs.

[01:05:37.10] JOE GALLOWAY: This was a mission for which you received the Navy Cross?

[01:05:42.44] ALLEN WESELESKEY: I received the Navy Cross via an Article 232 investigation pre-upping a court martial issue. Jack Jacobs with the 9th Infantry ARVN Group had planned a mission to cross the Mekong River into a northern territory, that was a battalion movement. He was in the lead company.

[01:06:19.95] The group had been compromised. Somebody within the ARVNs had passed on the frequencies of the radios, the makeup of the attacking unit, and their approach. So they knew everything about what was coming at them. Now who is they? It was a group coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. You have to think about this.

[01:06:51.40] Let's say that you're a little Vietnamese guy, and you start out in Hanoi. And they put a backpack on you and put two mortar shells in it. And you come down through the Cambodian border, being harassed once in a while by the Air Force. And then you make your way down the Mekong River into South Vietnam. And this battalion commander, whoever he was-- and by the way, I found out who he was, and I have a picture of him-- says, come here, boy. And he grabs the two mortar shells puts them in a barrel. Boom! Boom! OK, go back and get two more.

[01:07:40.63] That's a hell of a group that has that kind of sense that they're willing to do that. We see the similar thing in the jihadists. That's something the Brits, the Germans, in all of our previous world war experiences did not experience. This is something new. People willing to die. And we saw that during the Tet Offensive.

[01:08:10.84] So Jack winds up walking into a booby trap, if you will, for the whole company. And his company is just about decimated. He is impacted by a mortar that rips away part of his face. His nose is gone. His eyeball is hanging out. I didn't realize this until I got to him. Now they called for help. They asked the Air Force for medevac, Air Force turned them down. The Army-- when they asked them for help the Army said, we have no assets available.

[01:08:53.95] We had two river patrol boats on that river as a blocking force. So they scrambled their supporting fire team. That happened to be me. And so we launched from Vinh Long with two helicopters, a fire team. And within seven minutes, we were approaching the area. And it looked like a 4th of July celebration. There were mortars falling everywhere. But the coverage, the foliage was so dense it was hard to understand or see each individuals on the ground.

[01:09:30.88] So Jacob said, hey, it's hot in here. You aren't going to make it. They're all around us. I said, well, pop a smoke. I'll call the color. Now we do that procedure because if he says I'm going to pop a purple smoke, the VC pop a purple smoke. Then you're confused. Who do you go to? So he popped the smoke. It happened to be purple. And I brought my fire team in. I tried to hold fire because I didn't know where the enemy was. I couldn't see them. They were well camouflaged. And they had literally build up quite an area for support. And they had trench lines.

[01:10:18.79] As we got in, we took heavy fire, .51-caliber. I could see the green tracers. Once I saw green tracers, I knew it was Chinese, Russian type ammunition. And as I made my approach into the smoke he said, get out of here. Wave off because we're being hammered right now. And he could see that we were being hammered. So I pulled off toward the river. And my wingman said, Wes, I'm hit. I said, I am too. He said, no, no, I'm hit. He said, I took a hit in my leg. And my gunner has part of his hand blown off, the gunner behind him.

[01:11:04.42] And so I'm faced with this decision. I got two Americans and a Vietnamese commander on the ground both-- all wounded. The sergeant with Jacobs had several sucking chest wounds. He was Mexican-American, Chicano.

[01:11:30.38] We pull off and I can see that my wingman was streaming hydraulic fluid, looks like blood because it's red. So I circle around him and I ask the co-pilot, can you handle the aircraft? Is it stable enough to fly home? He said, yeah, it's going to be tough because the controls are stiff. I said, go home. He said, you're not going to come with us. No, I'm going back and get those Americans. And I said, I want you to go to the south side of the river over friendly territory and head for Vinh Long. Give them a call now. And I detach from him and went-- trying to get back into the Jacobs area.

[01:12:16.81] In the meantime, a flight of Vietnamese Spads, AD-5Ns, like I had flown, came by and they had some bombs. And they made a bomb run. And the NVA, VC took them on and hit a couple of them. And they pulled off immediately and went home to Binh Thuy. I later went back to Binh Thuy and looked at the serial numbers. I had flown several of those very same aircraft.

[01:12:45.30] So I'm trying to penetrate back into where Jacobs is at and the firepower is still more than I can handle. It's much greater than what I can put out. Well, that's a violation of the rules of engagement. You just don't do that. And so after about three attempts to go in and get him, I decide there's only one way. And that's to get on the ground, sand blower, fly under the trees, and get to where he's at.

