

Bock, William US Army

[00:00:15.80] WILLIAM BOCK: I was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 1944. My dad was a Dane who came to the United States, settled in Canada, came back to the United States, became a citizen and was serving in India.

[00:00:33.65] He came home on leave-- I was conceived then-- and went back to India. But I was born a Canadian, and I'm still half a Canadian. I became a citizen in 1965.

[00:00:52.68] JOE GALLOWAY: Your dad was obviously in the military during World War II.

[00:00:57.15] WILLIAM BOCK: That's correct. That's correct.

[00:00:58.47] JOE GALLOWAY: What did he do after the war?

[00:01:02.43] WILLIAM BOCK: He was a banker prior to the start of the war and was assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he was trained as a nigh horseman, the first horse on the right in a horse-drawn artillery battery.

[00:01:16.77] JOE GALLOWAY: Whoa.

[00:01:17.73] WILLIAM BOCK: And apparently, from what I hear, the first sergeant came down and told him that they'd had a message from the war department, and they were looking for people who had banking experience for the Army finance operations. And would he like to continue as a nigh horseman on an artillery battery, or would he like to become a banker working for the Army? He made the decision that he thought was best for him and was sent to India as part of the Army's banking operations for the theater.

[00:01:52.11] And then, after the war, he stayed in India. And my mother took me, who was a two-year-old, and went from Montreal to New York, took a ship from New York to Liverpool, from Liverpool, another ship through the Suez, a train from Bombay to Calcutta. And my father met me when I was about two and 1/2 years old.

[00:02:17.43] After a number of years with my family and two sisters, which included India, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Japan, we moved to Saddle River, New Jersey, and learned a little bit about America, things like football and basketball when I'd been playing soccer--

[00:02:38.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Soccer--

[00:02:38.76] WILLIAM BOCK: --and rugby--

[00:02:39.30] JOE GALLOWAY: --rugby--

[00:02:39.57] WILLIAM BOCK: --and even cricket.

[00:02:40.45] JOE GALLOWAY: --and cricket.

[00:02:41.94] WILLIAM BOCK: So Saddle River was the hometown. But like any military family, you live all over the world. And I guess Alexandria, Virginia, is hometown right now.

[00:02:52.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your dad stay in the Army?

[00:02:55.17] WILLIAM BOCK: No. He transferred to National City Bank of New York, which had branches all over the world and later became Citigroup. But he stayed with the bank and retired as an assistant vice president. And he started out filling inkwells in a bank in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

[00:03:17.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, how did you come to enter the Army?

[00:03:22.89] WILLIAM BOCK: At Gettysburg College, which I attended from '62 to '66, ROTC was a requirement for two years. And I liked it. And when it came time--

[00:03:35.79] JOE GALLOWAY: So you did four.

[00:03:36.84] WILLIAM BOCK: I did four. And I stayed on. And it was a good decision because I got a draft notice. And I explained that I was a Canadian and not subject to the draft. And they listened quietly and said, how long have you been here, Mr. Bock?

[00:03:58.53] I said, well, I'm starting my junior year. I've been here two and 1/2 years, or two years, here at Gettysburg. And they say, wonderful. You're going into the United States Army because aliens were subject to the draft.

[00:04:12.10] JOE GALLOWAY: After two years.

[00:04:13.74] WILLIAM BOCK: So I convinced them to let me continue with ROTC, became a citizen, and was commissioned in June of 1966.

[00:04:23.43] JOE GALLOWAY: What was your sense of what was going on in Vietnam? That's early days, but we're there, and we got a couple of hundred thousand troops on the ground. And you're going to be one of them sooner or later. You knew that.

[00:04:41.43] WILLIAM BOCK: Maybe in the back of my mind. But, Joe, that's a penetrating question because it's one of the things that the Gettysburg Vietnam Committee reflected on. Between '62 and '66, Gettysburg was a small, tucked-away, south central Pennsylvania community. We experienced the 100th anniversary of the battle-- obviously, thousands, hundreds of thousands of people there.

[00:05:09.42] But the college was a pretty conservative, quiet place. And things like civil rights, the war in Vietnam, really didn't touch the student body all that much. Although--

[00:05:26.25] JOE GALLOWAY: During that period.

[00:05:27.46] WILLIAM BOCK: During that period, during that period, although our ROTC instructor, Captain Millard Valerius, left Gettysburg in 1964 after two years. He was an infantry officer, a Silver Star recipient from the Korean War, and a Special Forces officer-- a true, true Soldier, and certainly motivated a lot of us.

[00:05:56.95] He rode us hard, put us away wet. But we knew what a professional Soldier was with Captain Valerius. And he went to Vietnam as an A-team leader and was killed seven months into his tour. And that sent a shockwave.

