

Apple, Charles USMC

[00:00:17.25] CHARLES APPLE: I was born in Jeffersonville, Indiana, 1943, March 1st. My father was Clinton E. Apple. My mother is Jane Elizabeth Apple. I had two sisters, Joanne Apple and Sharon Lee Apple. CHARLES APPLE: My father was a self-employed contractor. He did a lot of carpentry work for different companies. In my younger years, he traveled around the Midwest, building armories, Army Reserve armories.

[00:00:58.25] JOE GALLOWAY: What do you consider your hometown? Jeffersonville?

[00:01:01.36] CHARLES APPLE: Jeffersonville.

[00:01:02.09] JOE GALLOWAY: You still live there?

[00:01:03.23] CHARLES APPLE: Yes, I do.

[00:01:05.84] JOE GALLOWAY: How did you come to enter the Marine Corps?

[00:01:08.66] CHARLES APPLE: Well, I didn't like the Navy. In July 1960, I joined the Navy for two years with four other of my friends. And after the two years, I got out, worked over at the ammunition plant over in Clark County, Indiana, for about six months, decided I didn't care for it, so I joined the Marine Corps in March of 1963.

[00:01:41.66] I hadn't even heard of Vietnam. I went-- I had to go to Parris Island for 16 weeks. I graduated Parris Island, went to Camp Lejeune for four weeks IITR, Individual Infantry Training. From there I went to headquarters base at Camp Lejeune as a cross country chaser.

[00:02:06.53] I spent about a year and a half there doing that, then I volunteered to go to Marine Barracks Pearl Harbor. I spent three years over at Pearl Harbor. And it was there when I first heard about Vietnam. I can remember 1965, seeing it on television when they landed, the Marine Corps landed. And we all said, it's going to be over in a month.

[00:02:31.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, have you been promoted during this time?

[00:02:34.80] CHARLES APPLE: Yes, I-- on Marine Barracks I made meritorious corporal, meritorious sergeant.

[00:02:41.93] JOE GALLOWAY: You made sergeant?

[00:02:42.89] CHARLES APPLE: Right.

[00:02:43.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Three stripe sergeant.

[00:02:44.57] CHARLES APPLE: Correct.

[00:02:45.08] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. When do you get orders to Vietnam?

[00:02:48.59] CHARLES APPLE: Well, I was getting close to re-enlistment. And at the time, if you re-enlisted while you were in country in Vietnam, it was tax-free. So I went up to a Sergeant Major Wilson at the Marine Barracks there. And I was talking to him one day at the club, and I told him, I said, I sure would like to go to Vietnam to re-enlist.

[00:03:13.19] He said, when are you going to re-enlist? I said, well, it's coming up real quick. He said, well, see me in my office tomorrow morning. So I went over to his office that morning, and he picked up the phone and called someone, and said, what's your service number, Sergeant Apple?

[00:03:31.52] And I gave him my service number. And he talked to the guy who said, where do you want to go to Vietnam? Who do you want to go to? And I said, well, give me 1st Marine Division if you could. They said, all right. He hung up the phone. He said, pack your bags.

[00:03:47.12] JOE GALLOWAY: Pack your bag.

[00:03:48.20] CHARLES APPLE: He said, would you like to have some leave? I said, yeah, I'll take some leave before I go. So I took 20 days leave. First leave back here that I'd had in three-and-a-half years. And I got here, and I hooked up-- ran into my old girlfriend. And we spent about ten days together and ended up getting married, went back to Hawaii, picked up all my gear. She stayed here.

[00:04:21.95] CHARLES APPLE: Flying Tigers Airlines. Left there about midnight one night, and we flew-- we hit every island between Hawaii and Okinawa. And it seems like every time we landed somewhere, something happened. It blew a tire or busted an oil line, and was there a little bit longer than what we should have been.

[00:04:41.69] And I finally made it to Okinawa, and I spent three days at Okinawa, getting ready, getting shots, storing our gear, jumped on a plane, and flew into Da Nang. They transported us over to Marine operations on the other side of the field. It seems to me it was a truck that hauled us over there.

[00:05:06.66] And I remember a lance corporal behind the desk. He said, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to send you to sniper school because he'd seen my scores in my book. And I said, if you send me to sniper school, I said, the first target is going to be you when I graduate.

