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00:00:01,180 --> 00:00:07,680

We're recording the interview of Russell Seel. This interview is being conducted by Adrian Hill from the Wright State University Veterans voices project.

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00:00:07,680 --> 00:00:17,980

This interview is being recorded at VFW post 5434 in Union, Ohio. It is 4:30 pm on September 25, 2014.

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00:00:17,980 --> 00:00:20,920

Alright, ready to go?

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00:00:20,920 --> 00:00:21,420

Yeah.

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00:00:21,420 --> 00:00:24,060

Okay, when and where were you born?

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00:00:24,060 --> 00:00:30,460

Canaanville, Ohio December 18, 1939.

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00:00:30,460 --> 00:00:34,420

Okay, who were your parents and what were their occupations?

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00:00:34,420 --> 00:00:57,600

Father was a farmer Earl H. "Spud" Seel. Mother was Marie Kerns and they were married in early -- real early -- 1939 and Dad was a farmer.

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00:00:57,600 --> 00:01:01,160

Okay. Did you have any siblings?

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00:01:01,160 --> 00:01:12,800

Yes, I have daughter and son. Susan is 50 years old, lives with her mother in Indianapolis, Indiana

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00:01:12,800 --> 00:01:22,560

She has a degree from Mississippi State University in Clinical Psychology. She does not work in that field now.

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00:01:22,560 --> 00:01:31,720

The boy is Douglas Brian Seel and he lives in Austen, Texas and works in a restaurant.

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00:01:31,720 --> 00:01:33,720

Okay and you said those are your kids?

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00:01:33,720 --> 00:01:34,460
Yes.

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00:01:34,460 --> 00:01:37,640
What about siblings, like brothers and sisters that you had?

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00:01:37,640 --> 00:01:39,640
Brothers and sisters, I'm the oldest of 5.

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00:01:39,640 --> 00:01:40,240
Okay.

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00:01:40,240 --> 00:01:48,920
I have 3 sisters after me and then the brother was born in 1953 and he's the youngest of the siblings.

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00:01:48,920 --> 00:01:52,080
Okay, did any of your siblings serve in the military?

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00:01:52,080 --> 00:01:52,760
No.

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00:01:52,760 --> 00:01:58,740
Okay. What were you doing before you entered the Air Force?

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00:01:58,760 --> 00:02:08,540
After I graduated from high school I went directly into the military later that year, which was 1958.

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00:02:08,540 --> 00:02:17,160
Okay. So enlisted into the Air Force, you weren't drafted?

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00:02:17,160 --> 00:02:18,240
Correct.

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00:02:18,240 --> 00:02:21,980
Why did you choose the branch you chose, the Air Force?

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00:02:21,980 --> 00:02:35,900
It was an accident, because a friend in high school asked me to go with him to sign up for the Navy and at that time,

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00:02:35,900 --> 00:02:44,340

which is still relevant, the different branches of the service have different qualifications for entry.

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00:02:44,340 --> 00:02:55,320

And at that time the Navy had a high qualification that some of the service. Now my friend passed that test with flying colors.

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00:02:55,320 --> 00:03:07,780

I failed it by one point. So the very next day I went back and walked into the Air Force recruiters office and obviously, I did better on their test than I did on the Navy test.

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00:03:07,780 --> 00:03:20,840

Whatever, but I was accepted for the Air Force. There was a small problem in that -- now this is June of 1958 we're taking about here --

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00:03:20,840 --> 00:03:30,700

In January of 1958 as a high school senior I had a DUI and I was fined more than \$50.

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00:03:30,700 --> 00:03:43,720

Because of that the Air Force had to get special permission for me from Deputy Chief of Staff Air Force in Washington, D.C. to enter into the Air Force.

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00:03:43,720 --> 00:03:49,320

So I was not able to get in until December 3, 1958.

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00:03:49,320 --> 00:03:59,380

Okay, let's see, when you departed, do you recall that when you departed for basic training?

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00:03:59,380 --> 00:04:21,460

Yes, it's something I that every individual that enters probably remembers. It was the 2nd of December 1958 and in Athens, Ohio the roads were frozen from rain from the night before

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00:04:21,460 --> 00:04:32,840

and I will never forget my parents taking me to where I could catch a Greyhound bus to Fort Hayes in Columbus, Ohio

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00:04:32,840 --> 00:04:48,840

to catch a DC-8 to go to Lowe Field in Fort Worth and from Fort Worth as far as I remember, we went by bus,

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00:04:48,840 --> 00:04:55,940

because I do not remember exactly how I got from Fort Worth to San Antonio, but I believe it was by bus.

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00:04:55,940 --> 00:05:08,880

But that road that morning that my parents took me to me to catch that bus was a glare of ice and dad had to drive like 10-15 mile per hour to stay on the road.

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00:05:08,880 --> 00:05:10,260

So that's what I remember about that.

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00:05:10,260 --> 00:05:16,640

Yeah, okay. Do you remember like arriving at basic training, do you remember what that was like?

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00:05:16,640 --> 00:05:38,440

Very vividly. They always had one of the two -- I call them TI: tactical instructors -- out there to meet the bus and it was a comply with the order given or face the penalty

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00:05:38,440 --> 00:05:53,400

from that moment until we were released from basic training. Now if you had a guaranteed enlistment of a certain specialty you got out of there at 8 weeks.

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00:05:53,400 --> 00:06:12,180

But most of us didn't and we had to serve 12 weeks and the tactical instructor which was the nose to nose character, he put 15,000... 1,500... 15,000 -- I'm sorry --

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00:06:12,180 --> 00:06:23,840

through basic training as a tactical instructor during his instructor time and this 1958 and early 1959

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00:06:23,840 --> 00:06:39,600

and I met him later in Vietnam at Nha Trang Air Base in 1966 and an incident that occurred in basic training he still remembered after all those people.

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00:06:39,600 --> 00:06:52,580

I had passed out at parade rest in front of the dining hall and had to have three stitches up in my nose. So when I came back to the dormitory he said --

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00:06:52,580 --> 00:06:57,860

now he had a nickname for everybody and my last name is Seel and he called me "Sneel" --

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00:06:57,860 --> 00:07:06,920

so he looked at me and he said "how's your nose Sneel?" Now, in Vietnam, I walk up to him and -- okay [laughing] -- Now in Vietnam I walk up to him,

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00:07:06,920 --> 00:07:18,060

I says "Sargent Keys, you remember me?". He looked at my name tag, military clothing and he says "Sneel, how's your nose?"

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00:07:18,060 --> 00:07:30,160

[laughing] Okay, after all those years [laughing]. So that was hilarious that that occurred like that, because of all the people he had put through basic training.

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00:07:30,160 --> 00:07:31,180

[laughing]

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00:07:31,180 --> 00:07:34,500

How many years was that in between basic training and you seeing him in Vietnam?

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00:07:34,500 --> 00:07:41,580

I was out of basic training in February of '59 and it was 1966...

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00:07:41,580 --> 00:07:42,660

About 7 years or so?

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00:07:42,660 --> 00:07:43,620

...when this incident occurred.

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00:07:43,620 --> 00:07:44,280

Okay.

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00:07:44,280 --> 00:07:46,060

Yeah.

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00:07:46,080 --> 00:07:48,060

So do you recall any of your other instructors besides that one?

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00:07:48,060 --> 00:07:59,500

Yes, sergeant Henry. I recall my recruiter was a sergeant miller in Athens, Ohio, but the other instructor was Sergeant Henry.

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00:07:59,500 --> 00:08:14,000

He was more of individual who rotated days coming in with Sergeant Keys, but he was a laid back type person that did a lot of the paperwork in the office and stuff like that.

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00:08:14,000 --> 00:08:24,420

Now he was a total tactical instructor like Seargent Keys was, but Sergeant Keys was a guy that was right here to make you from a civilian to a military man

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00:08:24,420 --> 00:08:26,060

and that's the best way to describe it.

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00:08:26,060 --> 00:08:29,040

Yeah, okay.

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00:08:29,040 --> 00:08:32,580

So after basic training where did you go? Did you go to your tech school?

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00:08:32,580 --> 00:08:34,380

No, didn't have a tech school.

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00:08:34,380 --> 00:08:34,880

Okay.

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00:08:34,880 --> 00:08:47,380

Those of us that did not score high enough for a guaranteed enlistment specialty. What happened after basic training was you went to a building called the Green Monster

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00:08:47,380 --> 00:08:57,360

and that's... this fellow that talked me was a technical sergeant and in that day master sergeant, E-7 was as high as you went.

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00:08:57,360 --> 00:09:04,940

There was no senior master sergeant, no chief master sergeant until 1959, 1960, okay. At any rate, you go to the Green Monster

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00:09:04,940 --> 00:09:13,280

and the guy says "boy, what do you want to be?" He already knew what you was going to be, but he played the game, you know.

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00:09:13,280 --> 00:09:27,720

And I says "sir, I'd like to be an airborne radio operator, sir". He said "well, we don't need any of those guys today". [laughing] He said "how would you like to be an administrative clerk?"

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00:09:27,720 --> 00:09:33,640

There was nothing you could say except "yes sir". That was just the way it was. He already knew what you were going to be.

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00:09:33,640 --> 00:09:45,260

So, now this is a classic, I had two years of typing in high school and the man that was the instructor was one of my friends.