[01:13:17.77] In the meantime, they've moved him to a little clearer spot. And so I called Jack-- and I don't know who this guy is by the way. I had no idea who he was. I knew he was an American. And his sergeant was an American. So we get on the ground. I told my gunners, any time you see fire you are to return fire. And we did exactly that. He popped another smoke. And I plopped down in a very small, confined area.

[01:13:50.51] In the meantime, all of his surviving company is trying to get on my helicopter. Now I can't go anywhere like that. So I told my gunners, if you have to we're going to have to shoot some of these Vietnamese. And I don't want to do that because we'll wind up all being dead. So we get Jacobs on board, his sergeant, and I lift up to see if I can handle it because I'm still pretty heavy. I had just gotten there. I had a full fuel load and quite a bit of ammunition left. So I determined I can take one more person, and it's the battalion commander.

[01:14:33.37] Then we lift up. And as I lift off, I start spewing rockets and ammunition all around them. Because the word I get is they're within meters, maybe 20, 30 meters, of where this group is. And we're being hit like crazy. I mean we took a lot of hits. I took one right up the groin. But I kept my .45 there and that stopped the bullet.

[01:14:59.38] We got out of there barely. And I was skipping along because I had to turn downwind, and the aircraft didn't want to fly downwind. I didn't have enough rotational lift to make it out. But as I dragged along, we finally got up, translational lift. And I was able to make it out of there. Took him directly to Dong Tam, which is near the city of My Tho on one of the



northern tributaries of the Mekong. And had the ambulances waiting. After we got rid of them, we had to hose down the helicopter. There was blood everywhere.

[01:15:46.98] I later got a call from my wingman. He said, I met the guy who you rescued. He said, things are OK. He might make it. And then they medevac'd my wingman out of there. I never heard another word from Jacobs or whoever it was until I was contacted by Peter Schey some six years ago. And Peter says, I know what you did on March 9th, 1968. And I said, what are you talking about? He says, that's when you rescued a guy named Jack Jacobs. He's the only living Jew that has the Medal of Honor. And he says that they tried to court martial you.

[01:16:42.52] Well, I had gotten backchannel information throughout the squadron. I was put under house arrest when I made it back to Vinh Long. And they wanted to take my wings away because I didn't escort my wingman back. I broke rules of engagement. I went up against firepower heavier than I was. In fact, we were getting mortared while I was in there.

[01:17:10.05] So my CO figured that's the last straw. And my fitness report coming out of HA(L)-3 wasn't exactly glorious. After the Article 32, they had enough statements from the Army and the people who were close in that I wound up with a Navy Cross. I didn't get that until a year and a half later.

[01:17:38.68] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Worst day--

[01:17:41.80] JOE GALLOWAY: That you just described was your best day.

[01:17:45.10] ALLEN WESELESKEY: When I was at Valley Forge, my last year I was on the plebe detail. That is, instructing the new guys that had come in. One of the new guys was a trumpet player by the name of Bob Toal. Bob Toal's family is a lineage of lawyers and judges in the Philadelphia area.

[01:18:10.18] Bob was kind of special. He had a-- he and I bonded closely, almost immediately. It was a Christian fellowship that is from heart to heart. Well, while I was in HS-3, Bob Toal was on the ROTC staff at Valley Forge as a regular set of duty. And I would take the helicopter up there and do demonstrations for him and the corps of cadets.

[01:18:46.17] And on one of those trips, Bob introduced me to his wife and his son. And privately off on the side he said, I've got orders to Vietnam. And I said, I do too. He said, I'm not going to come back. And I said, come on Bob, we know better than that. And he was an outstanding officer.

[01:19:12.88] During the time when we were convoying into Berlin, going through Russian communist blockades, he was the officer that when stopped by the Russians, immediately put out a perimeter around his truck and would not let the Russians inspect what was in the vehicles. That's the kind of guy he was. He knew what his duty was, and he executed it.

[01:19:40.26] And then he became the operations officer in Vinh Long. So the old friends get to work together again. And we'd have a meal once in a while together. He was in downtown Vinh

Long with the colonel at the operations center. But he would also go out on operations with the North Vietnamese-- oh, I'm sorry, the ARVN, the South Vietnamese troops.

[01:20:08.25] And on returning from one of the missions, they were ambushed. And they blew off part of Bob Toal's head. Stripped him of his weapons. He had a .38 exactly like mine. And I got the call on the flight line, I had just landed, that the corpsman wanted me to come down and identify an Army casualty.