[00:05:27.93] I didn't want no part of that. Because I'd heard stories about it. He said, well how about the 1/5? I said, yes, I'd go to 1/5. And so I went down to 1/5, picked them up down at Chu Lai. And when I got there the battalion was off on an operation.

[00:05:48.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Now this is what year?

[00:05:50.16] CHARLES APPLE: 1967, January.

[00:05:52.92] JOE GALLOWAY: January '67.

[00:05:54.51] CHARLES APPLE: Right.

[00:05:55.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, did you get re-enlisted?

[00:05:57.87] CHARLES APPLE: Well, this is after I got incorporated into 1/5.

[00:06:02.49] JOE GALLOWAY: What company?

[00:06:03.69] CHARLES APPLE: Bravo Company.

[00:06:04.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Bravo.

[00:06:05.64] CHARLES APPLE: And I was there for about a month, and I re-enlisted.

[00:06:09.96] JOE GALLOWAY: For five--

[00:06:11.19] CHARLES APPLE: Six years.

[00:06:13.98] JOE GALLOWAY: God, I hope they paid you a lot.

[00:06:15.12] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah. Well, back then, it was \$5,500 to re-enlist, tax-free.

[00:06:19.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Whoeee. You could buy a new Corvette.

[00:06:20.25] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah, back then it would. Yes, sir. Now, it won't make a down payment on it.

[00:06:24.80] JOE GALLOWAY: Not now.

[00:06:31.19] CHARLES APPLE: We were there. We went on several operations, which I can't recall--

[00:06:36.26] JOE GALLOWAY: This is in the Chu Lai area?

[00:06:37.55] CHARLES APPLE: Right. And then we went on Operation UNION, down into the Que Sons.

[00:06:47.09] JOE GALLOWAY: That was bad country.

[00:06:48.38] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah, I can remember. They staged us at Tam Ky. And I remember the first time I ever seen a 175, and it looked like a big telephone pole at the end of the CP tents down there. And when that thing sounded off, it shook everything in the area.

[00:07:06.98] And then the first time I seen a CH-53. They come flying in. And then, they loaded us up on 46s, dropped us back in the Que Sons. And I can--

[00:07:23.15] JOE GALLOWAY: You were what size operation? Was it battalion?

[00:07:26.30] CHARLES APPLE: Battalion. Battalion. Well, actually it was a regiment operation. The 1/5 was-- the battalion was part of the operation. And I think 1/5-- seems like 3/5 was involved in it.

[00:07:47.19] JOE GALLOWAY: So it was a big deal?

[00:07:48.20] CHARLES APPLE: A big deal. Right. And that--

[00:07:51.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you find the North Vietnamese?

[00:07:53.30] CHARLES APPLE: Delta--

[00:07:53.78] JOE GALLOWAY: --or did they find you?

[00:07:54.44] CHARLES APPLE: Delta Company found them big time. We went to their rescue. It was-- they got caught to a horseshoe ambush, had several casualties. And they had them on three sides. And they shut the back door with mortars. And when we got in there they pushed us into a hot L zone-- hot LZ zone, which a lot of people are familiar with, anyway. They're no fun.

[00:08:26.09] This-- some of the things-- I can see the faces, but I can't remember the names of a lot of people, a lot of the casualties. I can-- I know it was a hot afternoon when they dropped us in to help them out. And we was there for three days.

[00:08:44.28] JOE GALLOWAY: You were pulling their wounded out and getting them on choppers?

[00:08:49.38] CHARLES APPLE: Right. Getting-- just get them out of the ambush. And I can remember them calling in air and artillery, it was a big deal. I was wounded May 10th, was when I was wounded.

[00:09:03.81] JOE GALLOWAY: On this operation?

[00:09:04.74] CHARLES APPLE: On this operation, right. And--

[00:09:06.89] JOE GALLOWAY: You got shot?

[00:09:08.29] CHARLES APPLE: I got shrapnel from a booby trap. And they medevacked me to Chu Lai. I spent three weeks there, convalescing. I was flown back out to-- I forget the hill, I think it was 51. Hill 51, I believe it was. And we were rebuilding there. After that, we kicked off on UNION II.

