Anzaldua, Jose USMC POW

[00:00:12.10] JOSE ANZALDUA: I come from a little town by the name of Refugio, Texas. And it's in Southeastern Texas. Grew up in a traditional family, two sisters and a brother. Just had what I would consider a normal childhood. Did high school sports.

[00:00:30.98] Senior year in high school, I came to the conclusion that because of our socioeconomic standing, that my parents couldn't afford to send me to college. And at that time, there weren't Pell Grants and things of that nature, so I started looking as to what I could do for myself to try to give myself some sense of a better future and improve my life.

[00:00:55.11] And I was drawn to a Marine recruiter-- not by design. It just one of those things that happens, almost like it was predestined. And wound up joining the Marine Corps in the Delayed Enlistment Program in March of '68.

[00:01:19.81] And I chose the military, not that I really had any more of a desire to be a Marine than an Army or Air Force or Navy type person. But it fit right in with what I would consider my aspirations, whereas to what I had a debt to perform because our country was in a war, as an individual. And I came to the conclusion that that choice was honorable and would be one that would be wholesome in itself and its entirety, and there were some things, some benefits that if I survived the Vietnam conflict and future conflicts, that I would have a chance at retirement and education and things like that that I would not otherwise have.

[00:02:19.96] When I talked to the recruiter, I was what I think they call it a category one mental group. I asked the recruiter what he could guarantee me. And the Marine recruiter looked at me and said, the only thing I can guarantee you is boot camp and then going to war in Vietnam. He says, and I can't promise you anything else. And as a volunteer, I had to sign a four year contract. But I did so willingly, and at age 17. And I had to convince my mother and father to sign for me since I was a minor.

[00:02:56.17] My father was-- I don't want to use the word "enthusiastic" in the sense that he was pushing me in that direction. But he did support my decision to pursue that. And with my mother, I think that she felt that she needed to support me also. But it was real emotional for her, and me leaving and going to where I was going.

[00:03:25.57] But nonetheless, I went to Marine Corps boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, California. Graduated from there and went to Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Pendleton, California. And then was processing to go to Vietnam with my friends. And because I was in that category one mental group, as they call it, they singled me out and sent me to an Army school up in Monterey, California, the Defense Language Institute. And they trained me for 12 weeks in Vietnamese, to learn to speak, read, and talk. So I spent three months up there.

[00:04:13.69] Took that rather seriously. And you go to school 10 hours a day for the entire 12 weeks. So they compress a lot of information over a short period of time, and to be quite honest with you, the-- fully understanding that whatever opportunities were afforded me, I had made the

decision way before that day that whatever was afforded me, that I would take full advantage of it and do it the best way that I could to better myself.

[00:04:49.99] So I immersed myself in that, graduated from that, and was sent to Vietnam in March of 1969.

[00:05:02.85] I got there and initially, I was trained as a weapons specialist, which is an 0351, which includes explosives training. Actually operated and was qualified as a flamethrower operator, 106 recoilless rifle operator, and breach and destruction of sites with demolitions. So when I got to Vietnam, I was assigned to a recoilless rifle platoon as-- I guess you would call me an ammo person to move ammo around for their guns, and did that for 2 and 1/2 months.

[00:05:49.02] And the word got out as a result of when we went into villages, one of the things that the battalion commander required of our Naval corpsman is that anybody, that any civilians that needed medical treatment, that if they weren't treating the Marine personnel, that they could take time to help out the villagers and stuff. And there was this huge communications gap, and I was not solicited, but I knew I had this training so I would go to where they were and help them decipher what it was that these villagers needed.

[00:06:33.72] And word got back to my battalion commander, and I was then reassigned as an S2 scout, an intelligence scout, with the battalion. And I did that for the remaining nine months. I started off with an infantry company as an S2 scout, and then as a result of attrition, because of where we operated in, which was the Arizona territory, which was in I Corps, southeast of An Hoa, which was a combat base. And needless to say, there was plenty of combat situations that resulted in huge attritions.

[00:07:19.20] And at one time, I was the only one that was an S2 scout that was not dead. But up to that time, I had already been wounded twice, which according to policy, I was supposed to have been in the rear and possibly was to be flown back to Okinawa and taken out of combat. But my battalion commander had pulled me aside and said that he needed me, and that unless I had some real strong issue with him keeping me out in the field, would I be willing to help him with that. And I told him that I would.

[00:08:00.27] We flew into Da Nang, and Da Nang City was probably the size of, say, a city like Augusta, Georgia or something like that. And a real secure compound, but it was always having rockets lobbed into it. And I remember this just like it happened five minutes ago, we flew in on a helicopter. They dropped the tailgate, we ran out the back, and I think I took three steps and the rockets started coming in. And I could hear them, but I didn't know what it was.

[00:08:41.06] And as they were going through the air, they make this real loud whistling noise. And a staff sergeant grabbed me and told me to run for the bunker because they were rockets. And that rocket attack lasted about 20 minutes, and that was my first five minutes in combat.

[00:09:02.89] There at An Hoa, when I got to An Hoa, it was an installation in the middle of what you would call no man's land. An Hoa Combat Base was comprised of 1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion, and 3rd Battalion 5th Marines-- an entire Marine Regiment in the middle of a jungle,

surrounded by mountains and flat rice paddies out towards the coast. Real hot, real humid, acrid air that always had a constant odor of gunpowder, spent gunpowder. It was always in the air.

[00:09:49.69] That, and the diesel smell just lingered in the air, real thick in the air, because of the humidity holding it in the air, being stagnant. As far as my initial opinion of what was going on, that was probably the first time that I asked myself, what did I get myself into? And by that time, I had already turned 18. And no second thoughts relative to what was expected of me because I will tell you that the Marine Corps trained me very well at what I was supposed to do.

[00:10:32.45] And everything that I did, it was nothing more than a mechanical reaction to a training process that makes you like a machine, but with compassion and the ability to rationalize things for myself. But I was very proud in my ability to operate and be able to do those things.

[00:11:04.39] Spent a lot of time on patrols, was-- I'd be back at the regimental CP and would be called out. And they'd give me two or three squads, platoon, and tell me to go out and run a patrol on this. And here I was, at that time, an E3. And at the point where I told you that I was the only remaining S2 scout as a result of attrition, as new people came in, at that time, I was an E4 and I actually had staff NCOs working for me because I was senior to them and they had no in-country experience.

[00:11:44.26] I trained them all as best I could. And the amazing thing of it, while I do not believe that the military actually trains its personnel to function in those things as a result of casualties, that the willingness of people to understand, regardless of where they are or what they are relative to rank, that they understand what you can learn from experienced people irregardless of where they stood in the chain of command. And I did that willingly and had no problems with it whatsoever.