[00:06:16.90] JOE GALLOWAY: This '65?

[00:06:17.86] WILLIAM BOCK: '65. And that sent--

[00:06:19.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you know where? What camp?

[00:06:21.97] WILLIAM BOCK: He was in the delta. And I have that information. I can't recall it off the top of my head. But it was definitely in the delta. And that sent a shock not only through the military community-- the ROTC community-- but to the campus as well because here's someone that we knew.

[00:06:45.91] And Mrs. Valerius was unable to make the dedication. She said she was 88 years young, but her doctor said she couldn't go. But she asked that-- her brother asked, came, and asked if we would all sign a card to her captain. And that we did.

[00:07:12.14] WILLIAM BOCK: The ROTC program then had us in our junior year go to a six-week basic officer training camp. And that was at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

[00:07:23.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Then you signed up for the artillery?

[00:07:26.96] WILLIAM BOCK: We had interviews with branch officers. And even in '65, '66, combat arms were-- young combat arms officers were being needed. So I don't know if it's because of my glasses or whatever. But rather than the infantry or the armor, I became an artillery officer. And I was a distinguished military graduate as well.

[00:07:54.99] JOE GALLOWAY: So you could choose.

[00:07:58.82] WILLIAM BOCK: No, I think we were told.

[00:08:00.65] JOE GALLOWAY: You were told, huh? So did you then go and do advanced officer training at Fort Sill?

[00:08:08.75] WILLIAM BOCK: The basic course I did at Fort Sill. That's correct.

[00:08:13.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Did that prepare you for what you were going to face in Vietnam?

[00:08:18.65] WILLIAM BOCK: It gave all of us the basic understanding of what a young artillery officer forward observer was required to do. But to answer your question, what prepared me was my first assignment. And that was to the demilitarized zone of South Korea.

[00:08:37.58] And I was assigned as a forward observer to one of the three battalions north of the Imjin River. They were understrength units, with a lot of officers who had been pulled out from the 1st Cav and sent to Vietnam. And the 2nd Infantry was probably 60% manned.

[00:09:00.98] So I got to an infantry company, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry as an artillery forward observer with no artillery to call in.

[00:09:10.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, dear. I hope they gave you a good rifle.

[00:09:16.91] WILLIAM BOCK: The infantry brigade that was up there manned the guard post, did the daily patrols of the DMZ, and then stood down for a week. So I was there for about three weeks and realized I was a pretty worthless addition to this company and asked the company commander if I could start taking out patrols and so on.

[00:09:38.40] So he sent me on patrols, sent me on guard posts. And I eventually became, quote unquote, a "company officer," if you will. So what prepared me for Vietnam was that assignment there, living with, working with infantry units, and--

[00:09:56.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Doing an infantry officer's job.

[00:09:59.17] WILLIAM BOCK: There you go.

[00:10:02.99] JOE GALLOWAY: How long were you in Korea?

[00:10:05.39] WILLIAM BOCK: I was there for seven months and volunteered for an assignment in Vietnam.

[00:10:11.12] JOE GALLOWAY: You signed up for Vietnam. They moved you directly from Korea to Vietnam?

[00:10:16.67] WILLIAM BOCK: Yes. I had I think a week or two-week leave, and then went directly to Vietnam.

[00:10:28.20] WILLIAM BOCK: I went from San Francisco, the air base outside of San Francisco--

[00:10:32.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Travis?

[00:10:33.31] WILLIAM BOCK: --Travis Air Base to Tan Son Nhut, and then the replacement center at Tan Son Nhut.

[00:10:38.62] JOE GALLOWAY: And did you have a previous assignment? Or did you go into the repo depot and take what they gave you?

[00:10:47.35] WILLIAM BOCK: Repo depot, exactly. Exactly.

[00:10:50.32] JOE GALLOWAY: And they sent you where?

[00:10:52.24] WILLIAM BOCK: To Pleiku.

[00:10:54.16] JOE GALLOWAY: To what division?

[00:10:55.51] WILLIAM BOCK: I was with the corps artillery, 3rd Battalion, 6th Artillery, stationed in Pleiku.

[00:11:02.41] JOE GALLOWAY: OK, and you were supporting what troops?

[00:11:07.09] WILLIAM BOCK: We were supporting--

[00:11:08.43] JOE GALLOWAY: 4th Division?

[00:11:09.16] WILLIAM BOCK: --4th Division, the 173rd, and CIDG and Special Forces units in the area.

[00:11:21.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Mm-hm. And your rank was--

[00:11:23.56] WILLIAM BOCK: I was a--

[00:11:25.06] JOE GALLOWAY: First lieutenant.