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00:09:45,260 --> 00:09:56,140

Let's just say he liked me and I liked him. I mean that's the best... He wasn't a close friend, but anyway I had two years of typing and never learned the keyboard.

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00:09:56,140 --> 00:10:05,280

So I get into the Air Force, I go to my first duty station and I'm an administrative clerk. So I'm still honing and pecking on the typewriter, you see.

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00:10:05,280 --> 00:10:22,920

Manual typewriter, you know. Actually it was that way. But anyway, my first supervisor at Altus Air Force Base, Altus Oklahoma was a young lady who was married to a warrant officer on the base.

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00:10:22,920 --> 00:10:32,000

She was my supervisor and she saw me doing this and she came up to me on day one and she said "how would you like to go to a base typing school?"

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00:10:32,000 --> 00:10:41,760

and the only thing you said in that day was "yes ma'am". You know, so that's where I learned to keyboard, but two years of typing in high school, never learned to keyboard.

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00:10:41,760 --> 00:10:44,940

[laughing]

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00:10:44,940 --> 00:10:49,700

So what about after that, any other specialized training..?

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00:10:49,700 --> 00:10:50,500

Oh yes.

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00:10:50,500 --> 00:10:51,460

... throughout your career that you can mention?

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00:10:51,460 --> 00:11:17,600

Yes, yes, much. I was an administrative clerk in strategic air command for seven years, different bases, and finally I became, in 1977, I was a general's aid in Colorado Springs, Colorado,

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00:11:17,620 --> 00:11:32,360

an air defense commander and he retired. So when I made technical sergeant, E-6, you could be a 1st sergeant and in that day there was no training for 1st sergeant.

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00:11:32,360 --> 00:11:50,200

You was an administrative clerk one day, you was 1st sergeant the next day. So my very first assignment as a 1st sergeant was Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida in a radar squadron.

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00:11:50,200 --> 00:12:00,860

Air Force had an 85 person long range radar on the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida in 1977

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00:12:00,860 --> 00:12:12,660

and the individual I replaced was a E-9 chief master sergeant sitting in an E-7 master sergeant position and every assignment he got,

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00:12:12,660 --> 00:12:22,520

he had a high powered brother in the pentagon that just got him off from the assignment. That man was there for 14 consecutive years.

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00:12:22,520 --> 00:12:29,860

I've never heard of anybody in the Air Force that served that long in one place, but he did. He's dead now.

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00:12:29,860 --> 00:12:36,840

[inaudible] Mississippi and he still had that slow southern drawl and when I went in there I was a 1st sergeant

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00:12:36,840 --> 00:12:44,820

and I just watched him until he got out on that medical discharge that he was on, which was some couple months later when I... after I got there

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00:12:44,820 --> 00:12:57,780

and in effect, that 85 person squadron he ran. That major that was in charge as commander, they would sit, the two of them would sit and talk all day

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00:12:57,780 --> 00:13:08,640

and were friends and this sort of stuff and that chief actually ran that squadron. It was an old World War II barracks. We had 14 troops living in that dorm

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00:13:08,640 --> 00:13:16,720

and so you had to have a charge of quarters at night, because if it caught fire it would burn up in 15 minutes, you know, that sort of thing.

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00:13:16,720 --> 00:13:29,520

So anyway, I watched the chief. I watched every move he made and finally when he was ready to leave he had to great big rings of keys right behind his desk

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00:13:29,520 --> 00:13:34,600

and I said "Chief, what's with the keys? I've been watching you, you haven't used any of them".

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00:13:34,600 --> 00:13:44,140

He said "young man, when you've been here" that [inaudible] Mississippi talk "when you've been here as long as I have, you'll know where every one of them fits".

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00:13:44,140 --> 00:13:55,720

Now what it amounted to was in that 14 consecutive years he had changed buildings many times. So he just kept all the keys. [laughing] [inaudible] key.

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00:13:55,740 --> 00:14:06,620

And then he had a green ledger book for everything in the squadron. The leave form, it was a three part leave form and the leave form that the Air Force came out with,

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00:14:06,620 --> 00:14:16,560

once copy went to personnel, one copy went to finance, one copy was... well one copy was for the guy going on leave, and the other copy was a suspense copy.

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00:14:16,560 --> 00:14:23,520

Chief didn't see anything wrong with that. Now he became 1st sergeant in World War II. He was in the chow line one day and they asked

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00:14:23,520 --> 00:14:35,120

-- he was a big man -- and he asked cook for an additional ration of meat and the cook gave him trouble so Roche just jammed him through the wall.

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00:14:35,120 --> 00:14:39,540

So the company commander comes up and he says "come with me sergeant, you're my new unit first sergeant".

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00:14:39,540 --> 00:14:47,920

Now in World War II, the unit first sergeant had to whip everybody in the unit. That's why I could have never had been one, [laughing] okay. I'm too small.

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00:14:47,920 --> 00:14:59,000

But anyway, that's how he became one and he was 1st sergeant all his career, basically and that's how he became one and he sat in that position for 14

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00:14:59,000 --> 00:15:07,260

-- I've never heard of that. I've been around a lot of Air Force people. I've never heard of that happening. So that was a first as far as I'm concerned with him.

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00:15:07,260 --> 00:15:13,820

And the major, after he left, the major had to check me out, because there was no turning for a 1st sergeant.

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00:15:13,820 --> 00:15:23,340

So he'd come in and he would do little tiny things to see if he could get me excited and I just wouldn't get excited, you

know.

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00:15:23,340 --> 00:15:32,320

And one day, he let the individual that's supposed to be in charge of the quarters, he let him off the charge of quarters duty from the compound,

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00:15:32,320 --> 00:15:38,560

because the compound had called the major and said "we need this guy here tonight" and the major said "okay".

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00:15:38,560 --> 00:15:45,580

Well when it came time for the sergeant quarters I didn't have one. So I just locked the doors and went home when I had found out the major had released the guy.

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00:15:45,580 --> 00:15:52,900

I just locked the doors and went home. Next morning major comes in. "We have a charge of quarters last night?" "No sir". "Why didn't we?"

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00:15:52,900 --> 00:16:03,040

I said, "because you let him of, didn't tell me". He said "we've got alternates on that list". I said "major, I make this duty roster, sir and if you're going to let somebody off,

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00:16:03,040 --> 00:16:07,080

you're going to want to tell me about it. Otherwise, we may not have any charge of quarters".

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00:16:07,080 --> 00:16:16,800

He said "come to my office". So I went in his office. [laughing] He asked me close the door. I closed it, okay, because he had been messing with me on little teeny tiny things

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00:16:16,800 --> 00:16:24,740

just to see how much I could take. So I wanted to let him know that he wasn't going to bother me.

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00:16:24,740 --> 00:16:31,860

So he said "why didn't you call one of them alternate charge of quarters last night?"

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00:16:31,860 --> 00:16:37,460

I said "major, did we have a [inaudible] last night?" He said "no, but that's not the point. Why didn't you call one of them?"

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00:16:37,460 --> 00:16:49,620

I said "because you let the gentleman off and didn't tell me". He said "from now on you..." I said "major, sir, with all do respect, you let somebody off duty,

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00:16:49,620 --> 00:16:58,640

I make up the duty roster, you let me know about it" and I walked, absolutely walked out. I didn't wait for him to say dismissed.

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00:16:58,640 --> 00:17:11,980

Well I figured that he would probably hold that against me, but instead it developed a report between us and he cut out his Micky Mouse stuff that he had been doing,

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00:17:11,980 --> 00:17:21,800

because I was new 1st sergeant and so we never had any problems beyond that point and he never wrote me down on any performance reports.

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00:17:21,800 --> 00:17:34,620

He lived one year after I left there in '72 at Thule, Greenland. I found out he had passed away and Chief Roche that stayed in that position all that time lasted done year

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00:17:34,620 --> 00:17:43,080

after his 30 year retirement and he had a bad heart problem and he died of a heart problem one year after he retired.

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00:17:43,080 --> 00:17:52,400

So both of them were gone basically one year after [laughing]... after I went to Thule, Greenland from that radar squadron.

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00:17:52,400 --> 00:18:05,040

And I played fast paced softball with the Navy in '71 and I played 26 years of fast paced softball. So anyway, I'm playing with their team

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00:18:05,040 --> 00:18:15,500

and I get hit in the side of the head with a pitched ball. What it did, it destroyed the support under this left eye, but not the eyeball.

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00:18:15,500 --> 00:18:28,920

Didn't break the bone, just destroyed the support. So the Navy surgeon put that back together no problem, but all the blood vessels on the left side of my head

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00:18:28,940 --> 00:18:39,400

and I'm down on the ground, seeing some stars, but I'm getting up to go to first base and Frank Mc Caffry had been a Philadelphia Philly, baseball player. He was our coach.

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00:18:39,420 --> 00:18:47,280

He says "Seel, what are you doing?" I said "I'm going to first base, Coach". He said "you're going to the hospital, okay". [laughing]

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00:18:47,280 --> 00:18:56,260

So I spend a good week, if not more, in the Navy Hospital and when your in the Navy Hospital if you can work, they'll put you to work.

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00:18:56,260 --> 00:19:01,400

So I'm in bed and this young man comes to me with a mop and he says "mop that area right over there".

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00:19:01,400 --> 00:19:07,860

I said excuse me, I'm an Air Force 1st sergeant, I make out the duty rosters. Air Force 1st sergeants don't pull no duty".