[00:09:37.22] But after that, I went to a CAP unit in June at Tam Ky.

[00:09:42.80] JOE GALLOWAY: CAP being civil action--

[00:09:44.69] CHARLES APPLE: Right. Combined Action Program.

[00:09:47.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. That's where they put a platoon out in the village or--

[00:09:52.13] CHARLES APPLE: Right.

[00:09:53.15] JOE GALLOWAY: --a squad out in the village.

[00:09:55.13] CHARLES APPLE: There was three squads. There was CAP India One, Two, and Three. Three different locations. Each had a squad. We had a platoon of PFs, Popular Forces. We worked with them going out on three or four-day patrols at a time. And we were sitting right at the mouth of the Que Sons. We caught a lot of them-- a lot of the VC and NVA coming into the villages for R&R, trying to get some-- see their families.

[00:10:32.43] I slept with one eye open all the time. I really did. A lot of people really loved working with the Popular Forces and everything. After I got over there, I really didn't care for it. I didn't trust them for one thing.

[00:10:47.01] The Popular Forces-- we had a perimeter about the size of a-- half the size of a football field in my compound. And they had two sides of it on their bunkers. And when I checked my bunkers, and I had to go down and check those bunkers to make sure they were manned and up, and I'd catch them sleeping and catch them gone. I just didn't trust them at all.

[00:11:13.29] And we'd go on ambushes with them a lot of times. Some of them were good fighters. You could trust some of them. But I never did feel good about all of them.

[00:11:31.32] CHARLES APPLE: I loved them. I loved them. Still do. I feel more at ease, I feel more comfortable around Marines, former Marines and current Marines. I feel more comfortable around military.

[00:11:51.60] I have a problem. My wife will ask me sometimes-- she'll say, where are you at? She'll say, you're not here.

[00:12:05.14] JOE GALLOWAY: You're gone.

[00:12:08.14] CHARLES APPLE: And you know. You've been there. Once I retired-- it really didn't bother me till I retired and my mind wasn't-- wasn't as active as it was when I was working, either military or my civilian job I got after I got out, retired. It started working on me.

[00:12:35.34] She said, fine. She said, you got to do something because we're not going to make it. So that's when I went to the VA and got counseling. They've helped me a lot.

[00:12:47.12] JOE GALLOWAY: When you were in the Marine Corps, did you form friendships with men from different racial and social backgrounds that you might never have had in civilian life?

[00:12:57.83] CHARLES APPLE: Yes, I did. I still do. We still have a reunion. I spent four years as a drill instructor at Parris Island. And we meet every year. And there's a group of us that were in-- that were in 1st Battalion, B Company, drill instructors. We meet another-- maybe twice a year after that. We're-- it's a friendship and a camaraderie that we will always have.

[00:13:26.61] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:13:27.96] CHARLES APPLE: The Marine-- the Marine Corps is a camaraderie, a brotherhood that I know the Army, there's some units in the Army has the same thing.

[00:13:40.78] JOE GALLOWAY: Absolutely.

[00:13:41.65] CHARLES APPLE: And if it wasn't for the Army, the 196th Infantry Brigade, January 10, 1968, I wouldn't be here today. So I have a lot of respect for the Army.

[00:13:54.09] JOE GALLOWAY: What'd they do for you?

[00:13:55.35] CHARLES APPLE: They come to our rescue, the CAP unit I was at.

[00:13:59.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, my. Y'all got hit hard.

[00:14:02.10] CHARLES APPLE: Got hit hard. And the night before that, January the 9th, I sat on my bunker and I watched the Australians getting hit in Tam Ky, which was a couple of miles away. And I said, man, they're having a good time over there.

[00:14:19.29] And the next night, they hit us. And I found out it really wasn't a good time.

[00:14:25.97] JOE GALLOWAY: What they come at you with?

[00:14:27.83] CHARLES APPLE: They come out--

[00:14:28.70] JOE GALLOWAY: A battalion, or-- ?

[00:14:29.15] CHARLES APPLE: They come out with just about a company size. But they dropped mortars on us. They hit our wire real hard, come through our wire.