[00:12:25.88] I was involved in numerous life saving issues. One particular place, at a place called Liberty Bridge, we were on patrol. And there was this lieutenant who was a platoon commander in a company that I was with. And as we were moving alongside a river, a mother, a Vietnamese woman, took two small children in the river to bathe them. And as she was bathing one of them, one of them got caught up in the current and was actually swept away, and the woman was just wailing.

[00:13:05.29] And I could see the baby floating away. And I stripped myself of my pack, and my rifle, and my cartridge belt, and all, took my boots off, and ran out there and jumped in the river and actually rescued the child. Two years ago, the then-lieutenant, who is now a retired Marine colonel, actually wrote an article about me in Leatherneck about that.

[00:13:30.80] MARK FRANKLIN: About that rescue?

[00:13:31.79] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir. Some 37 years later, he still remembered. And one other occasion, in July of 1969, we were set up in a battalion CP location in the Arizona Territory. And we'd been in a firefight and had numerous casualties and the sun had set, and they called in a medevac. And we were still taking fire, and we were in combat positions. And as the CH-46-- and the way they descended, under peacetimes, they'll actually corkscrew down a little

bit at a time. But in a hot landing zone, what they'll do is they'll make about two swirls and then drop their rear end rotor and brake hard right before they hit the ground.

[00:14:24.71] And in this case, as he got halfway in that maneuver, he started taking real heavy gunfire and lost his attention or depth perception as a result of what was going on, and the helicopter crashed right in the center of the battalion CP, the command post. The helicopter crashed, he caught fire, he broke in half. The front piece and back piece were intact, but in a split position. And the flames coming out of where it was broken, the middle and the rear tail section. And I knew there was people in there, so I ran in the helicopter, found the co-pilot and the pilot, and got them out of there, ran back in there, and found the two gunners and got them out of there.

[00:15:20.09] And as I was running out with them, and both of them had those window mounted M60s. And when they impacted, the 60s had come back up and they lost all their teeth. And one of them had a broken jaw, just blood. And as I was going out with those two, I looked on the right hand side and there was a stretcher, a medical stretcher, on the right side. And as I glanced, I saw something moving down there and I got them out of there and I turned around. And at this time, a corpsman and another Marine joined me and we ran back in there.

[00:16:00.02] And when I ran in there, the fuel flared and it burnt both my arms, and the flames were real high. But I managed to get up and over and around the flames, and went to where the stretcher was. And there was a Vietnamese man that was being medevacked also, and I managed to get him on my shoulders and get him out of there. That resulted in me getting awarded the Navy, Marine Corps Medal for Life Saving, with V for Valor.

[00:16:32.84] MARK FRANKLIN: So you rescued five people that day?

[00:16:34.61] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir.

[00:16:35.12] MARK FRANKLIN: And that helicopter crashed and ended up burning your arms in the process.

[00:16:38.07] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir. After I pulled out the pilots, the corpsman that went in with me the last time, tried to get me to sit down so he could put some salve on my arms. And the battalion commander was as close as I am to you, and I knew the corpsman was trying to help me, but I also knew there was another person in there. And the battalion commander looked me in the face, and I just smiled at him and I took off again.

[00:17:04.37] And the last thing I remember, he was going like that, but that's just what you do in a situation like that. There was a lot of other Marines there that helped in different ways in trying to extinguish the fire and stuff like that. And it wasn't a one man job at all, because there was many others involved. The corpsman that went in with me to get the Vietnamese civilian, he was also awarded the Navy, Marine Corps Medal for that.

[00:17:39.41] I lost a lot of friends, people that I had gone through training with at the start of my career with the Marine Corps. A gentleman by the name of Robert Alert, who's from Elkhart,

Indiana, who on my birthday, in a firefight, was killed. And I considered him-- I was as close to him as I was to my family, kind of like. And that's a relationship that you develop in a situation such as combat, that you actually wind up knowing more about them than you do your own brothers and sisters because of being around them in such a high stress-- and we always look to share and console each other, so you learn a lot of things about people.

[00:18:37.32] Spent a lot of time in the Stars and Stripes magazines for jumping in rivers with M16s, chasing bad guys, me and a lieutenant. And I didn't fancy myself doing anything other than what I was supposed to do, given the circumstances, that it always seemed like I got caught in situations that it was almost extreme. It was always that way.

[00:19:08.77] MARK FRANKLIN: You were there for a reason.

[00:19:09.65] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir. I mean, just gut wrenching, if you make one mistake, you're going to pay for it type situations. The two Purple Hearts that I had, one was awarded as a result of that rescue off that helicopter that went down in a combat situation, and the burns were classified as that. And then the second one was as a result of me tripping a 155 booby trap, within probably 10 feet of me, that went off. And it threw me about 45-foot in the air.

[00:19:51.89] I remember hitting the ground and just laying there, and my ears ringing, and just stunned. And finally, a corpsman found me, and amazingly, only had three pieces of shrapnel in my right side. But in my opinion, by all intents and purposes, a tripping of that type of device in that proximity, I'd say 99.9% of the time resulted in death if not maiming of some sort.

[00:20:24.11] MARK FRANKLIN: Sure.

[00:20:24.56] JOSE ANZALDUA: And I was in a hospital for 11 days. And on the 11th day, was flown right back out, back to the Arizona Territory.

[00:20:33.68]

[00:20:34.91] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir.

[00:20:36.65] MARK FRANKLIN: So you were wounded twice, which would have been enough for you to have been evacked to back to Okinawa, and not put back into combat? But you elected to go back into combat. And ultimately, that led to your capture.

[00:20:48.11] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir. At that time, I was the battalion chief scout. We were at a place called Liberty Bridge, which is in I Corps. It's a bridge that goes across the Thu Bon river, and it's the only bridge across that river for Americans to use. So we were guarding that.

[00:21:18.21] At that time, this is January of 1970, they were-- and I say "they," it was determined that Vietnamese would start-- the South Vietnamese army-- would start taking more of an active role in the actual conflict itself. So they were being trained to take over certain

positions. And in my particular case, they arrived at the Liberty Bridge, and they were supposed to take over for security of the bridge by the latter part of March, early April. And I was called and asked if I would be willing to help them train and learn what that entailed.

[00:22:01.35] And I said that I would. And this is the 21st Popular Force Platoon that was supposed to do this. So I picked up all my things and moved in with them, and we were on a hill right next to Liberty Bridge. I provided close air support, artillery support, and mortar support from the Marines. And we got hit two or three times the first week I was with them. I'd patrol with them, I'd sit there. And I had a Kit Carson Scout assigned to me, which is a previous Viet Cong soldier that had given up and come to our side. And then we'd train them, and then they'd work with us.