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00:19:07,860 --> 00:19:18,720

He said "really?" I said "yeah". So off he goes and here comes this old Navy chief. He said "he was saying you've got a little problem with manning the mop?"

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00:19:18,720 --> 00:19:29,760

I said "Chief, Air Force 1st sergeants don't pull no duty". He said "really?" I said "yeah". He said "we'll see about that". I said "okay Chief, have a good day"

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00:19:29,760 --> 00:19:37,980

but I never heard from either one of them again. [laughing] I hope I'm not wearing out your system here.

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00:19:37,980 --> 00:19:50,400

Oh no, no, you're good. I'm going to kind of [clearing throat] move into your... talk about Vietnam a little bit, because that was the combat zone you served in.

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00:19:50,400 --> 00:19:51,340

Okay, right.

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00:19:51,340 --> 00:19:53,340

So where in Vietnam did you serve?

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00:19:53,340 --> 00:19:56,160

Nha Trang, Nha Trang Airbase.

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00:19:56,160 --> 00:19:57,640

Nha Trang Airbase and that was..?

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00:19:57,640 --> 00:19:59,640

It was halfway up Vietnam...

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00:19:59,640 --> 00:20:00,780

Okay.

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00:20:00,780 --> 00:20:10,700

...on the right hand side, right on the South China Sea. It was known as -- I found out later -- the garden spot of Vietnam,

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00:20:10,700 --> 00:20:21,320

because every general, every congressman -- so help me now, I'm not blowing smoke -- it was the garden spot of Vietnam.

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00:20:21,320 --> 00:20:34,400

So 7th Air Force and that was a 4 star general. I think of his name in a minute. At any rate, he would send all the VIPs up there to see that base,

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00:20:34,400 --> 00:20:45,400

because our base was so much nicer than all the other bases and we had the 5th Special Forces on the southern part of our -- Green Berets, Army -- on the southern part

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00:20:45,400 --> 00:20:58,980

of our base and the ROK Koreans also was in separate facilities just south of our base, which was actually bordered our base.

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00:20:58,980 --> 00:21:10,360

And we was known as the 14th Air Commando Wing and we didn't have any air commandos, but that's what it was called, okay.

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00:21:10,360 --> 00:21:23,340

We had no aircraft on the base except one. There was an A1E propeller that carried a lot armament, of course that anyone that knows Vietnam would know.

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00:21:23,340 --> 00:21:35,620

Had no other aircraft, but that aircraft the wing commander used and he was full colonel, we had 3-4 colonels on that base and the colonel...

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00:21:35,620 --> 00:21:48,960

Colonel... I can't think of his first name, his last name was Bradburn and he was so well liked by everybody that I never heard anybody talk bad about that man.

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00:21:48,960 --> 00:22:02,440

And then we had a base commander and he had a deputy commander from material. So I'm clerk at this time. So I go to work and the deputy commander for material's building,

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00:22:02,440 --> 00:22:21,860

but not working for him. And when I got there, there was all kinds. I was a E-5 staff sergeant and the base didn't have

enough room for the airmen for quarters.

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00:22:21,860 --> 00:22:36,040

So they let all of us E-5 staff sergeants and above, move off the base. There was a very funny incident that occurred. They had an outside shower for everybody on the base

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00:22:36,040 --> 00:22:41,200

and it was like concrete block and it was like 12 foot high and it was open air.

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00:22:41,200 --> 00:22:53,780

So they had signs all around this thing. So the first day there I wanted to take a shower. So I go over there and I read that sign next to the door, which said:

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00:22:53,780 --> 00:23:07,980

"go in, turn the water on, get wet, turn the water off, soap up, turn the water on, rinse off". I didn't read all the signs. So I get in there and I get wet and I turn it off

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00:23:07,980 --> 00:23:18,260

and I soap up and I turn it on. Water hours are over. [laughing] If you've ever tried to get soap off your body [laughing] that is a challenge.

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00:23:18,260 --> 00:23:28,240

So anyway, that was funny thing that happened right at the very beginning. And then I think the thing that amazed em the most, we went contract flight Continental

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00:23:28,240 --> 00:23:40,180

from the United States into Clarke Field in the Philippines and then we went -- same flight, they had to refueled, we were able to get off the aircraft --

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00:23:40,180 --> 00:23:49,780

and when you stepped in that doorway in that aircraft, in the Philippines, it's like the same effect as walking into a steamer.

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00:23:49,780 --> 00:23:58,240

So you're thinking to yourself "sure hope Vietnam ain't like this", but it was. So you get to Tan Son Nhut where everybody, almost everybody went into.

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00:23:58,240 --> 00:24:07,220

Some went into Da Nang later on and so forth, but most people went into Tan Son Nhut and Saigon.

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00:24:07,220 --> 00:24:20,540

We Americans, we have to have a mattress to sleep on. Well in South East Asia your body sweats from 9 o'clock in the morning until 9 o'clock at night or after.

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00:24:20,540 --> 00:24:34,320

So these mattresses where... I mean they were rank and they had a dining hall just for E-5 staff sergeants in Tan Son Nhut. That's how many was there.

168

00:24:34,320 --> 00:24:44,940

The material was stacked so high, as high as forklifts could stack it at Tan Son Nhut. Now this is 1966.

169

00:24:44,940 --> 00:24:52,080

3 days alter we finally, me and theses 2 old master sergeants -- they had been World War II and got out, been in Korea and got out.

170

00:24:52,080 --> 00:25:05,980

Now they're in Vietnam just finishing up some time and they were aircraft maintenance guys. So we finally get a flight up to Nha Trang on a C-130 -- 4 engine prop dueled --

171

00:25:05,980 --> 00:25:15,820

and I opened my young mouth to these 2 old boys. They were reservists. I said "gentlemen, if there's an air condition on that base I'll be behind it"

172

00:25:15,820 --> 00:25:26,260

and they just laughed, they he-hawed, okay. So anyway, get up to Nha Trang, I chief [inaudible] complex. No air, just opened windows.

173

00:25:26,260 --> 00:25:36,340

Trucks would come by, roll all the sand and stuff into your office and so forth and the deputy commander from material, which owned this thing -- full colonel,

174

00:25:36,340 --> 00:25:45,120

one of the three on the base -- he's right next door in the headquarters building. So that clerk rotated and I got his position.

175

00:25:45,120 --> 00:25:55,300

Now looky here, I'm not going to used my bad language here, but when Tom and Jerry come up to see me in the old place, the guys see who works next door to me.

176

00:25:55,300 --> 00:26:09,100

This was after a couple months getting there. When they opened up that door and that air condition hit him in the face it was longest string of profanity I've ever heard in my life

177

00:26:09,100 --> 00:26:15,560

and that poor colonel come around his door facing and he looked in there and it was chief master sergeant, who was maintenance, it was a senior maintenance supply,

178

00:26:15,560 --> 00:26:27,100

and me next to the door, staff sergeant and that colonel looked his door facing. He said "I just make sure nobody's getting hurt in here" [laughing]

179

00:26:27,100 --> 00:26:38,300

Now Vietnam, what I liked about it, couple of things. Number 1: as a clerk I did not have to get out into the jungle.

180

00:26:38,300 --> 00:26:48,120

All of the vegetation for a mile around a mile around the base -- like I said, the South China Sea was on the right of the base, so you didn't have to worry about that,

181

00:26:48,120 --> 00:26:59,420

but all the rest of the landmass around the base for a mile, almost, was defoliated with chemicals and everybody calls this stuff agent orange,

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00:26:59,420 --> 00:27:08,060

but I'm here to tell you right now, the chemical companies..., because I'm a Vietnam Veterans of America life member and I get all these publications

183

00:27:08,060 --> 00:27:16,140

on all this stuff that they used in Vietnam and I'm telling you right now, agent orange is just a name for something.

184

00:27:16,140 --> 00:27:25,020

These chemicals that were used over there were many different types of chemicals and the chemical companies didn't tell the government.

185

00:27:25,020 --> 00:27:35,480

The government said "I want to defoliate the jungle". That's basically all they said, but these chemical companies, DuPont and so forth,

186

00:27:35,480 --> 00:27:47,020

they were putting chemicals into these drums that the government didn't even know what it was. So this why guys came back that had to wade through the stuff,

187

00:27:47,020 --> 00:27:59,180

got the wife pregnant, the kid was deformed, etc, etc. I mean the chemicals were not just agent orange, it was many different types of stuff.

188

00:27:59,180 --> 00:28:01,620

Okay, so you said you were clerk over there?

189

00:28:01,620 --> 00:28:02,120

Yes.

190

00:28:02,120 --> 00:28:11,700

That was your job? So you did a lot of admin? So did you ever... was the base ever under attack or anything when you were there then or...?

191

00:28:11,700 --> 00:28:13,960

I don't know how much of that kind of experience you got when you were there?

192

00:28:13,960 --> 00:28:29,560

From '66, which was like June, until June of '67 the height of the build up personnel wise in Vietnam, was '67.

193

00:28:29,560 --> 00:28:44,100

The only way that they could get in to out base was during the monsoon period, because it rains so hard that you wouldn't be able to see a person standing 15 foot from you is how hard it rained.

194

00:28:44,100 --> 00:28:55,880

It's like somebody pours a bucket of water over you. Now the best way to answer that is at Nha Trang, what happened one time.