[01:20:35.59] And they had Bob laid out in the morgue area. And the corpsman said, don't touch him. I said, why? He said, we received him in an unusual condition. Part of his head's blown away and he's all bandaged up. We think that they booby trapped him.

[01:20:57.26] And there was my buddy, my college friend. And I thought about his wife and family, and his prediction that he was going to not come home. And that was the worst day of my life. Because at that point, I wanted to go out and wipe out everything I could. And I had to suppress that. Because deep in my heart, he and I understood the Vietnamese people are great people, and they truly are. But you have these dedicated warriors within their group, that are going to do anything to win a combat situation. And he became one of their victims. That was it.

[01:21:49.82] JOE GALLOWAY: How much contact did you have with your family back home?

[01:21:55.46] ALLEN WESELESKEY: I would write daily as a diary because I knew technically we were not supposed to keep a log. My wife has preserved every one of those letters. And it was my hope to be able to turn that into a story that other people can share. From time to time, I would be able to make contact through MARS--

[01:22:27.04] JOE GALLOWAY: MARS.

[01:22:27.77] ALLEN WESELESKEY: --and would get a phone call back. When Bob Toal was killed, I was able to get a call back to Sally to please contact Bob's wife. And I couldn't tell her directly that Bob had been killed, but I tried to get that message to her. It was part of the hardest transition I had with the combat aspect, playing the infantry role, which we were all forced to do during the Tet Offensive.

[01:23:16.66] In fact, during the Tet Offensive, I was awarded a Bronze Star, Valor, by the Army. And when the 199th finally made it in on the 10th day to relieve us, the commander said, here's your Combat Infantry Badge. I'm one of the few naval aviators that is both a naval aviator, a surface warfare officer, and have a CIB.

[01:23:44.74] JOE GALLOWAY: And a CIB. How much news did you receive about the war from home?

[01:23:56.02] ALLEN WESELESKEY: The very little I got was really disturbing. Because in one of Sally's letters she said she was somewhere else and the boy started screaming-- and this was during the Tet Offensive-- Mommy, Mommy, get here. Daddy's base has been overrun. And

they had some shots of that. So I tried not to talk about the grueling aspects of combat because I saw it both from the air--

[01:24:36.95] Flying as a Seawolf is like flying like Eddie Rickenbacker did. Because you had eyeball to eyeball contact with the enemy at times. Not all the time, but sometimes. Example, one night I was flying with Robin Miller, the Army captain. And we were on a night lighter patrol going up some canals. And the Vietnamese were not allowed to be on the waterways at night.

[01:25:07.54] And here comes a guy with a loaded sampan. And Robin looked over at me, and I was on the machine gun side. And I had an M40 grenade launcher. And he says get him, get him, get him. And I sighted him, popped him, and I nailed him. I mean, we had blood everywhere. But I didn't pass that back home.

[01:25:36.36] ALLEN WESELESKEY: The news we got was not supportive and the return home was terrible. I wound up within 12 hours of arriving back home in the hospital at Portsmouth. Because I passed out, unknown. They kept me for about 10 or 12 days.

[01:25:59.82] I was to go to HS-1. This story is interesting. Down in Key West there is a training instructor pilot. But I had something wrong with me and the doctors couldn't figure out what it was. And they were giving me the silver stallion, and all kind of down the throat tests, checking blood, and I was quarantined.

[01:26:28.41] And the guy across the hall was Chesty Puller. So Chesty comes in and he said, the hell with them. I can talk to you. And we were exchanging war stories. And Chesty was telling me about his first Navy Cross when he was down in Nicaragua. And he had had a massive heart attack. And that was one of his stays at Portsmouth. So he and I became friends. But my delay getting back down to executing the orders caused some concern with my future command post.

[01:27:09.53] When I called back from Vietnam, those of us who were in the first 22 were guaranteed in writing either one of three choices that we could make. And my choices were overseas Europe. I'd never been on the East Coast until I got to HS-3 in Norfolk.

[01:27:32.84] Second was I had been selected as a principal to go to graduate school at both Naval Postgraduate Monterey-- I'm trying to remember where the other college was, for international relations, political science, for a master's. And it was tough. And the third choice was any lieutenant commander billet in Norfolk. The detailer kept coming back and saying, hey, we can't send you to Europe. You have too many dependents. By that time, for some time, my mother who came for a two-week visit stayed for 30 years.