[00:11:25.42] WILLIAM BOCK: --first lieutenant with one week in grade.

[00:11:31.90] JOE GALLOWAY: OK.

[00:11:32.68] CREW: When was that that you arrived there?

[00:11:35.17] WILLIAM BOCK: June '67.

[00:11:36.97] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your initial duties? They assigned you to the field as a forward observer?

[00:11:42.94] WILLIAM BOCK: Having come from a environment in Korea, and having asked to go, I immediately said, I'd like to go out in the field. And I think my first mission was with a Special Forces group. And I felt very comfortable-- obviously a different environment, but I knew-- yeah, I felt very comfortable. I knew what I was--

[00:12:09.76] JOE GALLOWAY: And you had--

[00:12:10.06] WILLIAM BOCK: --expected to do.

[00:12:10.36] JOE GALLOWAY: --some guns to shoot.

[00:12:11.89] WILLIAM BOCK: Absolutely. Yeah.

[00:12:15.64] JOE GALLOWAY: That really puts a whole new spin on the ball.

[00:12:20.23] WILLIAM BOCK: Yeah. The term "on the way, wait, or shot over" all of a sudden takes on a totally new significance.

[00:12:30.21] WILLIAM BOCK: It was working with the commander, whether it be a sergeant or a lieutenant, in what we were doing and where we were going and what artillery requirements we thought might be needed. And since--

[00:12:48.21] JOE GALLOWAY: And what we had available.

[00:12:49.77] WILLIAM BOCK: And what we had available. We were always within 105-- maybe not always 105, but always within 155 or eight-inch areas. And, of course, there was other--

[00:13:03.09] JOE GALLOWAY: That's a comfortable feeling.

[00:13:04.56] WILLIAM BOCK: It is. And although Special Forces units were never involved in assaults or taking ground, it was working with villages, setting up defensive perimeters, moving villages. So at night, if we were away from a base camp, it would be registering a couple of rounds so-- exactly-- so we knew where we were.

[00:13:31.47] And, Joe, I find it absolutely amazing that we dealt with the same things an artillery spotter would have used in World War II, World War I, or even Gettysburg. You had a map. You had a compass. And, yes, you did have a radio.

[00:13:49.26] But today, we've got GPS and everything else. It's a totally different world. And having to tell everybody to hunker down and put your hand over your head when that first smoke round comes--

[00:14:02.09]

[00:14:03.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, the lieutenants and the sergeant are arguing over where we are and decide let's bring in a round of Willie Peter. And you hope they're both wrong.

[00:14:12.63] WILLIAM BOCK: That's right. You just hope. You just hope. Exactly. And you hope everybody down the line has done their job.

[00:14:20.25] We learned that at the artillery basic course, that you're relying on those young gunners and the section chief that has laid that gun and has put those bubbles exactly in the

center of the theodolite, have put the trails in the dirt so that when the gun recoils, it doesn't take it off its position. You are relying on E-3s and E-4s and a young section chief-- E-5, E-6, maybe-- that when he gives the thumbs up, that gun is ready to go.

[00:15:01.71] And you rely on the fact that the folks in the fire direction center have taken into consideration the temperature, the humidity, the elevation between where the supporting element is and where you are, the age of the tube, wind speed, the age of the ammunition, all those imponderables.

[00:15:23.49] And you're sending something six miles, five miles, four miles away. And you just pray to God that everything was done correctly. And, obviously, a short round can be devastating. So it's teamwork. It's definitely teamwork.

[00:15:49.07] WILLIAM BOCK: In Pleiku, we had bunkers, showers, three hots, and--

[00:15:57.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Living large.

[00:15:58.67] WILLIAM BOCK: I did bring a picture I wanted to show you. But it was a bunker on the outside of one of our positions. It was in the monsoon season. It was mud everywhere. There wasn't a tree standing in sight.

[00:16:13.04] And I took a picture of that bunker. And today, it's still got mold on it. And I kept it with me all these years. So whenever I feel bad and complain about something, I just pull that thing out.

[00:16:26.01] JOE GALLOWAY: You could be in that bunker, outside the wire.

[00:16:36.41] WILLIAM BOCK: I had the good fortune to move around to a lot of different units because FOs were required when-- an operation. So I never really spent a lot of time with one particular unit. And when I was back at base camp, it was coming and going a good bit.

[00:16:58.79] The one young officer that I remember best was a member of the class of '66 at West Point. His name was Buck Thompson. And he was already almost a legend for the antics he pulled at the Academy.