195

00:28:55,880 --> 00:29:14,660

They came down a stream and they put satchel charges in UH1s of the 5th Special Forces and put some satchel charges in the dining halls of the ROKs and the 5th Special Forces.

196

00:29:14,660 --> 00:29:21,000

I can't give you a month or how many people died or anything, because I never saw any figures.

197

00:29:21,000 --> 00:29:37,500

But in order... Like I say, [inaudible] is down the river. In order to do anything against the enemy in Vietnam you had to have permission from headquarters, number 1.

198

00:29:37,500 --> 00:29:45,860

Number 2, they had to get a hold of the providence chief and if the providence chief said no, there was no action.

199

00:29:45,860 --> 00:29:57,340

Now all these people were Vietnamese of course. What happened on that special thing was we had an AC-47 mini-gun ship.

200

00:29:57,340 --> 00:29:59,340

Now are you familiar with that aircraft?

201

00:29:59,340 --> 00:30:00,260

No.

202

00:30:00,260 --> 00:30:10,800

Alright, it had too many guns on the right side of it and there was C-47 that was used in World War II, okay, but it's still in service after all this time.

203

00:30:10,800 --> 00:30:21,700

There was too many guns on the right side of that aircraft that could put a 7.62 bullet every 3 inches in the ground.

204

00:30:21,700 --> 00:30:35,120

And when it fired -- and it was an uncommon amount of firing per minute, but when it fired it was [machine gun noise] like that. That's exactly the way it sounded.

205

00:30:35,120 --> 00:30:42,660

And they have tracers in it and you could see where they're hitting in the ground and so forth is what they use for control of their...

206

00:30:42,660 --> 00:30:51,140

Now the aircraft had to be banked to shoot. You could not fly along straight and shoot down to the ground.

207

00:30:51,140 --> 00:31:03,960

If you had a target as an AC-47 pilot or co-pilot you had to bank to the right to hit that target to the right.

208

00:31:03,960 --> 00:31:23,200

As far as I know, there was no other weapons on that aircraft, except those mini-guns? Now the AC-130 had 4 of them on one side and there,

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00:31:23,200 --> 00:31:40,240

either aircraft when Charley was pinpointed by what they called a FAC: a forward air controller. Now this guy could be a full colonel, he could be any grade of officer

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00:31:40,240 --> 00:31:50,400

and he was in a Cessna, one engine, he didn't have no armor, he didn't have no way to protect himself. He was a forward air controller.

211

00:31:50,400 --> 00:32:02,760

So he was on... he would be called in by a ground person and he had rocket one each wing, one rocket and he would mark that target with a rocket.

212

00:32:02,760 --> 00:32:09,280

Now there's fighters in the air would come around and hit that area. They were already airborne.

213

00:32:09,280 --> 00:32:16,260

There was communication between forward air controller and the aircraft in the air and the ground controller,

214

00:32:16,260 --> 00:32:26,560

who could be a marine, Army, Air Force, whatever, but that's how it worked. You didn't go into nowhere without the providence chief knowing you was coming

215

00:32:26,560 --> 00:32:37,980

and you frequently dropped leaflets or a tape of their language that you were coming in.

216

00:32:37,980 --> 00:32:45,860

This was mandatory by headquarters, because it was mandatory by all the people in the pentagon and so forth.

217

00:32:45,860 --> 00:32:53,680

So you didn't go in unannounced. Now that's how we had to fight. This is political stuff.

218

00:32:53,720 --> 00:33:06,160

Just like all the wars we've fought there have been certain political things that really hurt the object of why we were there.

219

00:33:06,160 --> 00:33:25,240

And Vietnam was lost by the politicians not by the military. GIAP, G-I-A-P, North Korean -- correction -- Nort Vietnamese general, he didn't have to go through that stuff.

220

00:33:25,240 --> 00:33:39,380

He knew when we were coming, basically, in a way. Now yes, we wiped hundreds of them out, yes. I know a marine right now that was in 3 operation

221

00:33:39,380 --> 00:33:45,700

and his company was short manned. They were like 130 instead of like 150 or 50 or more.

222

00:33:45,700 --> 00:34:00,800

So they went through 3: union 1, union 2, and Tuscaloosa exercises. 14 of them walked out, because they knew they were coming and so we had to fight.

223

00:34:00,820 --> 00:34:12,620

Richard Nixon said we weren't in Laos. We were, Cambodia, Laos. Now he did that for a reason. I'm not badmouthing him, I'm simply saying politicians...

224

00:34:12,620 --> 00:34:28,700

If you... I hope anybody that reads any of this, here's this one thing: get on google and type on the computer and type in Pull Up: Just a Simple Soldier".

225
00:34:28,700 --> 00:34:29,820
You ever read that?

226
00:34:29,820 --> 00:34:30,840
I have not.

227
00:34:30,840 --> 00:34:34,120
I'll bring you a copy and leave it if you want me to, wherever you tell me to bring it.

228
00:34:34,120 --> 00:34:34,920
I can...

229
00:34:34,920 --> 00:34:36,320
Or I'll send it to you at your house.

230
00:34:36,320 --> 00:34:37,120
It's on the internet?

231
00:34:37,120 --> 00:34:53,200
Well probably, but I'll send you a copy of it if it's not. What it talks about is war and how in the newspaper are people who are dead are not talked about.

232
00:34:53,200 --> 00:35:04,260
It is so, so wonderful from start to finish and it is 100 truth. Douglas MacArthur did 52 years for our country.

233
00:35:04,260 --> 00:35:15,400
From '03 out of West Point, number 1 cadet. Got on his dad's staff in the Philippines. His dad is highest ranking general in the Army at the time or as high as one.

234
00:35:15,400 --> 00:35:22,060
Lieutenant General, until World War II three stars was the highest rank of general officers in country, okay.

235
00:35:22,060 --> 00:35:28,960
He went to be on his dad's staffs in engineering. Got his hat blown off in the jungle at one point.

236
00:35:28,960 --> 00:35:43,160
52 years for this country and when Harry Truman relieved him in 1951 in Korea. Yes he should have been relieved, because he was making policy for our government.

237
00:35:43,160 --> 00:35:52,460

Harry had every reason to relieve him, but end result: we're still in North Korea.

238

00:35:52,460 --> 00:35:58,160

Had Douglas MacArthur been allowed to do the 4 things he wanted to do there would not be a North Korea.

239

00:35:58,160 --> 00:36:06,800

Okay, now, George Patton stands beside Eisenhower in Berlin when the war finished and he said "General, when do we march on Moscow?"

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00:36:06,800 --> 00:36:20,060

Moscow was our ally in World War II against Hitler. Eisenhower went nuts. George wasn't wrong, we had a 40 year Cold War. [laughing]

241

00:36:20,060 --> 00:36:30,520

See these people that can see down the road that are military people, our government so many times has not listened.

242

00:36:30,520 --> 00:36:47,840

I case you don't know, there have been 9 5 star -- now this is the key -- 5 star flag officers made by our country.

243

00:36:47,840 --> 00:36:57,260

5 star flag officers don't necessarily equate to number of stars. Here's an example: [laughing]

244

00:36:57,260 --> 00:37:12,100

First one, Major C. Marshall 16 December, 1944. Second one, Douglas MacArthur 18 December 1944. Third one, Dwight Eisenhower 20 December, 1944.

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00:37:12,100 --> 00:37:22,120

And then you had 4 Navy Admirals each one of them got a 2 days different grade, because they wouldn't make these guys at the same time, okay.

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00:37:22,120 --> 00:37:31,880

So you had King and Leahy in Washington and then you had Nimitz and Halsey in then Pacific.

247

00:37:31,880 --> 00:37:42,260

Then you had a guy that was actually made twice by our commerce: Henry H. Hap Arnold, Army Air Force. Harry Truman made the Department of Defense in 1947.

248

00:37:42,260 --> 00:37:49,320

They had made Hap Arnold right before that. So they had to turn around and make him again, because there was no more Army Air Force, just Air Force.

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00:37:49,340 --> 00:37:57,020

Okay, now they left him with the same day to rank, but the ninth one, Omar Bradley, 1950.

250

00:37:57,020 --> 00:38:12,260

So after World War I congress made Black Jack Pershing general of the Army. Didn't have a thing to do with stars. He was just general of the Army. No one outranked him, okay.

251

00:38:12,260 --> 00:38:23,360

Now under [inaudible] Clinton I think, congress came to him with George Washington, I want no one to out rank George Washington.

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00:38:23,360 --> 00:38:33,420

Here again, doesn't have nothing to do with stars. It had to do with no one out ranked him. General of the Army for all time for our country.

253

00:38:33,420 --> 00:38:42,000

But people get this, especially when they're doing trivia stuff. They get this general of the Army mixed up with stars.

254

00:38:42,000 --> 00:38:48,540

I had one guy one night he said "who's the only 6 star general ths country ever made?" Couldn't have ever made a 6 star general.

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00:38:48,540 --> 00:38:57,320

They George Washington the general of the Army, didn't have nothing to do with stars. Okay, [laughing] so that in case anybody ever brings this up to you in the future.

256

00:38:57,320 --> 00:39:05,200

You'll know there were 9 of them and you can get that off the internet and their dates of rank and all this sort of thing.

257

00:39:05,200 --> 00:39:06,720

Okay, what else, what's next?