[00:14:37.16] JOE GALLOWAY: And you're three squads.

[00:14:40.46] CHARLES APPLE: Right. And we had a Captain Ken, I believe his name was, if I'm remembering right. He called down to the 196th, who was supporting us at the time. And they called in their artillery on us. They had pre-plots made. And they sent a slick of helicopters, gunships. And that's the first time I ever seen an automatic M79 used.

[00:15:09.99] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:15:10.46] CHARLES APPLE: And that was impressive.

[00:15:12.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. That'll stir them up.

[00:15:14.00] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah. So I have my hats off to the Army. Whenever I see someone wearing a hat with the 196th on it, I'll buy him a beer or a sandwich.

[00:15:25.21] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:15:31.33] CHARLES APPLE: What I seen in the CAP unit, we had a gunnery sergeant. And I was a sergeant at the time. His name was Westmoreland. I'd follow that man anywhere. He was terrific. He was outstanding. As far as anyone above him, I never had that much association with them.

[00:15:52.93] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't talk to the company commander ever?

[00:15:54.28]

[00:15:55.39] CHARLES APPLE: No. No. The corporals and the NCOs we had were outstanding in the CAP unit. They were a step above, I think. It's just like the drill instructor is supposed to be the cream of the crop in the Marine Corps, the NCOs in the CAP unit-- if they weren't when they got there, they were after they were there for a while.

[00:16:27.25] CHARLES APPLE: About 0800, January 10th, the fight was over. And I knew I'd survived it. That was probably the best day of my life.

[00:16:37.14] JOE GALLOWAY: Which fight?

[00:16:39.04] CHARLES APPLE: When we got hit hard, January 10, '68. That was Tet.

[00:16:44.17] JOE GALLOWAY: In the CAP unit.

[00:16:45.58] CHARLES APPLE: Right. I think we had four Marines killed. And just about all of us was wounded.

[00:16:53.75] JOE GALLOWAY: Whoa. Did you take a wound?

[00:16:56.17] CHARLES APPLE: No, I didn't take one, but--

[00:16:57.67] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't get one?

[00:16:58.15] CHARLES APPLE: Not that time. I rotated back to the States in February 14th.

[00:17:04.66] JOE GALLOWAY: So you don't know what happened?

[00:17:06.79] CHARLES APPLE: The CAP program changed at the time. We were stationary when I was there. They went to what they called a roving CAP, where they wouldn't stay in one place at any given time. They moved over the area of responsibility from time to time. They wouldn't stay in one village at the same night. They'd go to another village the next night. And it wasn't in a pattern. They just roamed around the area, the way I understand it.

[00:17:35.10] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:17:41.91] CHARLES APPLE: I remember going out one day. We was going out for a three-day patrol. And we lost a troop to a booby trap. And a couple got wounded. And the weather was weathered in. We had a hard time getting a medevac in for them, the ones that were wounded. We was afraid we was going to lose one.

[00:18:13.48] That same patrol had a kid that just-- he just joined the CAP unit. I can't remember his name again, but he-- I remember he had bright red hair. And we took one sniper round that afternoon. He was standing up and caught him in the stomach and split him.

[00:18:33.01] You know how bad a stomach-- yeah, you know how bad a stomach wound can be. He was alive when we put him on the chopper. But later on, we got word that he had died.

[00:18:41.50] JOE GALLOWAY: He died.

[00:18:42.10] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah. So those were always bad days when we lost someone. Best day, of course, was when I rotated home.

[00:18:51.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:18:57.57] CHARLES APPLE: The Australians, they had a compound in Tam Ky. And time to time, we would go in and be with them. And they would come out to our unit. We would sometimes run a patrol with them. Every once in a while.

[00:19:11.71] JOE GALLOWAY: They're pretty good troops.

[00:19:13.47] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah, they were. They partied hardy too.

[00:19:15.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:19:16.14] CHARLES APPLE: They got--

[00:19:16.68] JOE GALLOWAY: A lot of cold beer.

[00:19:17.55] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah. That's what we liked about going into their compound. They had a-- they had some cold beer.

[00:19:22.77] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah. Foster's Lager.

[00:19:24.12] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah.