[00:17:12.19] But he had prior enlisted service and went into the Military Academy with that experience behind him. And Buck was a natural leader. The term "the men respected him" really applied to Buck. And I remember--

[00:17:30.49] JOE GALLOWAY: He was what, a captain?

[00:17:32.47] WILLIAM BOCK: No, he was a first lieutenant. In fact, I used to lord it over him that I was commissioned two days before he was. But all officers commissioned the first week in June were assigned the same date of rank to make sure the West Point classes and the Gettysburg College classes were all together.

[00:17:53.11] JOE GALLOWAY: All the same.

[00:17:54.70] WILLIAM BOCK: But I joined Buck's unit in Dak To, I think, in early July '67, mid-July. And the first sergeant-- the big, black first sergeant-- I don't recall his name-- walked me around the perimeter and said, the old man would like artillery on this avenue and over here and so on. So I sketched it all out and sent my grid coordinates in and so on.

[00:18:22.13] And as we were walking around, I saw this hole-- about every time I tell the story, the hole gets deeper. But I would say it was about as high as these partitions, and maybe six, eight feet wide, six, eight feet across. And there was a black guy and a white guy in there.

[00:18:40.96] JOE GALLOWAY: Down this hole.

[00:18:41.89] WILLIAM BOCK: Down that hole. And they were pushing sandbags over the lip of the hole. So I looked at them and kept on going.

[00:18:51.34] At the end of my tour, I said, First Sergeant, what's the story on those guys in the hole? And he says, well, that was the old man's idea.

[00:18:59.96] And I said, about what? He says, well, Jones called Smith a nigger. And Smith called Jones a white honky. And the old man said, get in there and start filling sandbags. And I'll tell you when to stop.

[00:19:13.69] And his idea was that by the time they got out of that hole, they probably established a respect for each other and a friendship. And in the field, if he'd given them an Article 15, they would have gone back to base camp, had three hots and a cot, and probably watched a movie that night.

[00:19:30.58] JOE GALLOWAY: That's right.

[00:19:31.45] WILLIAM BOCK: So as long as-- so, anyway, I was interested meeting the old man. It turned out he was a guy two years older than I-- or three years older than I was, sandy hair, a very pale complexion, big smile, and a hell of a natural leader-- hell of a great guy.

[00:19:49.69] JOE GALLOWAY: And he was in charge of this camp, the A-team.

[00:19:52.69] WILLIAM BOCK: No, he was a platoon leader with the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment, Charlie Company, 2nd of the 503rd, right. And--

[00:20:05.62] JOE GALLOWAY: 173rd?

[00:20:06.97] WILLIAM BOCK: 173rd, and he was an acting company commander then.

[00:20:11.96] JOE GALLOWAY: So how did he do in the rest of his tour?

[00:20:17.00] WILLIAM BOCK: Buck was killed in Dak To on November 19, 1967. And I was shocked when I'd heard that because two days before, we'd spent the night-- that doesn't sound right-- we spent the night together in the same trench, but we were in the same position.

[00:20:37.29] And we talked about what kind of cars we were going to get when we got home. And Buck wanted an Oldsmobile 442, and I wanted an Austin-Healey 3000. And he told me British cars were crap. And I told him a 442 was just a big gas guzzler, blah-blah-blah.

[00:20:55.85] And I got my car, and Buck got a grave at the Military Academy. And I've taken my kids to see his grave at the Academy. And the class of '66 and the class of '67 lost 29 men over there. And I learned that those were the highest casualty rates of any classes through the entire history of the Academy. And that's not the class of '39, '35, or '41 or '42. It was those two classes.

[00:21:31.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you form friendships with men from different racial and social backgrounds in the Army that you might not have in civilian life?

[00:21:42.20] WILLIAM BOCK: Yes, I think that's true. All of a sudden, my environment-- the environment I grew up in, Saddle River, is a white community. I'd obviously lived overseas-- Philippines, Hong Kong, India, Japan-- was used to different people of different races.

[00:22:01.46] But certainly, at Gettysburg, we had one black student. And he happened to be the quarterback of the football team, Snuffy Parsons. But I led a pretty sheltered life when it came to being around people of Hispanic origin or African Americans.

[00:22:23.42] At jump school, I was a stick leader at Fort Benning. And the morning of our first jump, there was a young kid literally shaking in his boots.

[00:22:32.39] And I talked to him. I said, we've had three weeks of great training. We learned to exit from a six-foot platform, from a 34-foot tower, from a 250-foot tower. And we're going to exit this aircraft today, and we're going to all be OK.

[00:22:50.30] He said, it ain't that, sir. He said, I've just never been in a plane before. Well, that's a shock, right? That goes to show you that not everybody grows up the same way.

[00:23:00.94] JOE GALLOWAY: That's right.