[00:22:48.84] So I had one that was with me. And he would interpret, and I would explain to them what would need to be done relative to actual patrolling, and defensive positions, offensive positions, and how to break ambushes and how to set off ambushes. And spent a lot of time with them doing that. The rest of the time, what little time I had left, my Kit Carson Scout and I would keep observation post on this hill that we were on and just basically track what was going on around us so we wouldn't get caught by surprise because the Popular Forces didn't have that good a grasp of defensive actions, and they had been known to be overrun rather easily.

[00:23:35.60] So in order to protect myself, as the only American there, I just had to stay real proactive as to what was going on around us. A Marine captain called me back to Liberty Bridge on January 16 of 1970 and told me that 5th Marine Regiment would be conducting a regimental sweep from An Hoa to Liberty Bridge on the southern side of the river, and that the regimental commander wanted me to take the Popular Force platoon, during darkness, to go in and pull out all the civilians so the Marines could sweep through there and clear it out in its entirety.

[00:24:21.82] And I said that was fine. Then they gave me coordinates where to start at. And I went back and I set it all up. We left at 12:30 AM on the 17th of January, and we went in and got our first group of about 25 civilians, Vietnamese civilians in a group. Sent a squad with them to get them back to the road, where the Marine trucks are going to pick them up and relocate them to a relocation camp. And we kept on pushing and pulling them out, as we were going there, to keep them away from the push that the Marine regiment was going to conduct.

[00:25:07.78] And as I got to the fourth village, while we were in the middle of a rice paddy that was terraced going up. As we were going forward, we hit a U-shape ambush. And I got hit twice within the first three seconds of the initial engagement.

[00:25:39.70] So many bullets that you could actually hear them going by your ears. But one reflexion or one movement in the wrong direction, it would have been over with-- and probably might have been more humane than what I was enduring at that time. But the fire was strong. My Kit Carson Scout didn't leave me. He stayed by my side. His name was Hue.

[00:26:12.79] And the PFs that were behind us, we were returning fire. And as crazy as it may sound, going forward to get us off of that-- being on the lower side, where we could get volleyed with grenades and rounds. So we were pushing forward, making some progress. A lot of close,

not hand-to-hand combat, but shooting of what I think were NVA soldiers from as close as about 20 to 25 feet, and us trying to push through them, knowing that on the backside of that was an entire infantry regiment, Marine regiment, coming in my direction.

[00:27:05.61] And I knew that if I could just hold out, I'd be OK. And I had told my Kit Carson Scout repeatedly to go on and fall back and let me do what I need to do on the front, since I was already hit. And he wouldn't leave me. And at one point in time, he just looked at my eyes and he just said, I'm not going to leave. And I said, well, and I thanked him and we went at it.

[00:27:29.04] 14 hours into the firefight, I had Cobra gunships over the top of me. I had popped smoke on me. The Marines were about half a mile away from me. What my purpose of popping the red smoke was to get the Cobras to engage, because they kept-- I was losing blood real bad and I was in shock. And they were, not in waves, but one or two at a time would run at us. And the last time, before I popped the red smoke, the one that I shot was probably about four feet away from me. He actually landed on top of me.

[00:28:12.78] And the only thing I knew that I had been trained to do was to pop the red smoke and let the Cobra open up on the site. One Cobra actually came down and tried to put the skid to where I could wrap myself around it, but I couldn't do it. I was in mud that was probably about 3, 3 and 1/2 foot deep. And the loss of blood and stuff, I just didn't have the energy nor the strength to be able to get up and do something like that. So I pretty well settled into my fate and continued to fight.

[00:28:52.56] Ran out of ammo about 7:30 that night. We had wore them down. I guess they thought there was a whole bunch of us, but they wouldn't push on us anymore. And I could hear them, my regiment, Marine regiment, coming. They were real close. And I started blanking out on the end of consciousness. And this time, I didn't have any more rounds. M16 was gone, M79 rounds were gone, the grenades were gone, .45 rounds were gone. And I was just laying there, and my Kit Carson Scout with me. And they just overran us.

[00:29:34.72] And they picked me up. They took him, and they took us and put us in the spider hole. And they put me in a spider hole. I had one on my right side, one on the left side, with AK-47s. And Hue was behind me in another spider hole, and the Marines walked right over top of us. And the decision I had-- and like I said, I could hear the Marines talking, they were right above me-- is go straight up and pop the hatch and come on out and try and hope that these guys could only shoot me in my legs.

[00:30:16.22] But I remembered what I was trained to do, and I knew that if I jumped out of the hole in the middle of a Marine unit, and they saw a trapdoor come open, they would have killed me. Not by intention. It was dark. It's I know what I would have done, so I just sat there and let it be what it was going to be.

[00:30:40.14] The next morning, the regiment went by. Next morning they came out of the spider hole. They took us up to a village about an hour and a half away. I had a through and through gunshot on my left foot, and a round throughg my left arm. And when we got to that village, they executed Hue in front of me. They just killed him. And that was terrible.

[00:31:12.42] They had me walk. Once again, they kept pushing me again. Wound up in the Khe Sanh mountain range. Walking with these-- the bullet hole in my left foot was terrible. The stench coming off of there. No medicine. And finally, it got so bad that I could barely walk, that they gave me some warm water with salt to soak my foot in, which is rather primeval in its way. But it did work, in the sense that it seemed to slow down what was happening, the actual deterioration of the tissue.

[00:31:53.41] And every time I had to cross a river or a stream, the salt in the water used to just bear down real hard on me, pain-wise. And about after 2 and 1/2 months of walking, one morning, I couldn't get up. I couldn't put no weight on my leg, and my guards came up to me and one chambered a round, put the AK-47 on my head, and he told me in Vietnamese, you get up or I'm going to kill you.

[00:32:28.54] And to be quite honest with you, I didn't think I could. And I started singing the Marine Corps hymn and got up, and walked, and made it to a prisoner of war camp that was on the Vietnam-Laotian border, in the jungles of South Vietnam.

[00:32:55.77] We came up on a clearing. I had four guards with me, two in front, two in the back. And as we got to this, what I consider a-- I thought it was a Montagnard village at first. It was halfway up a hill, under triple canopy. And the two front guards peeled off to the left, and the ones behind me kept pushing me forward. When I got up, there was a Vietnamese gentleman there. And I stopped in front of him and he was-- he spoke English.