[00:19:31.55] CHARLES APPLE: The civilians in the village that we were at, they more or less kept to themselves. They-- as long as-- as long as they had that little plot of ground that they could work and their family was all right, they were fine.

[00:19:48.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:19:51.75] CHARLES APPLE: They never bothered us all that much. We never-- I don't know how much they appreciated us being there. I know that there was a lot of VC sympathizers throughout the village that we would catch from time to time. Or sometimes, one of them would come up and point one of them out to us.

[00:20:14.87] But once again, I really didn't trust them. I should've never went to CAPs because my heart and soul wasn't in it.

[00:20:24.14] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:20:29.83] CHARLES APPLE: I got mail from time to time. And there was one time that I recall that-- a Christmas. We'd send a vehicle in. We had an old beat up Marine Corps pickup truck. And we'd send that in from time to time to pick up the mail or any other supplies that we needed at Chu Lai.

[00:20:52.36] And this one-- this one day, you come-- they come back and they've got five or six bags mail bags. And of course, everyone was happy, they got all that mail. But all it was was packages for me, my wife had sent me. She had sent me a Christmas tree, all the decorations.

[00:21:17.47] JOE GALLOWAY: Presents to put under the tree.

[00:21:18.52] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah, presents to put under the tree.

[00:21:20.98] JOE GALLOWAY: Nobody else got anything?

[00:21:22.30] CHARLES APPLE: No.

[00:21:22.66] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:21:24.82] CHARLES APPLE: A big chicken in a can.

[00:21:26.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, my.

[00:21:29.96] CHARLES APPLE: Carrot cake. I can remember, it was-- people were amazed what she sent. And they couldn't-- the Vietnamese couldn't believe I had a tree there, decorated. She sent me lights and a extension cord, but there was no electricity.

[00:21:44.33] JOE GALLOWAY: No electricity.

[00:21:45.46] CHARLES APPLE: No. But it was-- I had to share everything because--

[00:21:52.41] JOE GALLOWAY: You're a Corps.

[00:21:52.88] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah. All the troops enjoyed it.

[00:21:58.09] JOE GALLOWAY: How much news-- while you were in Vietnam, how much news did you get about what was going on in the war you were fighting and what was going on back home?

[00:22:07.99] CHARLES APPLE: Every once in a while, we'd get a newspaper from home. The wife--

[00:22:13.12] JOE GALLOWAY: You read the Stars and Stripes once in a while?

[00:22:14.38] CHARLES APPLE: Stars and Stripes I read. And that's about the limit of what we got.

[00:22:19.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you ever listen to the Armed Forces Radio?

[00:22:21.79] CHARLES APPLE: Very rarely. It was hard to get a reception out there.

[00:22:26.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:22:27.10] CHARLES APPLE: That's another thing I never really seen was the race problems. We didn't have it at Parris Island. And wherever I was stationed at, I'd never seen any of that.

[00:22:47.22] CHARLES APPLE: I heard all kinds of-- we heard all kinds of stories about people spitting on you, calling you baby killers, and throwing eggs at you and all. And I never seen none of that, never heard none of that. I know I flew right from Okinawa-- from Nam to Okinawa. Got-- they lost my sea bag. But see, I was going to drill instructor school. And so that was a good thing for me because I'd get a whole new issue.

[00:23:18.84] I'd been on the drill field about six months. And my sea bag caught up to me.
[LAUGHS]

[00:23:23.97] JOE GALLOWAY: You finally got it?

[00:23:25.05] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah.

[00:23:25.34] [LAUGHTER]

[00:23:26.30] JOE GALLOWAY: That's the first one I've heard of. [LAUGHS]

[00:23:29.60] CHARLES APPLE: I was out-- I come in-- I come in from-- we come in from practicing drill one day with the platoon. And they called up and said, get down to the company office. First sergeant wants to see you. So I went down and I said, well, you need to talk? And he said, get over to housing. They got a package for you. And I couldn't figure out what it was. I went over and it was my sea bag.

[00:23:49.28] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:23:51.46] CHARLES APPLE: But I flew from Okinawa back to the States, landed in LA, I didn't see none of those demonstrations. I think I changed planes in St. Louis. And they had been redoing the airport, construction. And they had plywood walls.