258

00:39:06,720 --> 00:39:15,940

We'll move on, yeah. So you said you saw a lot of deforestation. You knew what was going on in Vietnam. I mean you could obviously here it and stuff like that.

259

00:39:15,960 --> 00:39:19,520

How did you feel about that? I mean did that bother you at all knowing that was going on?

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00:39:19,520 --> 00:39:28,520

Well number one, while I was there I didn't know what was going on. alright, other than what was going on at our base.

261

00:39:28,540 --> 00:39:38,240

We had the 20th helicopter squadron, UH-1s. They had no armor; they had no way to protect themselves. They were not weapon helicopters.

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00:39:38,240 --> 00:39:45,660

They would go out and they would take people in and they would bring people out and stuff like that, but they had no armor, no weapons.

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00:39:45,660 --> 00:39:57,360

So 4 star general Bruce Holloway who I'm pretty sure was one of the original Flying Tigers in China in World War II.

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00:39:57,360 --> 00:40:09,380

He was deputy chief of staff in the Air Force. He came to Nha Trang. So I'm driving for him and Wing Commander and Wing Commander is saying to him

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00:40:09,380 --> 00:40:22,200

"General, we've been trying to get PACAF at Honolulu to approve a class 1 modification so that we can protect ourselves in our UH-1s.

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00:40:22,200 --> 00:40:29,140

We're getting all kind of ground fire, we can't do nothing about it, we just have to take whatever's coming up at us".

267

00:40:29,140 --> 00:40:39,560

Holloway says "Colonel, do you have your paperwork?" And he just handed it to the general and Holloway said "when I get back to my office I'll work on this".

268

00:40:39,560 --> 00:40:59,000

It wasn't a week until we had on a strap, in the door, an M-16 machine gun. Now, the reason why PACAF wouldn't approve it is they could get off balance and shoot themselves down

269

00:40:59,000 --> 00:41:05,780

by being where they could turn that thing 360 you know, so that's why PACAF wouldn't approve it.

270

00:41:05,780 --> 00:41:18,120

But after we got that then, things were different for the people in the 20th Helicopter Squadron and I learned so much from senior officers.

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00:41:18,120 --> 00:41:26,160

I worked for a lot of colonels as 1st sergeant and as a clerk or visa versa there.

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00:41:26,160 --> 00:41:35,520

But anyway, I learned so much from the senior officers who had all this upper schooling that I never had a chance to have for example.

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00:41:35,520 --> 00:41:44,340

Little tricks that they would do for example, if they didn't know you and they asked you a question, they would ask you a question they already knew the answer to

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00:41:44,340 --> 00:41:52,640

to see how you answered them, okay. That was... and this is generals to full colonels type stuff, basically, basically.

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00:41:52,640 --> 00:42:02,360

Okay or if they heard something that was totally wrong, that sort of thing. They all had a pen and a pad and they wouldn't write something down in front of you normally,

276

00:42:02,360 --> 00:42:09,760

but you can be they would write it down later and they would give to their secretary or whatever, "give this back to me in 30 days"

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00:42:09,760 --> 00:42:20,240

and people couldn't understand how they never forgot anything. [laughing] So I learned a lot from those senior officers and really helped me when I was a 1st sergeant.

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00:42:20,240 --> 00:42:32,220

My last 9 years, well basically my last 9 years I was a 1st sergeant. I had huge units at times. Especially in that last one at Wright-Patterson.

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00:42:32,220 --> 00:42:40,420

It was a communications group and we had a headquarters out west. Now there's no headquarters communications.

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00:42:40,420 --> 00:42:54,680

All communications on the base report to the base commander. So the air... there's only one thing. Now my retirement was on the last day December, 19 1984.

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00:42:54,680 --> 00:43:14,340

That was my 26 year mandatory retirement. Couldn't stay no longer. Now we go out there to shop and I see all the uniforms and all the people and how they look and all this sort of thing.

282

00:43:14,340 --> 00:43:24,740

The only thing that I can say that is totally wrong is you can't call an office and talk to a person, you've got to go through a menu

283

00:43:24,740 --> 00:43:35,880

and you better hope that you know what menu you want to talk to somebody in or else you're still sitting out there wishing somebody would pick up a telephone, see.

284

00:43:35,880 --> 00:43:41,360

That's one thing. When I was in somebody answered the phone when somebody answered the phone when there was a call.

285

00:43:41,360 --> 00:43:55,020

Now the other thing is, there's only one thing that has not changed since I got out, one thing, the officer grade insignia in the Air Force is still the same as it was when I was in.

286

00:43:55,020 --> 00:44:02,900

From second lieutenant to 4 star general, it's still the same as it was when I was in. Every single solitary else thing has changed.

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00:44:02,900 --> 00:44:15,200

All the uniforms many times, all the stripes several times, and the enlisted and stuff like that.

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00:44:15,200 --> 00:44:26,360

It is different from the standpoint of if I was called back, which I wouldn't be because of my age, but if I was called back I just about have to start through basic training again,

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00:44:26,360 --> 00:44:40,680

because of every single thing. For example, we had regulations and manuals to use to do our jobs. Now it's called an instruction and you juts print it off the computer.

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00:44:40,680 --> 00:44:51,520

Standards of dress and appearance, you just print it off the computer. [laughing] There's no [inaudible] manuals anymore. So anyway, what else?

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00:44:51,520 --> 00:44:57,300

Could you tell me a little bit about what coming back home from Vietnam was like?

292

00:44:57,300 --> 00:45:16,300

I flew in to the West Coast, then I flew to Bear Field in Fort Wayne, Indiana, because my wife -- my first wife and my two children -- was living in a little town called Warren,

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00:45:16,300 --> 00:45:36,700

which wasn't that far from Fort Wayne. When I landed my daughter was probably 67. She's 50 now. I would say that she was just like 11 or 12 or whatever

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00:45:36,700 --> 00:45:46,720

and she came running to me with her arms out and Douglas was... she was born in '64, he was born in '69.

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00:45:46,720 --> 00:45:59,720

He was real young and my wife's parents, she was an only child, my wives parents were there and we had parked our

mobile home,

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00:45:59,720 --> 00:46:21,760

because I went Vietnam from 8th Air Force, Westover Air Force Base, Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts and I volunteered to go in '65. I got it in '66.

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00:46:21,760 --> 00:46:34,320

But landing at Bear Field, I've got a calendar right not that is a military something calendar and it's got a picture of this young girl...

298

00:46:34,320 --> 00:46:36,320

[sirens in background]

299

00:46:36,320 --> 00:46:52,040

... running toward her daddy who is kneeled with her arms up. I can get emotional over stuff like that and that picture just is exactly how it is.

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00:46:52,040 --> 00:47:01,520

When you're gone from your family with young children for a year, even a year, it's something to come back.

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00:47:01,520 --> 00:47:15,880

I've got a -- well he married my sister's daughter, whatever that makes him -- he's a full colonel in the Army Reserve and every Christmas I see him

302

00:47:15,880 --> 00:47:29,140

and because he's a medical doctor, when they go to Afghanistan or Iraq normally it's a 6 month thing rather than a full year, normally okay.

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00:47:29,140 --> 00:47:43,120

And he's been overseas doing medical work 3 or 4 times and if you can remember the little child that was highly publicized in all the newspapers in America

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00:47:43,120 --> 00:47:56,880

for this big goiter type thing it had under it's chin. Todd Frederick , my relative was the individual that was responsible for sending that child back to Wright-Patterson,

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00:47:56,880 --> 00:48:06,420

got it operated on, got it back overseas to where it came from. I think that was probably one of the things that helped him make full colonel.

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00:48:06,420 --> 00:48:27,620

But he was over, he was over in Afghanistan about 3 years ago he called his wife -- my sister's daughter-- and he said "tell all the relatives to write their congressmen.

307

00:48:27,620 --> 00:48:41,000

I've just been notified that no person on this base" -- and it was huge -- "can correspond with their relatives by any means".

308

00:48:41,000 --> 00:48:48,180

There's not letters coming in, there's no letters going to go out, there's no nothing, by the Pentagon.

309

00:48:48,180 --> 00:48:56,180

Now what the Pentagon was doing, they was getting ready to start phasing down the base and that was why they said what they said.

310

00:48:56,180 --> 00:49:07,780

But I went to Mike Turner. I went to Portman and so did all the relatives. [laughing] That changed, that changed in about a 2 day period, okay.

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00:49:07,780 --> 00:49:19,580

So I kept all my correspondence for Todd and on Christmas I see him and he's a typical CEO type. All full colonels get this also.

312

00:49:19,580 --> 00:49:27,340

"Todd, what's your chances of making brigadier general?" "Oh Russ I don't know. Most of us..." and he's talking medical talk.

313

00:49:27,340 --> 00:49:40,400

"Most of us, we... there's so few positions and we really would just rather stay in our civilian practices", but you don't get an answer, okay [laughing]

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00:49:40,400 --> 00:49:56,680

You don't get a definite answer from those people. I've been around so many full colonels and the one that I liked the best was in Thailand in '74

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00:49:56,680 --> 00:50:07,380

and he had been down at Bergstrom Air Force base as deputy commander of operations and I was non commissioned officer in charge of administration in that group.

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00:50:07,380 --> 00:50:15,520

Now I had worked with his chief messenger and I never said nothing to him. I would go out on inspection trips with him, because we had to inspect guard units West of the Mississippi.