[00:33:31.68] And he says, you follow me. And the other two guards dropped off, and I followed this guy. And there was this enclosure that was surrounded by bamboo fence and punji sticks around the outside, and an opening. And there was two huts inside this little compound. And on the right side, I could see a fully armed Vietnamese soldier in a guardhouse. And a million thoughts run through your mind, trying to figure out what this is. And we went in the opening to the left. Went in there, and went to the hut that was in the center.

[00:34:17.67] And when I got through the door, I looked to the left hand side and there was Hal Kushner, Dave Harker, Tom Davis, Ike McMillan, Daly, Lewis, Pfister, and there was probably two or three others; Dennis Hammond, a sergeant in the Marine Corps. And I looked at them, and I said to myself, oh my god. They looked absolutely emaciated. I mean-- I knew they were Americans and they were grinning at me and I was grinning at them. Hal Kushner asked me who I was and I told him. And he said, well, have a seat. And he says, how are you? And the interpreter walked out and left me there, and I started talking to them and come to find out some of them had been there five years or longer.

[00:35:20.61] The least was probably, at that time, 2, maybe 2 and 1/2 years. Dennis Hammond was the only Marine. There had been other Marines, but they had passed on. And I made the 26th prisoner that was held by that Vietnamese unit, of which, out of those 26, only 12 survived. And I'm one of them, after two years in the jungles of South Vietnam.

[00:35:53.84] The food was the equivalent of a half a can of a small can of PET milk and dried rice per prisoner, once a day, salt, no meat, and whatever else we could catch, be it a frog, a

lizard, a snake, steal a chicken, a biddy if you got a chance or something like that, and leaves and anything else we could muster up. And they spent a lot of time asking me questions about what was going on back in the United States, as far as did I think that the war was going to end real soon.

[00:36:41.63] And I told them, I said, well, from my perspective, that we were still in a position of power over the situation and to be quite frank, that I didn't think that it was going to end any time soon because there was no reason to believe that it would. And they asked me about the antiwar movement, and I told them that I had heard bits and pieces of it. And yes, there were people that were against the war and that they had public demonstrations and stuff like that, and just basically that they were out there but they weren't really influencing anything going on.

[00:37:30.05] They all told me, each one, their individual stories, how they got caught, where they came from, the wounds that they suffered. Hal Kushner helped treat my wounds, got me back in reasonably good shape. And in the interim, Dennis Hammond just gave up, and as a result, developed a disease called hunger edema, which is when your body has a lack of protein, the electrolytes get messed up and instead of expelling fluid, the body retains it. And you swell up and eventually, you will die.

[00:38:16.39] And he was the last one to die at that camp, and we buried him.

[00:38:23.20] There were some Vietnamese army prisoners of war there; a gentleman by the name of Quy. And there was an elderly man who was also a Vietnamese army type, and one of the-- he was out gathering wood and somebody shot him in the head. And I'll never forget this. They brought him back, and he had a bullet wound to the right rear of his skull and his brain matter was right there and visible.

[00:38:54.82] And the camp doctor came down and was looking at him, and from the severity of the wound and the way the individual was reacting, they had to trache him because his brain damage was so great that he was actually losing the ability to breathe and was fading off. Not much blood, but I distinctly remember the NVA doctor taking his middle finger and inserting it in that guy's brain. And I'm sitting, and I asked Hal Kushner. I said, well, what's he doing? Looking for the bullet? He says, he's just trying to determine how much brain damage he's gotten.

[00:39:36.04] This guy, his eyes had actually rolled half back in his head. And in my opinion-- and I'm not a medical officer-- he probably was on the verge of losing brain activity because of the amount of damage. So we buried him.

[00:39:58.76] In the jungles of South Vietnam, there wasn't enough food and the way we, as Americans, are, we have to have a certain amount of protein in order to maintain our bodies because that's the way our bodies are developed and become used to. And when you deprive them of that protein, then the first thing your body consumes is muscle tissue. And once that's gone, then it's kind of like hang on as best you can.

[00:40:32.78] I made the decision that anything that I could find to eat, I would eat, be it rats, bats, anything, and to include maggots out of a in-ground toilet. Some people wouldn't do it, and I understand that and I can appreciate that. But the way I viewed it was, that it was nothing more than I came and believed that if I had to live like an animal to stay alive, that I would. And by and large, except for Dennis Hammond, everybody pretty well did that.

[00:41:19.31] And because of this situation of being on the brink of death, we looked out for each other. And to be honest with you, the first thing that I asked everybody when I got to this camp is where's the chain of command, because I noticed that things were being done different than the way that I was trained.

[00:41:50.90] You could not take a pilot out of a jet and put him in a ground situation, and that he would automatically become the head of the chain of command. Ground personnel irregardless of rank would assume that, and then you would move forward with it. But in that particular case, there was none of that. No chain of command.

[00:42:14.33] I refer to it as a jungle law. Jungle law being that the strongest makes the rules and the strongest makes the decisions. And I'll be quite frank with you, I voiced my disgust with that and how it was done, almost to the point that at numerous times, there was-- I drew the ire of the whole group because it just didn't work.

[00:42:48.31] I wasn't capable of doing anything outside of what my body would let me, and there's nothing that I could do as an individual to fix it. But at every chance I got, I would state that what we were doing was wrong and this is the way it ought to be-- and it was explained to me, and I fully understood that after-- and as the transition of the start with the 26 on down to the remaining 12, that that's the way that it would always be done. The strongest could carry the most wood, could gather the most manioc for the group. Therefore, they eat first and they make the decisions. And in some instances, consume more than others.

[00:43:41.29] When people are sick and you're not sick-- and no one was in A-1, number one shape, no one. But if you're sick and the only chance that you have to live is by getting maybe an additional little bit of food to keep you hanging on, I believe that they ought to get it. And by and large, they did not. And I fully understand that, and there had been people in that camp that were of bigger stature.

[00:44:15.61] Minorities seemed to weather diminished environments better. I can't tell you why, but it seems like minorities-- but I think I do know why. Because of environmental and availability issues relating to food, that when you are raised on lower standards and qualities of food, eating things that may be somebody who has more money to get other things, that your body is capable of functioning on less and of different items and processes starches differently than somebody who's more of a protein-based type consumption individual. Because the majority diminished physically quickly.

[00:45:19.47] And the minorities, while they didn't gain, they seemed to diminish in lesser amounts. Therefore, as I understood it, it was never expressed to me, but there was a threat of

physical harm expressed to others because they were sickly and these other guys were more able to do, that if you don't like it, I'll just beat you.

[00:45:51.18] So they went along with it. And I understand that. Don't agree with it. But that's what it was. And I understand.