[00:24:11.46] I remember walking through there. I heard this clip clop, clip clop coming up behind me. I couldn't figure out what it was. Turned around, it was a stewardess. She had one shoe on, one shoe off.

[00:24:23.20] And there was a gentleman behind her, in a suit and a tie, and he had her shoe. And she stopped, she said, sir, can you please make this guy give my-- or this gentleman give my shoe back to me? And I looked at him and I said, you don't know him? She said, no, I don't know him.

[00:24:42.28] JOE GALLOWAY: What the hell is he doing with your shoe?

[00:24:43.12] CHARLES APPLE: And I turned around and I looked at her. And he was trying to get her to have a drink with him. She said, I'm going to miss my plane. So I looked at him and I said, sir, I said, I've been fighting for 13 months. I don't want to fight no more. Give her damn shoe back to her. And he looked at me and looked at her, and handed her shoe back to her, and walked away.

[00:25:02.08] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:25:03.25] CHARLES APPLE: And the connecting flight that I got on, that's when you fly military standby, you had the numbers. Well, they come out and they said, well, all the seats are full. And I started to leave. And the stewardess come running out and said, one more.

[00:25:20.81] She got me and took me on there. And when I got on, the stewardess, I got her shoe back for her, was on it. And she said, come here. She said, I'll take care of him. She took me up and set me in first class.

[00:25:31.63] JOE GALLOWAY: There you go.

[00:25:32.47] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah. And she told the stewardess up there, she said, you give him anything he wants. So I had a good--

[00:25:39.18] JOE GALLOWAY: Good flight.

[00:25:39.84] CHARLES APPLE: --good flight from St. Louis to here. [LAUGHS]

[00:25:42.07] JOE GALLOWAY: There you go.

[00:25:44.86] CHARLES APPLE: I left Vietnam. I had-- I had about 20 days leave. And I packed up the wife. And I brought her down to Parris Island. And we found a place to rent. And I went in and checked in, and went to DI school. Graduated DI school, and started my--

[00:26:03.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Drill instructor.

[00:26:04.51] CHARLES APPLE: Drill instructor duty.

[00:26:06.91] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you have any difficulty readjusting to life after combat?

[00:26:13.21] CHARLES APPLE: Well, once again, I was busy at Parris Island.

[00:26:15.82] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:26:16.84] CHARLES APPLE: And we were down there-- when I was there, we had what they called the.

[00:26:22.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, yeah.

[00:26:23.53] CHARLES APPLE: And we had privates everywhere. I mean, we had-- we were working-- I'd graduate a platoon, or the series would graduate 9:00 AM on Friday afternoon. And by 1 o'clock that afternoon, we picked up another platoon and started all over again. And this--

[00:26:42.13] JOE GALLOWAY: We're getting some of these 100,000 candidates?

[00:26:45.31] CHARLES APPLE: Right. Some of them--

[00:26:46.63] JOE GALLOWAY: There were IQ 50s in that bunch.

[00:26:48.87] CHARLES APPLE: As long as they had that right there.

[00:26:51.12] JOE GALLOWAY: That's all they cared about.

[00:26:52.20] CHARLES APPLE: That's all they cared about. They sent us-- I can recall getting one private down there. He had had polio. And he couldn't stand at the position of attention. Just getting them in. Just getting them in because they need to fill a quota. And that's when the Marine Corps was taking every fifth man in the draft line.

[00:27:10.71] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:27:11.43] CHARLES APPLE: And we'd get them down there. They couldn't read. They couldn't write. Had a private come up to me one time and tell me that he couldn't afford all this.

And I said, what-- I said, what are you talking about, private? He said, I can't afford all these clothes and this bed and pillow. And I can't afford that. [LAUGHS]

[00:27:31.14] JOE GALLOWAY: You get this free, son.

[00:27:32.28] CHARLES APPLE: Yeah, you get this free. And I had this one private. He really wanted to be a Marine. But his head was so deformed, a helmet wouldn't fit on his head.

[00:27:44.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, God.

[00:27:45.61] CHARLES APPLE: And you know where he was going. He was going to Vietnam.

[00:27:48.73] JOE GALLOWAY: You're going to need the steel.