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00:50:15,520 --> 00:50:25,040

So I've been out on inspection trips with him, but I never said nothing to him, he never said nothing to me. But anyway, I worked with his chief. So he knew me through a chief.

318

00:50:25,040 --> 00:50:31,300

When I found out he was going to Udorn, Thailand I called the chief. I said I wanted to come talk to the colonel. He said "come on down".

319

00:50:31,300 --> 00:50:36,940

So I walked in, I reported. I said "Colonel, I understand your going to Udorn, Thailand". He said "that's correct".

320

00:50:36,940 --> 00:50:44,860

I said "sir, if you need a clerk over there I'd like to go with you" and I was ready for him. He said "well sergeant, how do we go about that?"

321

00:50:44,860 --> 00:50:53,600

I did something nobody had ever done to him in his entire career and we wasn't that far from 30. I picked up his phone in front of him,

322

00:50:53,600 --> 00:51:04,360

dialed airman's assignments at Randolph, Texas, handed him the phone, saluted, left his office and never asked. Okay, now, he leaves.

323

00:51:04,360 --> 00:51:14,620

I get 2 letters from him. First one said "when are you coming?" That's all that it said. The second letter two weeks later said "why aren't you here yet?"

324

00:51:14,620 --> 00:51:24,520

[laughing] I'm serious, this happened. So I landed in Udorn, Thailand 2 o'clock in the afternoon and there was a staff sergeant come to meet that was going to work for me

325

00:51:24,520 --> 00:51:31,940

and he was like this and I knew basically about that. But anyway, I said "take me to personal, let me sign in, take me to the unit".

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00:51:31,940 --> 00:51:41,460

Now this was a fenced in compound unit headquarters and combat reporting center was down there and that's why we were there.

327

00:51:41,460 --> 00:51:52,200

Those people did all of the stuff about everything going anywhere in Vietnam. They had to report it to the right people at the right time, blah, blah, blah, okay.

328

00:51:52,200 --> 00:52:01,560

That's why we were there. At any rate, Colonel Davis, Richard Gene Davis, he was originally from Toledo, Ohio. He's dead now, '07.

329

00:52:01,560 --> 00:52:12,840

At any rate, full colonel and I'm non commissioned officer in charge of the boarding room you might as well say.

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00:52:12,840 --> 00:52:23,020

I had three sergeants working for me and I worked for the prettiest 1st lieutenant female that ever lived. I'm serious, her desk, right inside the door.

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00:52:23,020 --> 00:52:29,980

Every person in that unit had to come through during the day and say hi to Lieutenant Kramer, because she was single, okay.

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00:52:29,980 --> 00:52:40,800

So I sign in personnel, he takes me to the office and I stepped inside that frame of that door and stopped, because I knew how Davis was.

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00:52:40,800 --> 00:52:51,520

On those inspection trips he would do stuff which was proper. He would reach behind a big filing cabinet and pull out a bunch of charts and put them on the floor.

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00:52:51,520 --> 00:52:58,400

He said "if they're back there you don't need them" and he would look on top everything. "If it's up there you don't need it"

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00:52:58,400 --> 00:53:04,200

and he would open up a bag cabinet of pencils and paper and all that kind of stuff and pull it out on the floor.

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00:53:04,200 --> 00:53:13,180

He's say "my, my my, you used a lot of this stuff, don't you?" You know that sort of thing or how the floor looked or so on and on and on.

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00:53:13,180 --> 00:53:24,660

And so I knew how he was. So I stepped inside that door at her desk and I looked around. Everything was not like I just mentioned to you.

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00:53:24,660 --> 00:53:29,740

So I said "Lieutenant, would it be possible to speak to you ma'm, in the corner of the room?" She said "certainly".

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00:53:29,740 --> 00:53:36,420

Because they started [inaudible] new dude coming in, okay. So I went back there with her and I said "ma'am when you come to work Monday morning" that was Friday

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00:53:36,420 --> 00:53:42,240

"would you mind if your desk is clear back here in the corner of the room?" She said that'd be fine sergeant". I said "very well, thank you very much".

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00:53:42,240 --> 00:53:50,900

Now I called them sergeants together and I said "gentlemen" now this Friday that I'm talking about, tomorrow's Saturday and they're all off.

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00:53:50,900 --> 00:53:56,420

I said " gentlemen, they need you here tomorrow at 8 o'clock" and this educated staff sergeant spoke up and he said "I've got plans for tomorrow".

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00:53:56,420 --> 00:54:06,400

I said "you sure do, right here at 8 o'clock, okay". Look, Davis didn't normally come in on the weekend. He would come in at 6 o'clock in the morning

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00:54:06,400 --> 00:54:12,940

and then combat reporting center would have to open the gate, because everything was compound and let him in.

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00:54:12,940 --> 00:54:19,980

And then the gate would be open the rest of the day so the troops that worked at the compound could go through our compound instead of down the muddy road

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00:54:19,980 --> 00:54:25,840

to get to their building. And it was muddy, I'm tell you. Snakes and so forth and so on.

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00:54:25,840 --> 00:54:38,980

Anyway, we cleaned that place up and Davis for some reason came in that weekend to get something out of his desk or whatever, do a little work or whatever.

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00:54:38,980 --> 00:54:44,960

He looked at that place. So Monday morning he waited until 8 o'clock when everybody had to be there instead of 6.

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00:54:44,960 --> 00:54:57,780

He waited until 8 and he stepped inside that door just like I had had done and just loud enough for us to hear he said "well I'll be damned, there must be a new non commissioned officer here now".

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00:54:57,780 --> 00:55:12,900

[laughing] Now the only time I ever crossed him, we had a car stolen out of that compound. So he passed the word to the combat reporting center and all of us.

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00:55:12,900 --> 00:55:20,020

They let me in in the morning, that gate will be locked all day. Now that meant that all the people going to the combat

reporting center had to walk down

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00:55:20,020 --> 00:55:30,180

that terrible place to get to their work. By the time they got there, their shoes and the bottoms of their pants and everything was all... I mean it was super bad.

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00:55:30,180 --> 00:55:34,540

So I went to them, because would come to me. They didn't like the 1st sergeant, they would come to me.

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00:55:34,540 --> 00:55:41,040

I went to him, I said "Colonel Davis, we've got to do something. The troops at the compound are really complaining about their standards when they get to work".

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00:55:41,040 --> 00:55:47,860

And he wore these little half glasses to do his paper work and he would look at you like this while you're talking to him

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00:55:47,860 --> 00:55:57,280

and he would say "sergeant, that policy stands" and I'd salute and get out there, see. So two weeks later everybody except that major that worked down there,

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00:55:57,280 --> 00:56:08,860

that was afraid of that colonel, everybody was coming to me and they're complaining about this and I went in and said "Colonel, we have to do something about your policy".

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00:56:08,860 --> 00:56:17,140

I said "everybody done there is complaining to me about this". He said "sergeant, that policy stands".

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00:56:17,140 --> 00:56:26,260

So what I did was I called the compound. Now this was a Friday. I said "do not open that gate Monday morning for Colonel Davis, do not open it"

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00:56:26,260 --> 00:56:36,640

and he said "excuse me?" I said "do not open that gate Monday morning". He had walk up that path. He had to park his Jeep out there at the gate.

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00:56:36,640 --> 00:56:45,260

He had to walk up that path and he came ordering room and thank god he and I were the only in the place, because he was so livid his chin was quivering

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00:56:45,260 --> 00:56:53,660

and he said "sergeant, [inaudible] change my clothes and when I get back you have that gate open for me and you give me time to get in my office and you come in my office".

363

00:56:53,660 --> 00:57:01,080

I said "yes sir". I knew that some stuff was going to be missing from my sleeve, okay.

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00:57:01,080 --> 00:57:10,500

So I was out there and did just what he said and I gave him time to get in and I went ahead and reported and so forth and he said...

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00:57:10,500 --> 00:57:14,420

Now he's looking at his correspondence, he ain't even looking at me. He didn't return my salute.

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00:57:14,420 --> 00:57:19,480

He said "you wouldn't happen to know why the gate wasn't open, would you?" and I said "yes sir, I called them on Friday and told them not to open it".

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00:57:19,480 --> 00:57:28,400

He said "why did you do that?" and I said "because I've talked to you twice and now you see what the troops have been complaining about".

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00:57:28,400 --> 00:57:40,700

Now this guy was immaculately dressed all the time just like me and so he said "I would strongly recommend that you never ever try anything like that again"

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00:57:40,700 --> 00:57:48,840

and he didn't look at me and I said "yes sir" and he said "dismissed" and I saluted and got out of there before he kicked me in the rear end, okay.

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00:57:48,840 --> 00:58:03,080

So anyway, when I left, now I've had kind of accolades as a military man. I was airman of the year on the base, huge strategic air command base.

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00:58:03,080 --> 00:58:13,180

I was airman of the year. There was only one airman of the year and on and on and on throughout my career. I've got 17 active duty decorations

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00:58:13,180 --> 00:58:19,680

and I've got 12 commemorative declarations and that's what I've got out in the car that I wanted you to see.

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00:58:19,680 --> 00:58:36,980

I mean I looked like George Patton, you know, whatever. But anyway, he gave me in my 26 years, a compliment in my performance report that meant more to me than everything else that ever happened to me.

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00:58:36,980 --> 00:58:47,460

He put in my performance report: "this man is from the old school. He knows exactly where he is going and exactly how to get there".