[00:46:02.34] It stayed that way the whole time I was in the South. And I'll give you a for instance. We had a sick individual. The camp personnel, the Vietnamese, NVA, had chickens. The mother hen had hatched some eggs and had biddies. And they wander around and they scratch and eat, and they would walk through our yard. And when they walked under the bamboo bed, we'd spread the slats and if we were lucky, we could grab one.

[00:46:31.19] Well, you can imagine a biddy about that big. Not much bigger than an egg, being divided into 12 pieces.

[00:46:37.50] MARK FRANKLIN: Doesn't go very far, no.

[00:46:38.63] JOSE ANZALDUA: No, sir. There was some that didn't need it, and there were others that absolutely needed it because of their physical condition. But that's not the way the thing responded. And at one point in time, the NVA guards had offered or had mentioned that they were thinking about giving us chickens for our own, which was unheard of. And there was a discussion about that.

[00:47:11.39] And there was 12 of us, and I asked, well, if they bring 12 biddies down here, and each one of us gets one. What I do with mine has nothing to do with what you do with yours. And they said, oh no, that's not the way it works. He said whatever it is, every part of it is divided in 12. And I said, I don't know where y'all got that. I said, but I ain't no communist and I ain't going along with it.

[00:47:40.38] I'm sorry. It just didn't work for me.

[00:47:47.11] I had been told of previous indoctrination camps and courses that were running in the camp that I arrived at. While I was there, they really didn't mess with us much, as far as trying to indoctrinate us or brainwash us or anything like that. They were so concerned with staying alive, as we were, and whatever they could get and keep for themselves, they obviously kept. And they just gave us enough to stay alive. And I understand that.

[00:48:28.21] September of '71-- we had just come back from a manioc run. It was Tom Davis, myself, David Harker, Robert Lewis, Daly, and Gustav Mehrer. And we had gone down to this spring, and were washing ourselves off, each individually. And I was coming back up to the center of the compound, and I heard a loach, which is a Light Observation Helicopter. All it is is a little thing with a rotor and--

[00:49:07.16] MARK FRANKLIN: A little bubble of glass?

[00:49:08.37] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir. A little glass thing. But I could hear it up there. And I had heard all kinds of aircraft while we had been there over the years. The B-52s-- just about anything you could think about; artillery. And as I got up and got into the hutch, the loach accelerated its forward movement real quick. And all of a sudden, it just stopped right over the top of the hooch in triple canopy.

[00:49:40.08] And David Harker looked at me, and this guy by the name of Frank Anton, which was an army helicopter pilot looked at me, and I says, it's right up there. And they said, oh, they don't know we're here. And the next thing I know, here come all the guards. And normally, you would see them-- except for the ones that were in the guard shack-- they would always be armed and the rest of them never would be. But here they come, in all their battle gear, and are yelling and screaming and stuff and telling us, go, go, go.

[00:50:12.51] And everybody was going out the door. And when I came out the door of the hooch, I hit this board and I fell down. And when I did, there was a guard behind. And I looked straight up, and there was an army guy with a helicopter pilot head gear thing. And you could see the actual communication, and he had that thing and he was talking to somebody. And he was hanging out the door just like I'm sitting here, with both feet on the skid. Just looking at me, just like this, right at me. And he was right at the top of the trees.

[00:50:47.79] And they were taking the loach and trying to cut the top of the trees down. And I could hear the rotor hit it, and he pulled it back up. And I sat there. And finally, the guard put the gun to my head said "di di mau," and I got up and I looked at the guy and he smiled at me and waved. So I went back up. Then he got us all together. We were running up the-- I say "running,"-- moving briskly up the trail. And we finally got to where we were going.

[00:51:16.79] We sat down there and we were all talking. And I looked at Frank and I said, that was an American. And I said, that guy looked at me. And I said, I looked at him. And I said, you can say whatever you want to. I said, they know we were there. And Hal says, something's going to happen. They ain't going to let this go on. So I'm sitting there going, damn. I guess they're going to kill us.

[00:51:41.31] They moved us to another camp, and they shut down that camp. And we were there, and about two months passed. And all of a sudden, the interpreter came up there and said, you're going to be divided into two groups of six and you're going on a trip. And Harker, Kushner, Frank Anton, and Julius Long said that they thought that they were going to move us to the Vietnam-China border. And all of them said, we're going to run. We ain't doing this. I'd rather die than to go up there because we go up there, they'll never know-- our country will never know we're up there. And for all intents and purposes, we're gone.

[00:52:39.23] And I didn't have that much insight as to how they thought and what they would do or were capable of doing other than the fact that when that loach was over the top of us, I knew that there wasn't much of a give and take as to whether they would decide to shoot us if they thought they were going to get us out. There was no doubt in my mind that they would.

[00:53:05.90] And lo and behold, they split up into two groups. Harker, and Kushner, and Frank Anton, Julius Long, Gustav Mehrer went in a group. And then I came up in a second group with McMillan, Davis, Daly. We walked up and down some of the sheerest mountains I've ever seen in my life, barefoot. The sandals that they wore, and the way they were designed, their legs being shorter, they took shorter steps. But because of our height, our steps being longer, your foot would slide out of the straps and break the straps. Before you knew it, you were barefoot.

[00:53:56.28] We would walk 10 to 12 hours a day. One guy by the name of Robert Lewis developed night blindness, like a chicken does, where the pupils don't dilate to take in more light so they could see in the dark. And as soon as the sun set, I was the only one that could guide him or carry him or get him to wherever he needed to. Because with the onset of that night blindness, he also was losing his ability to walk.

[00:54:29.48] Like I said, didn't go fast. But we had all said that we would do whatever we needed to do to help each other to wherever we were going. Ran into a lot of NVA units. And a lot of the NVA units had more females in them than they did males. And Hal Kushner had told us that the war had gone on so long and the North Vietnamese had suffered so much human loss relative to males, that now they were using real young kids and females to fight the war because the male population was whittled down to something like about 22 to 23% of what it was prior to the war.

[00:55:21.15] And there was women and young kids, and there was a lot of prodding and poking, and hitting, and rock throwing, name calling. We'd wind up at these waystations. We'd spend the night there and wake up the next morning and take off.

[00:55:46.89] I remember, when we walked out of Vietnam and walked on to the Plain of Jars. And it was the most amazing sight to me, in that the Plain of Jars, except for these jars is nothing more than elephant grass, a huge area of elephant grass, surrounded by triple and quadruple canopy. And as we were walking out of the woods, fixing to enter into the Plain of Jars, I was looking around, and the trees had no leaves.