[00:23:01.67] WILLIAM BOCK: So, yeah, it was an eye-opener, getting to meet people from different backgrounds. And certainly, I was there with an infantry unit when Martin Luther King got killed. And that was--

[00:23:18.95] JOE GALLOWAY: That's the next question, really. It's a time of social and racial turmoil back in America. And the draft was feeding people right off the streets to Vietnam in 12 or 14 weeks. Did you see any of that coming over where you were?

[00:23:42.32] WILLIAM BOCK: I think in retrospect I've become aware of it. But on the ground, for the most part--

[00:23:50.89] JOE GALLOWAY: Rear echelon.

[00:23:54.56] WILLIAM BOCK: The guys in the field, first of all, had a job to do. Since I supported mostly airborne units, they were proud to be paratroopers. They were getting an extra \$55 a month when the average pay was \$70 a month. So that's a major addition to your-- and then combat pay.

[00:24:18.40] Were there-- racial strain? Yeah. But I did not observe them raise or become significant enough to impact unit integrity and so on. And Buck's treatment of those two young Soldiers was a good example of how to deal with it without--

[00:24:41.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Kicking it to the higher level.

[00:24:43.58] WILLIAM BOCK: Exactly.

[00:24:44.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:24:44.66] WILLIAM BOCK: But when Martin Luther King was killed, the company officers-- and I was just, again, an outside company officer-- we discussed how to do it. And a black first sergeant was the man who was the one who broke the news, but he broke it in a company formation with all the officers present.

[00:25:05.81] And there was no-- a great deal of sadness and shock. But there was nothing that I saw about, quote unquote, "Get Whitey, or we're going to-- that." But the shock to all of us, especially coming two months after Bobby Kennedy was killed-- and I think the normal reaction was, what the F is going on back there?

[00:25:35.71] JOE GALLOWAY: What did you and the troops you were with do for off-duty or recreation time?

[00:25:43.81] WILLIAM BOCK: Everybody looked forward to R&R, obviously. But when we had a stand-down, we got fatigues delivered by a Huey or sometimes a Chinook. And we'd take off our old ones.

[00:25:57.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Nice clean new ones.

[00:25:57.85] WILLIAM BOCK: New ones. If we were fortunate enough to be near a river-- and in the Central Highlands, lots of streams and rivers-- we'd set up a defensive perimeter around the river, and everybody would go swimming. And guys would catch fish with frags.

[00:26:18.46] We never operated near cities and towns much because the highlands is pretty deserted. And Dak To and Dak Pek and Dak Seang and Plei Me and Plei Djereng, they were just tiny little hamlets.

[00:26:32.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, there was nothing there.

[00:26:33.58] WILLIAM BOCK: Nothing there. We did not have the bright lights or anything associated with that. But when we had a stand-down, it was a lot of sleeping, and then bring out a movie projector or something like that once in a while, visit by Donut Dollies and so on. I think Bob Hope came to Camp Enari. And by lottery guys were selected to go and got to go to see Bob Hope.

[00:27:02.62] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you go?

[00:27:02.89] WILLIAM BOCK: No, no.

[00:27:06.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, do you have specific memories of the popular culture at that time? And by this, I'm really talking songs, that if you hear a particular song on the radio today, it takes you right back there.

[00:27:20.26] WILLIAM BOCK: Oh, yes. I think a lot of it was-- a lot of my memories are attributed to Robin Williams in Good Morning, Vietnam.

[00:27:27.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Good Morning, Vietnam, yeah. We Gotta Get Out of This Place.

[00:27:32.56] WILLIAM BOCK: Yeah, the Rolling Stones and so on. Yeah, there are definitely memories of that time and memories of quote unquote, "home." Yeah.

[00:27:48.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe for us the quality of the leadership in the units that you served in and you served with?

[00:27:57.63] WILLIAM BOCK: From a junior officer's perspective-- and, again, with a year and a couple of months, up to two years in the Army, I don't recall having any qualms about any of the men appointed over me and their leadership. Some were more outgoing and better leaders than others, but I did not see or experience anything of--

[00:28:26.70] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't see anybody you wouldn't soldier for.

[00:28:29.82] WILLIAM BOCK: That's correct. That's correct. The outstanding ones were quickly identifiable, and you could relate to them.

[00:28:39.57] And some were more reserved. Some were burned out. Some of the captains were already burned out. But I learned in Korea that you could make mistakes, and it wouldn't hurt anybody.

[00:28:55.74] JOE GALLOWAY: In Vietnam, it was a little different.