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00:58:47,460 --> 00:58:57,340

Now that meant more to me than all the other stuff that happened to me in my career and I'm sorry if I've talked...

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00:58:57,340 --> 00:58:59,640

No, no, you're fine, you're fine.

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00:58:59,640 --> 00:59:08,540

But he died. I had sent a Christmas card. Of course it wasn't at Christmas time. I sent one just to his wife, because I wanted her to know

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00:59:08,540 --> 00:59:13,820

that if anything happened to him, I wanted to know about it. Well he died in '07, she calls me.

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00:59:13,820 --> 00:59:26,480

Carolyn and I went to Centerville, Tennessee to his funeral and he was... I rubbed shoulders with generals, I was general's aide.

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00:59:26,480 --> 00:59:37,980

He was the most professional man and he went through ROTC at Ohio University at Athens, Ohio and commissioned a second lieutenant there in 1951

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00:59:37,980 --> 00:59:49,740

and he was from Toledo originally. But he retired a full Colonel and he retired in like 1981 and I didn't retire until '84, so.

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00:59:49,740 --> 00:59:54,760

Let's just... a quick snapshot of what did you do after you got out the service, just like as far as work and stuff like that?

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00:59:54,760 --> 01:00:07,820

Okay, we were at Athens, Ohio at that time and the only employment down there if you could not get on with the University, which I tried and couldn't do it,

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01:00:07,820 --> 01:00:15,080

the only employment down there is something like fast food or selling vehicles or something like that.

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01:00:15,080 --> 01:00:23,020

So she lived real close to Pomeroy, Ohio, which is close to the Ohio River. It's 16 miles south of Athens, but she worked in Athens.

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01:00:23,020 --> 01:00:36,720

So I went to work selling cars and I sold at Pomeroy and then I sold at Athens and then she gets promoted from craft into management and offered Bowling Green or Brookeville

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01:00:36,720 --> 01:00:54,520

and that's why we're here at Brookeville. She worked on -- I've got a brain problem -- she worked on the road that leads to Brookville from the Trotwood area

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01:00:54,520 --> 01:01:12,140

and Verizon, which became Frontier now. She was an outside plant engineer and she had only 2 weeks to get up here to either [inaudible].

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01:01:12,140 --> 01:01:23,480

So we came up here in November of 1987 and I went to work in the car business immediately of Tom Harrigan's, Salem Mall.

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01:01:23,480 --> 01:01:32,360

I was into used cars, but we were also selling the new GM trucks and we could sell anything to the dealership if we... you know, if we went about it right.

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01:01:32,360 --> 01:01:50,020

But generally speaking it was used cars and GMC trucks, new GMC trucks. So I stayed there until he... he went to Loop Road in Centerville in a Chrysler outfit

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01:01:50,020 --> 01:01:59,120

and he wanted us sales people to go with him and he made us some promises if we went. So we went and he didn't live up to the promises.

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01:01:59,120 --> 01:02:09,600

So after about 45 days I've moved out there and I went to Arena Dodge up in Trotwood and I worked there for like a couple years

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01:02:09,600 --> 01:02:15,080

and I didn't like their operation and the way they did their operation. I worked in used cars.

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01:02:15,080 --> 01:02:25,820

I didn't really sell anything new, but I sold quite a few used cars. And so I stayed there a couple of years and then I went to work for a guy who had is private used car lot.

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01:02:25,820 --> 01:02:40,020

Right on Route 48, right next to the VFW there, 7741 VFW on Route 48 before you get to West Brook Road if you're going south.

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01:02:40,020 --> 01:02:49,260

Anyway, I worked there for him for a year and he lost his mother and he lost his family, on and on and on. He went nuts. So I only stayed there a year with him.

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01:02:49,260 --> 01:02:57,040

And then I went back again to Arena Dodge, but I sold total. I ended up at Castrucci's at the Dayton Mall.

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01:02:57,040 --> 01:03:08,020

Both of those huge lots down there, one's on 741 and one's on 725 right by the Dayton Mall and I worked on both those lots from time to time

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01:03:08,020 --> 01:03:23,920

and the last day of December of 1995 I hear of a sales card manager that was coming in to be out manager at the 725 lot

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01:03:23,920 --> 01:03:32,620

and I had never seen him or worked for him, but I'd heard a lot about him and I'm already retired military, you know that's a thing.

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01:03:32,620 --> 01:03:40,260

So I knew it'd just be a short period of time until he and I was nose to nose on some of those Micky Mousy issues that all those dealerships have.

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01:03:40,260 --> 01:03:53,420

So I just walked out and I've never been back. Now from there I mowed grass on the golf course at Penn Terra at Lewisburg, Ohio for a year.

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01:03:53,420 --> 01:04:07,800

And then I was waiting to get on where my wife worked at GTE, at Verizon and finally this guy got on medical and I got his position,

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01:04:07,800 --> 01:04:22,040

but my job description was temporary part time, which was 365 days a year, okay. So I worked in that job for like 2 years and I would do everything I could to help the line crews.

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01:04:22,040 --> 01:04:31,780

I would put out the flags, I'd pick the flags up when they were down, I would help them put poles in the ground, I would help them with any job that I could help them with,

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01:04:31,780 --> 01:04:49,240

but I didn't climb poles and I wasn't a professional lineman, okay. So anyway, that went on until my age of 61, which was I think 2000-2001, right in there.

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01:04:49,240 --> 01:05:03,020

I'm 75, I'll be 75 in December. So I worked that period of time and then I was losing 40 cents out of every dollar I was making to Bill Clinton's administration,

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01:05:03,020 --> 01:05:12,880

because of our combined salaries. She was an outside plant engineer at this time, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

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01:05:12,880 --> 01:05:26,440

And I haven't done a thing since age 61 except play golf or whatever I wanted to do. I've been very, very active in the military posts and especially in the VFW,

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01:05:26,440 --> 01:05:36,860

because I think that it, although I have nothing against Fraternal Order of Eagles, where we've been very active or American Legion or VFW.

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01:05:36,860 --> 01:05:45,720

I don't have nothing against any of them, because they all give thousands of dollars to charities every year.

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01:05:45,720 --> 01:05:58,800

And so I've been very active and I won't go into all that except to say that most of those organizations and I'm talking about fraternal orders, military posts,

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01:05:58,800 --> 01:06:08,880

and service organizations -- Elks, Moose, etcetera -- most of them, congress mandated that they would be 501-C blip, blip.

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01:06:08,880 --> 01:06:18,520

Now the blip, blip determines what organization, okay, but the 501-C means that they're tax exempt for some things, okay.

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01:06:18,520 --> 01:06:30,960

So anyway, the VFW is the only one of all of them where there is one person in charge. Now you cannot run a company...

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01:06:30,960 --> 01:06:39,260

No one has ever been able to name me even one company in the United States of America that operated from assembly.

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01:06:39,260 --> 01:06:50,400

Now that's what all these people operate from except for the VFW. That commander has total responsibility for that operation and total authority throughout that responsibility.

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01:06:50,400 --> 01:07:02,080

Now yes we have a monthly meeting, yes there's stuff that comes across the floor, yes and very seldom is there an incident where the commander decides

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01:07:02,080 --> 01:07:10,840

that what they passed is not in the best interest of the post. Very, very seldom. But you cannot run a company by assembly.

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01:07:10,840 --> 01:07:21,180

If you think about an United States company, there's a board of directors, a chief financial officer in there, and a CEO.

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01:07:21,180 --> 01:07:37,000

Now they can do whatever they want to to feed him information, but that CEO has got the final determination on what's done and if they get out of line they get fired

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01:07:37,000 --> 01:07:43,820

by the shareholders or whomever. In the case of the military posts and the VFW there's a provision in the national book where

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01:07:43,820 --> 01:07:54,400

you call a special meeting, all the regular members only for one purpose: does the individual stay or go? Now that has never happened in my 37 years in the VFW,

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01:07:54,400 --> 01:08:03,620

except one time and that was a little commander that wouldn't resign and they told him "you resign or we'll boot you out of office".

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01:08:03,620 --> 01:08:13,500

So he resigned, but all these other organizations, congress mandated when they made them... when they allowed them, you will have a national headquarters

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01:08:13,500 --> 01:08:22,280

and the national headquarters let themselves off the hook by putting in their national book "you will comply with all governmental law" okay.

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01:08:22,280 --> 01:08:23,620

Go ahead, next one.

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01:08:23,620 --> 01:08:37,040

Sorry, I just wanted to... keep you from dying here. Is there... How do you feel about the... Now that you're out and you've been out for a while and you know,

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01:08:37,040 --> 01:08:44,960

work other places and stuff like that, how do you feel about the military and how it affected your life in general?

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01:08:44,960 --> 01:08:47,640

How do I feel about it and how it affected my life?

432

01:08:47,640 --> 01:08:49,420

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

433

01:08:49,420 --> 01:08:50,860

How do I feel about it right now?

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01:08:50,860 --> 01:08:55,360

Yes.

435

01:08:55,360 --> 01:09:04,980

That poem I was telling you about: "Just a Simple Soldier". When I send a copy of that if I give you my address, which I will,

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01:09:04,980 --> 01:09:20,160

you will see in there that our civilians who have never been in the military often times make mistakes that they wouldn't make had they been in the military

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01:09:20,160 --> 01:09:27,500

or had they listened to the joint chiefs of staff in the case of the people in Washington D.C., that sort of thing.