[00:56:24.41] I mean, forever. And as we walked out into the elephant grass, I got to looking and there was this orange stuff all over everything. I didn't know what it was. It was everywhere. We just basically said, well, we ain't going to stick our hands in. We don't know what it is. We didn't do a taste test, thank god, or anything like that. We just kept going. And that, in itself, constituted exposure to Agent Orange, which for me, personally, I haven't suffered as a result of that. But it was there, and it went on for miles and miles. Absolutely nothing. Just stick after stick of the remains of a tree. And everything gone.

[00:57:12.12] Actually, I guess the term they used is deforestation. And it was exactly that.

[00:57:20.10] We got up, went across the Red River, walked a little, about three more days later. And they put us on trucks, and they had us under these tarps. And we rode-- I want to say for four or five days. And you listen to what's going on around you. You couldn't stick your head out, but you can hear people talk at times. And at this one point I knew that we were in a city, a

big city, with a lot of people because there was a lot of traffic on both sides of us and people were talking.

[00:57:59.16] And the next thing I know, they pulled us into a place called Plantation Gardens, through the front doors. We got there. They kept us, our six, separate from David Harker and Hal Kushner's group for about two to three weeks. And since they knew that we all lived together in the jungle camps, they'd let us out and we talked. And Hal was informing us of what was going on in the camp. And he said there were other prisoners there. And from time to time, you might get a peek at them going by, but they wouldn't allow any communications between prisoners. And they kept us isolated.

[00:58:41.58] He said that they're doing that for political purposes. And there was no doubt in this type of an environment, it's nothing more than an extension of the formal French prison system that was there when they occupied the country, that they had all the time in the world to devote to indoctrination and humiliation, beating you, and just basically humiliating you.

[00:59:11.28] We had food, pumpkin soup and some bread. When before, you only had something to eat once a day. And pumpkin soup is not real palatable. It tastes like dishwater. But at least you had that, and you knew you weren't going to die. The only way you were going to die there is if they shot you. And we had all come to the conclusion that we would never do anything, unless something went terribly bad, that would lead up to that.

[00:59:41.13] The political commissar for the camp, he was in charge of indoctrinating us. And at one particular point in time, he told us about this group of 12 that they called the Peace Committee that was in that camp, and what they were. He said that they were people from all different branches of service that were all against the war. And they got together and were, from time to time, writing letters and making tapes and sending them back to the States in hopes of ending the war so they could go home.

[01:00:15.36] And I thought this kind of funny. And I said, well, and I got to talk to Hal Kushner about it. And I remember this little thing called the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Code of Conduct. And I'm sitting there going, well, unless it's duress-- and obviously there's no duress up here-- why would that be other then the fact that they've chosen to do that. So I made a mental decision that I would somehow or another get to them, and stand in front of them and tell them what the Code of Conduct says, what they need to do to end that. Perfect plan.

[01:00:56.99] Was able-- one day, they opened the doors, which is a normal routine. They opened Hal and them's door up, and then they opened the door cells to the cells next to us. And here were these Peace Committee guys. And I looked at them, and the rest of the guys in my building and Hal's building said, we're not going out. And I says, I'll be right back. And I went out the door, went around, went into that place, stood right there in the middle of them.

[01:01:30.53] And they asked me who I was. And I told them. I said, I'm a corporal in the United States Marine Corps. My service number's 2468970. And I says, you are bound by the Code of Conduct not to be doing what you're doing. And you need to stop and desist. Otherwise, you'll be

subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I had just got that out of my mouth when a guard came in behind me and butt-stroked me. And I got drug off.

[01:02:00.92] I thought they would come at me, the guys.

[01:02:03.20] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah.

[01:02:04.73] JOSE ANZALDUA: But I didn't think-- well, once again, I thought they might bruise me up, beat me up, whatever 12 guys could do. But that wasn't my concern as much because I knew I wouldn't get hurt real bad. They took me up there to the political commissar's office, and I got tied and hung on a porcelain fixture. The old timey ways that the French-- for wiring, they would have porcelain fixtures attached to the walls, then the wires would go around, wrapped those porcelain fixtures. Whereas we hide ours in conduit, that's the way they used to do it here, probably back in the '20s and '30s.

[01:02:48.18] Anyway, there was these two huge porcelain fixtures, and they tied my elbows back together and they lifted me and they hung me on that thing. The political commissar told me that I was bellicose, and that I was inciting bad behavior amongst all the prisoners. And because of that, the camp commander wanted me punished. I didn't say anything, so he slammed the door and walked out and I hung there.

[01:03:17.86] The next day, they came back in there and they cut me down. And when I hit the concrete floor, unbeknownst to me, I broke my right shoulder. But I never knew. I was taken from there, put in leg irons and shackles, and put in solitary confinement.

[01:03:38.48] Stayed in there for 3 and 1/2 months by myself. And the hardest thing to do is to find yourself, all of the sudden, caught in a situation where you have to live by yourself, with no other outside stimulus whatsoever other than the dark cell with just mental deprivation. And for about the first two days, I couldn't force my mind to shut off. I couldn't sleep.

[01:04:09.51] And then finally, after the third day, I adapted and actually went to sleep. And one day, as we all did, I went to the door and I was looking out a crack in the door, and there was a gentleman about as tall as I was in front of the door, about 30, 35 feet in front, walking, exercising, and two guards there.

[01:04:34.83] And he stopped as I was looking out the door, and he made a big O and then a big K with his body. And then he goes like this. One time up, that means you're OK. Two times down, you're in bad shape, so I lifted the little view door one time, and let it hit to tell him that I was OK. And come to find out that was Colonel Ted Guy, the senior ranking officer in that camp.

[01:05:04.17] Stayed in there. 3 and 1/2 months later, I was taken out of there and put in a cell with a bunch of wounded pilots that, either as a result of flak injuries from the anti-aircraft, or ejection injuries as a result of the canopy going back and hitting them and the acceleration of the seat being greater than the canopy coming off, injuring themselves. But I spent almost six

months taking care of them. That's feeding them, bathing them, giving them medicine, just basically taking care of them.

[01:05:46.32] And one day, I was in there and there was a guy by the name of Mott who had a severe canopy injury on his right shoulder and some leg damage from when he hit the ground. And he was the second across the way from the door, and the guards would come in. They'd have a tray full of medicine, and they'd have it listed who gets what. For whatever reason, he came in the door and he had this tray. And he put it down, and he takes it with his foot and he split it like that. And it went halfway across the room.

[01:06:21.90] I'm on the right side, on this plank that I slept on. And for whatever reason, he spun around and he looked at Mott. And he kicked him. And when he did that, I went after him and got the hell beat out of me again. But-- off to solitary again.