[01:28:24.50] In the Eastern European community, as my father had done when I was 14, you have children to support the family. Whatever you earn that you bring in goes to the father, mother, and they will issue whatever they choose. My old man's idea was whatever I did, he would retire and live with me. Well, he couldn't make it. He died at 40. Thank God. And my mother did. And she wound up living with me until she passed on.

[01:29:07.78] When I was dickering with the detailer of my three choices he said, you can't go to Europe. There's a war on. We're not sending helicopter pilots anywhere other than back to Vietnam. I said, where the hell do you think I've been?

[01:29:32.45] And the third one was, there's no lieutenant commander slots open in Norfolk. He said, how would you like to go to VX-1? I said, that would be fine. That would be super. I could fly multi-engine and helicopters, ASW work. He said, we can't send you there. You're not an aeronautical engineer. But since you want to go to Key West-- I said, wait a minute, I never put down I wanted to go to Key West. He said, well, since you want to go to Key West, you're going to HS-1 as an instructor pilot in the RAG-- replacement air group.

[01:30:07.24] OK. So I executed orders and went down to Key West. In my duties at Key West, I was safety officer. And you had to take students on cross-countries. So I grabbed two good lieutenants who were in the training program. They were JG's actually coming through into advanced helicopter ASW.

[01:30:36.68] And I went through the squadron looking for the enlisted people who were about to have orders issued that had finished their tour. And my premise is this, if you can look after your enlisted people and your officers, but enlisted primarily, you do the best you can to help them with their career. So I loaded up this H-3 helicopter and we did a cross-country to Washington D.C.

[01:31:07.91] Well, having been an air traffic controller at Anacostia, I knew all the operators at the Pentagon heliport. So I called up as we got into the pattern there and said, hey, this is Lieutenant Commander Wes. Can you park me on the grass at the heliport? And he said, sure. So we park the helicopter off on the side. That's where the VIPs come in and out of the Pentagon.

[01:31:33.77] And we march up to BUPERS on the hill. And I had the officers stay close. I said, this is a lesson for you. And I went around to the enlisted detailers with each guy and talked to the detailer and said, this guy is a four-o Sailor. He's been great with community work, da-da, da-da. He wants to go here. Have you got-- what have you got there? And I would get them their orders. And they would get what they wanted.

[01:32:08.31] So I take the two JGs and we go to see their detailer, separate wing of the BUPERS area. And these are the two best guys out of this class. And one wanted West Coast, one wanted East Coast. And I talked the detailers into giving them what they wanted. So I said, OK, let's go see my detailer. So we go to see my detailer and it's two jet jocks who are go fast afterburner guys.

[01:32:41.34] And by this time, I had gotten my Navy/Marine Corps Medal, the Bronze Star from the Army, a couple of DFCs. I had 31 air medals and one from the Army with valor. My Navy Cross. So I was in blues and all decked out. And the detailer looks at me, so what the hell do you want? I said, I want orders to graduate school. He said, forget it. You're where we need you. I said, wait a minute, I want you to break open my file and there's a written document that says that I get one of my choices. I want to go to graduate school.

[01:33:30.20] He says, we're not sending you anywhere. There's a war on. And where you were at there was no fighting. That's the last thing he remembered saying. Because I reached across the desk, dragged his ass over to my side and punched out his running lights. I kicked in a few ribs. And by that time, the guys had pulled me off him. I had an immediate admiral's mast with Admiral Seiberlich, who was the deputy BUPERS.

[01:33:57.56] So they marched me up to the admiral's office. The other guy is hurting pretty bad, because I broke his nose and blacked his eyes. What's the story here detailer? Well, this a-hole came in and demanded that he be allowed to go to graduate school. Well, was he selected for graduate school? Well, yes, sir. He was selected for Tufts and for Postgraduate School at Monterey.

[01:34:28.31] And what's your story? And I said, well, in my file I have a written guarantee that if I volunteered to go to combat, I would get one of my three choices. And one of those choices is graduate school. And he looked at the detailer, said, you dumb bastard. Get those orders out. And two weeks later I was on my way to Monterey.

[01:34:55.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Thank you, Captain. We appreciate your stories.

[01:34:58.82] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Thank you for your time and your interest. Too many people don't realize what combatants go through. They don't recognize that we're not strange birds that go off half cocked. That we are true patriots who love this country more than life, and we're willing to give our life.

[01:35:29.78] JOE GALLOWAY: Thank you.

[01:35:30.35] ALLEN WESELESKEY: Yes, sir.

[01:35:31.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Thank you for your service.