[00:28:57.87] WILLIAM BOCK: Exactly. You didn't want to learn that--

[00:28:59.73] JOE GALLOWAY: You screw that up--

[00:28:59.82] WILLIAM BOCK: --on the ground.

[00:29:00.24] JOE GALLOWAY: --somebody's going to bleed.

[00:29:04.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Could you describe for us significant actions that you participated in or witnessed?

[00:29:13.64] WILLIAM BOCK: I was fortunate not to be directly involved in anything significant, such as the Battle of Dak To, 875. I was slightly wounded just before that engagement. But--

[00:29:32.84] JOE GALLOWAY: Boy, you're lucky not to have been there.

[00:29:35.42] WILLIAM BOCK: Very lucky, very lucky.

[00:29:37.33] JOE GALLOWAY: The guy who commanded the North Vietnamese on that position was General An, who fought us in the Ia Drang.

[00:29:46.58] WILLIAM BOCK: Is that right?

[00:29:47.58] JOE GALLOWAY: --Hal Moore's opposite number.

[00:29:50.33] WILLIAM BOCK: Is that right? Did not know that.

[00:29:52.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, he commanded the division. He said, I brought my regimental commanders up on top of Hill 875. And we were looking around. And I said, I'm going to want you to prepare very deep, very strong positions.

[00:30:11.45] And they said, whatever for, sir? And I said, for the Americans. And they said, Sir there are no Americans around here. And I said, you prepare the positions, and I'll provide the Americans.

[00:30:28.64] WILLIAM BOCK: Wow. Well, the bunkers in the hills around Dak To that--

[00:30:34.86] JOE GALLOWAY: They dug them deep.

[00:30:35.53] WILLIAM BOCK: --we did take, there was one complex-- and this was earlier in November that we found. And it was a room about the size of this, maybe smaller. And there were three bicycles in the corner and a huge light like that.

[00:30:54.04] And we realized that was an operating room. And those people pedaled the bicycles--

[00:30:59.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Embedded hospitals, yeah.

[00:31:01.03] WILLIAM BOCK: Exactly. And some of the uniforms we saw were new web gear, not the ragged, worn stuff.

[00:31:13.36] JOE GALLOWAY: How did you get wounded?

[00:31:16.67] WILLIAM BOCK: It was a stray mortar round, and-- well, not a stray. It was a mortar round. And--

[00:31:24.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Ours or theirs?

[00:31:26.18] WILLIAM BOCK: Theirs. And I got a small piece of shrapnel in my leg that-- it got me out, but two days-- a week later, it probably wouldn't have.

[00:31:38.35] But your mentioning that about 875 is indicative of the fact that that was a disciplined, experienced enemy and not the ragtag--

[00:31:55.33] JOE GALLOWAY: Nuh-uh. It wasn't no VC, man. That was the real deal.

[00:32:00.58] WILLIAM BOCK: And your book captures the fact that the men that you fought in the Ia Drang, again, you mentioned your great-grandfather being with Hood's Brigade. Hey, worthy foes. Joshua Chamberlain, who was on the top of Little Round Top, knew that the men coming up that hill--

[00:32:20.89] JOE GALLOWAY: Were worthy foes.

[00:32:22.30] WILLIAM BOCK: Yes, yes. And Chamberlain, two years later at Appomattox, when he told his troops there would be no cheering as Lee's men came forth with their arms. But they were to be standing at present arms and giving them the respect they were due.

[00:32:43.00] JOE GALLOWAY: The respect that they had coming.

[00:32:45.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe operations GREELEY and MACARTHUR and your role in them? Where and when was that, and what did you see? What did you do?

[00:33:00.22] WILLIAM BOCK: I arrived in June '67. The 173rd had taken a hell of a horrible loss in Dak To earlier in June. And basically it was a company that was unprepared.

[00:33:18.25] And it was some staggering statistics. They had more dead than wounded. And I wouldn't say they were caught napping because--

[00:33:30.58] JOE GALLOWAY: That's unusual to have more dead than wounded.

[00:33:33.53] WILLIAM BOCK: It is.

[00:33:33.94] JOE GALLOWAY: They must have been overrun.

[00:33:35.56] WILLIAM BOCK: And the 173rd had been operating down in Bien Hoa and were used to a different enemy. And as we talked a couple of minutes ago, the NVA in the Central Highlands were disciplined, regular troops. And I'm not speaking from definitive knowledge. But something happened that caused that ratio, and they were probably surprised and didn't have the time to react.

[00:34:10.67] But that sent a shockwave-- and, again, Joe, from the perspective of a first lieutenant with a year and three weeks' service, you're not talking strategy with General Peers or General Westmoreland. But, obviously, all of a sudden, we started getting beefed up with more troops from the 4th Division.