[01:06:39.77] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, did they? Back in solitary?

[01:06:42.26] JOSE ANZALDUA: It's really not funny. When it happened, I didn't laugh.

[01:06:45.65] MARK FRANKLIN: No, I don't imagine you did.

[01:06:48.41] JOSE ANZALDUA: What he did just did not sit well with me. A person that was totally helpless, couldn't help himself, couldn't defend himself. I mean, you don't even do that to a dog that's injured. They toted me back off to solitary confinement, leg irons and shackles again. Stayed there for 4 and 1/2, maybe five months. Came back out.

[01:07:13.79] I finally was told by Hal Kushner's group about this Air Force survival tap code-- five letters across, with five rows of letters, for a total of 25, C and K being the same, and a break in a letter by a sweep on the wall. And you could spell letters out and actually carry on conversations through the wall.

[01:07:39.74] And I was communicating with this guy by the name of Captain Archer, a Marine captain, who had been captured in Hue when Hue was overrun in '68. And he was asking me about the Peace Committee and I said, yeah. I said what they're doing is not right, and somebody needs to stop them. And I'm the guy that walked in and told them to stop.

[01:08:06.81] And he says, well, he didn't need to do that because other people had already done it. And I said, well, you can say that. I said, but I felt an obligation and I was encountering the situation. I assessed it, I reacted to it, I paid for it. I'm back. I tried. And he says, well, Colonel Ted Guy, the senior ranking officer, says to stay away from those guys, which by the time I was away from them, I had already-- them ties had been severed. And we communicated back and forth.

[01:08:38.61] And I can't explain it. David Harker and I were discussing it today, and it came as a thought to me on the way up here, as I was driving up here today. Colonel Ted Guy, the senior ranking officer who was a Phantom pilot, for some reason, we developed a bond through the walls and communications. He would have people send me messages, and I would send it back

through the walls to him. And I was just an E4, a corporal, Marine corporal. And I would see him from time to time.

[01:09:19.98] They had told us not to do anything to agitate the guards. Don't try to escape. You can't escape, they're going to kill you. And still in my mind, the Code of Conduct says that you are to attempt escape at any opportunity that's available to you. And for some reason or another, I couldn't get that out of my head. But I still had that sense of loyalty for what Colonel Ted Guy stood for.

[01:09:51.96] And I basically understood that he was just trying to make sure that nothing happened to us outside of what was needed. And that was not needed because he said we should resist as best we can because while we're prisoners, we should still not give in. We should make it as hard as we can on the NVA. I think I did my part of that quite well, maybe to the point that they thought that I was crazy. And I wasn't. It's just that I did what I needed to do with the circumstances.

[01:10:29.63] They loaded us all up and moved us to another prison. When we got there, we found out it was the Hanoi Hilton, Hoa Lo, which was the premiere French prison in North Vietnam. We got there, and we thought this was kind of funny. At some point in time, for no known reason, one day, they opened up all the jail cells. The good, the bad, and the ugly. I mean, no matter-- everybody. And the guards were going like this, for everybody to come out.

[01:11:07.10] And I went out there. When I walked out there, right in front of me, was Ted Guy, Colonel Ted Guy. And he looked at me. He says, are you OK? I said, yeah. Sure am, sir. He says, well. He says, you speak Vietnamese, right? And I said, yes, sir. He says, I want you to be my eyes and ears. He says if you hear anything, I want you to bring it to me. Don't say anything to anybody else. I said, I can do that, sir.

[01:11:30.20] So we talked. He asked me where I was from. He told me where he was from, about his family. I told him about mine. Met everybody else, Colonel Fred Thompson, Jon Cavaiani, Major Montague, Ron Ridgeway. Met all kinds of people. Everybody that was there. There was about four hundred and-- I'm going to guess 431, maybe 436 total. Every evening, they would lock us up. They locked me up this one evening, there was a Dutch doors at the front that had a bar of wood across them and they would lock. And at the back, there was a door with a wooden slat cover on it.

[01:12:07.82] In the evening time, I would always go to the back window because there was always guards back there, and I could hear them talking. And this one evening, I was sitting there. And this one guard says to another, oh, we found out today that the Americans are going home. And I'm sitting there going, I didn't just hear that. So I-- nothing, no emotion. I just kept listening, and they said we were going home. So I just thought, OK. So I went to bed.

[01:12:36.82] The next day, when they opened the doors, Colonel Guy comes to me. He says to me, have you heard anything? I told him, I says, I need to talk to you in private. So we went back in that room, where we was at. And I told him. I says, I heard them say we were going home.

And he looked at me, and he says, really? He says, are you sure? I says, he said it twice. He says, have you told anybody? I said, no, sir.

[01:12:59.31] He says, well, do me a favor and don't tell anybody because if it doesn't happen, it's not going to be good for morale. He says, if we tell them they're going home and that you heard that and it doesn't happen, he says, it won't be good. I said OK, sir. No problem. I won't say a thing.

[01:13:15.14] About five weeks later, they open up the doors again. They're going like this and everybody's going out there normally. Right in the middle, they had this podium. And the camp commander walked up there and he's strutting around with an interpreter. He's got his war gala on and had his finger and the swat stick that-- what do you call that stick? Swagger stick.

[01:13:45.23] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah. OK.

[01:13:46.19] JOSE ANZALDUA: And he would rap you with it if you didn't bow when you were going by him. But anyway, he had that and he was flailing his arms and legs. And all of a sudden, the interpreter said, as a result of the Geneva peace talks in Paris, there's going to be a release of American prisoners of war and an exchange of prisoners. And I guess he thought we were all going to jump up and down and all that. But everybody's just sitting there, not--

[01:14:17.76] MARK FRANKLIN: Straight faced.

[01:14:18.22] JOSE ANZALDUA: Absolutely no emotion whatsoever. Colonel Guy looked at me and winked at me. And I just hung my head and I just started grinning. Went back in, he says, you were right. And I said, yes, sir. I said, for once, I'm right. He said, oh, don't worry about it. You keep listening, and if you need anything, you let me know. He said, we'll get through this.

[01:14:41.61] About a week later, the Red Cross come through there I suppose. And I guess they were inspecting, they were doing a drive by, whatever you want to call it. They had baskets, and they were in the center court. And all the prisoner cells were around, in a circle. And there was a court. And there was three females, American females, two American males, and they had these baskets full of cigarettes. And they were flinging them at us through the bars. Cigarettes.

[01:15:13.38] Needless to say, there was a lot of smoke in the room.

[01:15:15.34] MARK FRANKLIN: I guess there would be.