[00:27:49.61] CHARLES APPLE: You're going to need a helmet.

[00:27:50.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:27:51.25] CHARLES APPLE: And the day we put him on the bus, shipped him back home, he was crying.

[00:27:55.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Now did you stay in the Marine Corps?

[00:27:57.43] CHARLES APPLE: Yes. Yes, 23 years.

[00:27:59.15] JOE GALLOWAY: For the full 23?

[00:28:00.67] CHARLES APPLE: 23. yes, sir.

[00:28:01.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Got out as what rank?

[00:28:03.37] CHARLES APPLE: Gunnery Sergeant.

[00:28:04.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Gunnery Sergeant. And then what did you do?

[00:28:09.58] CHARLES APPLE: I went to work for the post office. It was a good-- it was a good job as far as the salary and the pension I got out of it. But I wouldn't want to do it again. I spent 23 years in the Marine Corps. And I miss every minute.

[00:28:30.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:28:33.73] CHARLES APPLE: I spent almost 20 years before I retired at the post office. And there's not one minute I liked. That's the difference.

[00:28:50.14] CHARLES APPLE: It made me appreciate life. One minute, you're sitting there, talking to an individual. The next minute, he's gone. It's so-- you've seen how easy it was that the life was snuffed out.

[00:29:07.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:29:12.07] CHARLES APPLE: That's one thing. The other thing, it made me don't want the way things are. Now I hope y'all don't cut this out. But it made my faith stronger. And--

[00:29:28.33] JOE GALLOWAY: You--

[00:29:29.11] CHARLES APPLE: I know--

[00:29:29.95] JOE GALLOWAY: You went to be a drill instructor. And you're training guys that you're going to send to Vietnam. Do you feel that you were able to teach them enough to keep them alive?

[00:29:45.34] CHARLES APPLE: I tried to-- I tried to give them every bit of experience that I had. And I would tell them exactly where they were going. I said, don't believe that you're going anywhere else because where you are going, you're going to need every bit of this training that we're giving you. And I said, you better pay attention. I said the Marine Corps has got a motto: The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war.

[00:30:13.88] JOE GALLOWAY: There it is.

[00:30:14.87] CHARLES APPLE: And I said, this training is everything that's going to keep you alive.

[00:30:24.08] I had a private one time, a Black private. He thought I was prejudiced. And graduation day, I asked this-- I asked the platoon guide, I said, is there anybody in this platoon that hates me? I mean, really hates me? And they gave me his name.

[00:30:41.06] And I went down to him. And he was standing there, getting ready to graduate. And I can remember saying, if you hate me because I trained you or the way I trained you and as hard as I trained you, and that's the reason why you hate me, I said, the hell with you. I said, but if you hate me because you think I'm prejudiced against your race or your black family, I said, I apologize to you from my heart because that wasn't the reason why I was hard on you. I said, I had to bring this out on you. I had to get you to where you performed.

[00:31:28.21] And after graduation, he came up and apologized to me.

[00:31:35.74] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your time in combat affect the way you think about the troops coming back from the wars today?

[00:31:45.01] CHARLES APPLE: Well, once again, I love the military and I love the Marine Corps. And I'm the type of guy that when the Star-Spangled Banner plays or the flag goes up, a chill goes down my back. I can honestly say that I love every one of them.

[00:32:13.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today?

[00:32:22.28] CHARLES APPLE: I think it's just a moment in history. I think it all depends on how they write it up in the history books.

[00:32:33.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:32:39.55] CHARLES APPLE: I think it's hallowed ground. It's-- I believe that when you start at the end of it and you start walking down, you get the feeling that you're walking down into a hole or you are going down. And I just think-- I think it's hallowed ground. And that's what it ought to be treated.

[00:33:12.37] CHARLES APPLE: I think it's a good thing about bringing it out. The young kids today, they don't know. They're only being-- they only know what they're being taught about it.

[00:33:22.27] JOE GALLOWAY: Which ain't much.

[00:33:23.41] CHARLES APPLE: Well, no, they're not getting taught the right way. I don't know if you're liberal or you're conservative, but some of these professors in school, some of these teachers, and even in high school or elementary school, they're not teaching it the way it should be.