[00:34:38.42] The base camp at Dak To became much more active. And there was much more activity-- we were involved in much more search operations and so on and so forth.

[00:34:55.93] JOE GALLOWAY: Bigger operations.

[00:34:56.59] WILLIAM BOCK: Bigger operations. And it stayed that way for most of the summer. And then there was--

[00:35:03.88] JOE GALLOWAY: We're talking '67.

[00:35:05.65] WILLIAM BOCK: '67. And then there was, again, reports of infiltration and significant action in November. And that culminated in the Battle of Dak To and MACARTHUR.

[00:35:23.00] I look back on it now, and frankly, we didn't know where we were going and what we were doing most of the time. You're just told to be prepared to move out tomorrow morning or tomorrow afternoon or relieve this--

[00:35:35.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Here's a couple of map blocks. Just don't get outside those.

[00:35:39.41] WILLIAM BOCK: Yeah, yeah. Looking back on it, you realize how insignificant a part you really play. And you do what you're told and try to do it to the best of your ability. But no one ever asked me about where we should go and what we should do.

[00:36:05.69] WILLIAM BOCK: I went in to Pleiku-- no, Kontum-- one day. I think it was two or three Jeeps and a deuce-and-a-half. And we were supposed to pick up some replacements in Kontum. And a Catholic nun, a soeur-- S-O-E-U-R, sister-- florid face, big woman-- was walking down the dusty streets of Kontum.

[00:36:39.78] And in my French, I said, "Bonjour, madame. Comment ca va?" And she looked at me, and we talked. And she was running an orphanage in Kontum. And she said, do you have any food? And I said, no. She said, we always need food.

[00:37:02.41] So the next day, I asked the company commander. I told him what we did. And I said, could we bring some food to these folks? And he said, well, I have no objection. Talk to mess sergeant, and so on.

[00:37:18.17] So it was only seven or eight clicks away. It was not that far away. We were just up the road.

[00:37:23.98] So I went back and found the church. And we provided five or six mermite cans. And they emptied them out and so on.

[00:37:32.54] And then I went on an operation. I went out with another unit the next day. And when I came back, the first sergeant said, the old man wants to see you. And I went up to him and reported.

[00:37:48.91] And he said, there was some Catholic sister looking for General Bock. Now, how could she get that idea? Well, she was pretty aggressive. And she felt that if she got food on Tuesday, maybe she could come back and promote me and get some more food.

[00:38:06.24] So the experience interacting with that wonderful woman, and what she was doing to help these orphans, was really a good feeling. And the month or so that we were there, we did provide a lot of food because when the meal was spinach and rice and hot dogs, a lot of guys didn't eat all of it. So there was a lot of food--

[00:38:38.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Left over.

[00:38:38.67] WILLIAM BOCK: --left over. Yeah, yeah. So that was a good day.

[00:38:43.62] And then another day was the first time we got involved with Montagnards. And we moved to-- this was with a Special Forces group. And we moved the tribe of Montagnards from, mm, I think it was somewhere near Dak Siek-- Dak Pek, I guess.

[00:39:05.51] JOE GALLOWAY: Dak Pek.

[00:39:06.08] WILLIAM BOCK: It was Dak Pek. And there were about 45 total. And we moved the village, with their pigs and chickens and cows and so on, about six or eight clicks away from what was going to be a free fire zone. And we had medical personnel providing help and giving inoculations and shots and taking care of wounds and so on.

[00:39:38.07] And seeing these people-- the men, as you know, had crossbows. And the women, bare-breasted, just breechcloths. And they were friendly and open.

[00:39:51.12] And when that first helicopter came in, they were just absolutely-- and realize you're talking and interacting with people not far removed from the Stone Age. Maybe that's a little exaggeration, but--

[00:40:03.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Not much.

[00:40:04.56] WILLIAM BOCK: --crossbows, and totally at home in their environment. And they were well fed, living off the land. And

[00:40:19.08] JOE GALLOWAY: Slash and burn agriculture.

[00:40:20.40] WILLIAM BOCK: Slash and burn agriculture, exactly--

[00:40:22.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Keep moving.

[00:40:22.77] WILLIAM BOCK: --Manioc, cutting it, yeah. And that was an incredible experience. And we were not looked at-- they weren't afraid of us, because Special Forces had used many of their men as scouts and so on. But that was an amazing, amazing-- I guess we were with them about six or seven days. That was an amazing time.

[00:40:55.04] WILLIAM BOCK: I think it was the day that I found that found out that Buck had gotten killed. I was safe and untouched, basically. And my friend was dead. And it hit me so hard that when Rick Atkinson wrote his book, The Long Gray Line, about the class of '66 in West Point, I started reading it, and it took me two years to get through the book because I just couldn't-- it just brought back too many bad thoughts.