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01:09:27,500 --> 01:09:50,740

That's on point. The other thing is what I see now is that we are as a country -- if I can go into that in my opinion.

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01:09:50,740 --> 01:10:05,800

The man that's in office now, the country was in 9 trillion in debt when he came in. It is programmed that he's going to be 18 trillion -- the country -- 18 trillion in debt when he leaves.

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01:10:05,800 --> 01:10:14,500

So how in the world is our younger people like you and people in the country who's got to try to do what they can do

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01:10:14,500 --> 01:10:25,220

to get the country back into a financial proper state and Thomas Jefferson said "you pay as you go".

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01:10:25,220 --> 01:10:34,480

Now, the only time I think is the exception to that is war. World War II, we had to win.

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01:10:34,480 --> 01:10:44,480

If we and our allies had not won, we'd have on a Nazi armband. We wouldn't be sitting here now. We would be a part of Adolf Hitler's 1,000 year Reich, okay,

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01:10:44,480 --> 01:10:58,320

which was what he was after. So there are very few congressmen and senators right now that have any military experience.

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01:10:58,320 --> 01:11:07,840

So when you come up with where "we've some money" the very first place that's looked is defense.

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01:11:07,840 --> 01:11:28,520

Always, it was that way while I was in, it's still that way now. This new bunch of people that are overseas beheading people think that they cannot be stopped,

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01:11:28,520 --> 01:11:36,260

bu they can and they will be decimated to point where, because of all the people that are going to be fighting them.

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01:11:36,260 --> 01:11:45,600

That's one thing that I've got to hand to our president now, he is getting all these other countries to be against those people and that's proper.

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01:11:45,600 --> 01:12:03,020

They are as bad as the Gestapo was for Germany in World War II if not worse. And so they will be stopped in the end, it's going to take a while.

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01:12:03,020 --> 01:12:09,040

Is there anything else there that you would like me to..?

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01:12:09,040 --> 01:12:12,940

Just kind of how it affected your life. That's your feeling...

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01:12:12,940 --> 01:12:14,520

How the military affected my life?

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01:12:14,520 --> 01:12:15,060

Yeah just...

454

01:12:15,060 --> 01:12:15,580

Okay.

455

01:12:15,620 --> 01:12:16,760

...what it taught you.

456

01:12:16,760 --> 01:12:38,920

Okay, alright. I went in at age 18, I came out at age 43, 44, 45. Had they let me, I loved it so much I would still be there today.

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01:12:38,920 --> 01:12:51,600

Like I said, MacArthur did 52 years. I would have almost 60 now. I would still be there, because as a first sergeant, you've had an opportunity to help people and I like that.

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01:12:51,600 --> 01:13:04,980

Now you also have the opportunity to do things that the people didn't like. You know, some people would not perform to the their skill level that they had on paper.

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01:13:04,980 --> 01:13:18,960

So there were cases when I got a few people back to the one underneath what they had so that they could come back up again, because they weren't doing their job properly.

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01:13:18,980 --> 01:13:31,280

You had the opportunity both ways. Now you always.. all of them had a supervisor and all of them somewhere had an officer above.

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01:13:31,280 --> 01:13:40,460

So you had to deal with the airmen, the NCO over the airmen, and the officer over the NCO and the airmen.

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01:13:40,460 --> 01:13:51,740

Okay, you had to be... whenever you were wrong as a first sergeant there was normally something that occurred that woke you up.

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01:13:51,740 --> 01:14:01,500

I went against full colonels like the one I told you around. There was another time at Thule, Greenland there was no shades for the windows.

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01:14:01,500 --> 01:14:12,520

The sun's shining in 24 hours a day, our people couldn't sleep. That base had been up there forever and no one got off their rear end and got blackout curtains.

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01:14:12,520 --> 01:14:21,300

That full colonel basically told me I couldn't do that. I said "you do what I want, I'll take the heat". That requisition went to Tinker Air Force base in Oklahoma

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01:14:21,300 --> 01:14:26,300

and that full colonel called me he says "son, who do you think you are?" I said "excuse me sir?"

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01:14:26,320 --> 01:14:39,320

He said "you can't order this stuff under this priority". You've got to realize that at Thule, Greenland everything expect expendable items came in on ship when they could get in

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01:14:39,320 --> 01:14:50,160

and the expendable items was the only thing was flown in, plus the people changing. So what we ordered from the year we was there,

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01:14:50,160 --> 01:14:59,440

the people the year behind us had to live with the second. That base had been there forever. Sun in the windows 24 hours a day.

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01:14:59,440 --> 01:15:04,460

I got the blackout curtains, but that full colonel said "who do you think you are? You can't order unto this priority".

471

01:15:04,460 --> 01:15:12,980

I said "sir, do you know why I did that?" He said "no, please tell me". I said because, I knew it would take this kind of priority to get someone's attention".

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01:15:12,980 --> 01:15:19,400

He said "well you've got my attention. I can't do this". I said "Sir, have you ever been assigned to Thule, Greenland?"

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01:15:19,400 --> 01:15:28,420

He said "no and I don't intend to be". [laughing] I said now and I explained to him why I was doing what I done.

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01:15:28,420 --> 01:15:34,020

He said "I'll tell you what I'm going to do Sergeant Seel" he said "I'm going to work for you, but I can't promise you nothing".

475

01:15:34,020 --> 01:15:41,260

I said "sir, that's all I'm asking, but I don't want to see them 3 years from now on a ship, I want them flown in".

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01:15:41,260 --> 01:15:55,140

He said "oh, really?" [laughing] But they did and I got... the Danish people from Denmark, they woke up there after a certain period of time they're tax rate in Denmark.

477

01:15:55,140 --> 01:16:02,880

52% of their tax at that was... or their wages at that time, were going for tax. So they get to Thule, Greenland, they'd stay there for several years.

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01:16:02,880 --> 01:16:13,720

So I got them to install them in all the 33 dorms. That guys were all [clapping] you know. Things like that, I...

479

01:16:13,720 --> 01:16:21,840

The full colonel 15 miles up the mountain, he came in new. My full colonel transferred, new when he came in.

480

01:16:21,840 --> 01:16:33,380

So anyway [laughing] let's see, let me get this. Anyway, now, leave policy: there wasn't one. There was no leave policy.

481

01:16:33,380 --> 01:16:37,680

So this new colonel calls me in, says "Sergeant Seel we've got to do something about this" and I'm the only first sergeant on base.

482

01:16:37,680 --> 01:16:46,300

"We've got to do something about this" and I made a little mistake there. You don't tell a full Colonel what I told him, which was a just over the top of my head.

483

01:16:46,300 --> 01:16:54,180

I said "sir, that's a no brainer" and he looks at me like "okay, Einstein". You know [laughing] that sort of look.

484

01:16:54,180 --> 01:17:02,020

I said "it's one 30 day leave. We've only got one person up here for every job". We don't have no extras.

485

01:17:02,020 --> 01:17:09,060

They can be gone 30 days and that's all, they can't take no 3, 10 day leaves and be gone for 60 days, okay".

486

01:17:09,060 --> 01:17:19,540

And that's what they were doing just to get off the rock. He said "put it in effect". So I made a letter up for his signature, but I wasn't going to sign it,

487

01:17:19,540 --> 01:17:27,540

because I wasn't over those other units except as a first sergeant for their people if something needed to be done.

488

01:17:27,540 --> 01:17:36,220

I couldn't tell them from my signature what they were going to do about leave, because there was a regulation on leave policy and so forth.

489

01:17:36,220 --> 01:17:40,440

Anyway, we cured that problem.

490

01:17:40,440 --> 01:17:45,780

Alright, well that's all I've got for you Russell, so thank you for doing this interview and thank you for your service.

491

01:17:45,780 --> 01:17:48,540

Okay, now I would like to say one last thing.

492

01:17:48,540 --> 01:17:52,660

Sure, go ahead.

493

01:17:52,660 --> 01:18:03,640

Our military people from a professional standpoint are as good as good as any military people we've ever had in this country,

494

01:18:03,640 --> 01:18:10,760

because the technical stuff that they have to work with, a lot of us didn't have to work with.

495

01:18:10,760 --> 01:18:18,420

Their weapons now are completely sophisticated to the point where the one's that we used weren't, on and on and on.

496

01:18:18,420 --> 01:18:27,600

Our warriors are as good as this county has ever had and they will come through when they are asked.

497

01:18:27,600 --> 01:18:38,540

I've got a nephew who is operating the drones right now. He's 11 years and he's an E7, which is almost unheard of.

498

01:18:38,540 --> 01:18:47,900

I've talked to his dad getting him into an officer candidate school and so forth, because he's so brilliant and I don't know what will happen if anything,

499

01:18:47,900 --> 01:18:56,240

but he's in Australia now operating drones and that particular job right there, you talk about a future.

500

01:18:56,240 --> 01:19:05,020

I mean it's going to be a future for a long period of time. At any rate, our warriors are as good as any warriors we've ever had.

501

01:19:05,020 --> 01:19:17,980

And one more, Audie Murphy in World War II is on top of this burning tank with a machine gun and he's killing Germans that are really close to him

502

01:19:17,980 --> 01:19:33,320

and he called in artillery right on himself and the artillery officer says "how close are they?" Murphy said "wait a minute, I'll let you talk to them". [laughing]