[01:15:16.05] JOSE ANZALDUA: And a couple of guys got candy. But they gave it to Colonel Guy, and he gave it to the guys who had-- a couple of guys that had serious, serious wounds. And we had one guy who had his spine severed, David Baird. But he's passed on now.

[01:15:36.48] MARK FRANKLIN: Was he able to make it home?

[01:15:37.56] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir. He was.

[01:15:38.37] MARK FRANKLIN: That's good.

[01:15:38.78] JOSE ANZALDUA: Yes, sir. But he finally succumbed to his injuries. But there was two releases. I was in the third group, and my actual release was postponed four times because of breaks in the peace talks. And details, as they used to tell us, that some details weren't right. And finally, one day, they came in and they gave us these clothes and said, put it on, and gave us a bag, and said, you're going home. And I'm sitting there going, well, I ain't believing this. But anyway, they stuck us on a bus that had all the windows covered, and we drove.

[01:16:22.71] And they opened the doors to the bus, and as I got off the bus, I look off to the right side and there was an Air Force C-141 hospital airplane-- jet. Standing there on the left hand side, there was an Air Force general and a couple of colonels, and then about every North Vietnamese dignitary that there ever was in the country was standing there. And we had to go up there to salute that general and shake this Air Force colonel's hand.

[01:16:51.72] And they would say to walk very briskly to that airplane. And they didn't have to tell me twice. They said, don't run, but walk briskly. Went over there, got to the door, there was Air Force flight nurses on there. And they put us in the seats, and they hugged us, and told us, welcome home, and kissed us and gave us cigarettes and beer and candy. Next thing I know, we're facing back, this way, to the tail end of the jet.

[01:17:24.60] We're taxiing. The next thing I know, the front end of the plane goes up and I'm looking down like this. And as it banks hard to the left, I looked out the window and I saw the last time I ever saw North Vietnam. And I was glad. Very glad.

[01:17:40.63] We left there and went to Clark Air Force Base. Went through a quick debriefing. Was there for about three days. Was told updates about my family, pay and benefits. Were escorted down to the PX to buy civilian clothes. Were shown bell bottom pants. And I refused them. I said I just want blue jeans and t-shirts, so that's what I bought. Didn't know anything else. Left there, stopped in Hawaii, had a big reception there. And then I went to Norton Air Force base in northern California, landed there, and then a general's car drove me from there to Camp Pendleton, California, where I was in a hospital for 3 and 1/2 months, trying to get rid of intestine problems that I had developed.

[01:18:37.33] But I was fortunate enough to get those things taken care of, went home, had a wonderful welcoming home event, got to see all my siblings, my mother and my father. They did fly my mother and my father to Camp Pendleton. They were there with me for two weeks. And then they went back home. Then I went back home.

[01:19:03.40] They gave me convalescent leave of 90 days, and they told me go back and figure out what you want to do with your life. And I was home for 90 days, and I called in and I said I need a little bit more time. So they gave me another 90-day extension, not as a intentional thought of doing anything else and doing it. I went to Canada. Went through there for about 3 and 1/2, four weeks. Came back down home, packed up everything, went back home. They gave me a 1973 Ford Mustang.

[01:19:35.23] I drove back to Camp Pendleton, and they asked me what I wanted to do. And I told them that I wasn't real comfortable with our society as it was, and had not been back long enough to be able to adjust to it and wasn't comfortable. I said, but I am comfortable and still aware of what the Marine Corps expects of me, so I'm going to stay with it. So I reenlisted for six years.

[01:20:06.59] I was a weapons specialist instructor at Infantry Training Regiment for about six months. Then they sent me to the Army interrogator translator school at Fort Huachuca. I was there for about six months. Came back to Camp Pendleton, was assigned to the interrogator translator intelligence section, and then I got this message and my sergeant major, Sergeant Major Pallance, called me into his office.

[01:20:40.70] And he shut the door and he says, sit down. And he had this message, and he handed it to me. He says General Cushman has awarded you a battlefield commission for conduct while a prisoner of war. And I looked at him. I said, I don't know what that means. And he says, well-- I said, do I have a choice? He said, well, you have a choice, but that choice has to be that you accept it because you don't turn down things like that. He says, and if you turn it down, he said, they would think that you didn't appreciate what they were trying to do for you.

[01:21:16.04] So I said, well, I guess I'll do it. And they added a caveat to it-- I was a high school grad-- that if I successfully completed Officers Candidate School and the Basic School, that I would become a reserve officer instead of a temporary limited officer.

[01:21:37.82] And completed OCS, completed the Basic School, became an infantry officer, was a platoon commander, a logistics officer, was on recruiting duty for a total of six years in North Carolina, then assigned at 2nd Marine Division. Was a company commander at Camp Pendleton, on the truck company because my legs were starting to deteriorate to the point that I couldn't perform my duties as an infantry officer. So they let me lat move over in the motor transport field.

[01:22:16.29] And retired in 31 September of 1992, after 24 and a half years.

[01:22:28.85] The only way that I can form an opinion outside of mind on that is what I see and what I've read. And that it's basically a foregone conclusion that it was a political mistake. That somehow or another, our politicians overstepped and denied the ability of the military to perform the task before them in Vietnam, to the point that it actually ended into a defeat or a stalemate.

[01:23:05.07] From my perspective, what it has done for me and what I have noticed, that from the extreme environment that I was in, after being in a military conflict, armed conflict, was that the only absolute that there was for me, it was nothing more than the Constitution of the United States. That is the only thing that is unwavering. There is no possibility of error on a decision of a document that has endured close to-- what was it now? Going on 300 years, sooner or later? And that our problems-- and don't get me wrong. I love my country. I fought for it. I bled for it. My record stands for itself.

[01:24:13.73] I have four Purple Hearts, four Bronze Stars, a Navy and Marine Corps medal. The Constitution of the United States did not fail me. The errors were both military and political, associated with specific individuals, not the entirety of the system. but that some mistakes were so grievous that it really took blood and the youth of this country and put them in the ground.

[01:24:50.93] That, for me, is painful. For me, I love my country, but I also equally love the Constitution of the United States. A lot of times, you'll have people pay lip service to it and say the Constitution says this, the Constitution guarantees this. And they turn around and do something else. Well, that's the fallacy of the human being. And unfortunately, a lot of times, those decisions impact on individuals and groups in some cases. Be it the-- perfect example, for me, is the entire wiping out of a Marine battalion in Beirut, Lebanon by a singular event. That was a political mistake.

[01:25:46.76] And our Constitution guarantees everything that we need to have. And that's what I protect and I see myself protecting. Nothing else matters. Nothing.