[00:41:38.03] But I don't have any particular war stories that I want to either relate or want to remember. But being scared, that was a big one, and feeling inadequate sometimes.

[00:41:59.09] In my first operation, I went out, and we were in some marshy ground. And I hadn't become acclimated to the temperatures. And I had those birth control glasses, the big black glasses. And I was crawling over a log, I had a helmet on, and had a radio. And I was hot and sweaty.

[00:42:22.06] And my glasses fell off. So a Soldier behind me bumped into me. And he said, what are you doing? I said, I'm looking for my glasses. And the next thing I heard was him saying, fucking lieutenant lost his glasses. That wasn't a very good day.

[00:42:49.88] WILLIAM BOCK: As I said earlier, Joe, we operated out in the woods. We were in the boonies. There were very few villages that we saw-- Kontum, well, Pleiku. But there were some Vietnamese in Kontum, which we spent a little time in.

[00:43:06.50] And I found the civilians industrious. I did not personally work with any South Vietnamese soldiers. But one of my friends at Gettysburg, Tom Hardy from the class of '66, he was commissioned infantry. And he was an adviser to an ARVN battalion. And he speaks highly of his ARVN soldiers that he advised and said that one of his biggest regrets was that so many US forces looked down on the South Vietnamese soldiers.

[00:43:45.98] And he said the soldiers he served with were good, committed soldiers. And the problem we didn't realize is that they weren't there for a year.

[00:43:56.18] JOE GALLOWAY: They were there for the duration.

[00:43:58.97] WILLIAM BOCK: And we did not deal with corruption or incompetence or politically appointed officers. And some of those South Vietnamese--

[00:44:08.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Those guys in the Vietnamese Army bought their commissions like they did in England in the old days.

[00:44:14.66] WILLIAM BOCK: Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. But, yeah, my impression-- and, again, Joe, I think, having grown up overseas and known Filipino people and Chinese people and Indian people, I could speak Tagalog as a kid. I could speak Hindustani as a kid because you live with our servants' families, and you picked up the language and played with them and so on.

[00:44:46.50] And I know one of the differences I had in Vietnam was not being shocked by the poverty, not being shocked by a different culture. But if you're from Dubuque, Iowa, and go to a-

[00:45:01.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Never seen that.

[00:45:02.93] WILLIAM BOCK: Exactly. And the term "gook"-- what a horrible term.

[00:45:11.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:45:11.42] WILLIAM BOCK: And they weren't. They were a proud people who had been fighting the Chinese--

[00:45:18.71] JOE GALLOWAY: --for 1,500 years.

[00:45:19.07] WILLIAM BOCK: --the Japanese, the French-- exactly, exactly. And I never got to meet any-- what should we say-- intelligentsia, if you will. But the people I did meet-- the few shopkeepers in Kontum and so on-- regular, normal people just like you and I.

[00:45:48.83] WILLIAM BOCK: Absolutely none.

[00:45:49.82] JOE GALLOWAY: No?

[00:45:50.63] WILLIAM BOCK: No.

[00:45:55.74] WILLIAM BOCK: Those welcome letters and-- writing "free" on the upper right-hand corner and send them back-- and how we-- again, the parallels with the war we fought in Vietnam and the previous wars, hey, slick comes in, bag gets thrown over. First sergeant yells, "Mail call!" And everybody crowds around, looking for-- no different from Civil War, World War I or World War II or Korea.

[00:46:25.74] And now we got kids who can Skype and so on and so forth. One funny thing-- I went on R&R to Australia, and I called home and reversed the charges. And my dad, as I told you, came over in 19-- well, he was an immigrant in 1929, bad time to come to the States, spoke a little English, was washing dishes within four hours of arrival, and went out to Moose Jaw,

Saskatchewan, and filled inkwells and swept the floor and lived in the second floor of a bank and stoked the fires at 7:00 AM to get the bank warm for opening and so on.

[00:47:05.13] So he knew the value of a dollar. And I talked with my mom and my two sisters and talked with him. And there was a slight, pregnant pause. And he said, "Bill, you know this is a long-distance call." And--

[00:47:18.81] JOE GALLOWAY: A very long distance.

[00:47:20.67] WILLIAM BOCK: You'd have to know my dad-- the meaning of that. But, yeah, the letters from home are so important. That's for sure. That's for sure.

[00:47:30.14] JOE GALLOWAY: Were you telling them very much about what you were doing, or were you keeping that quiet?

[00:47:37.64] WILLIAM BOCK: I consciously kept it quiet because I saw a letter that a kid was preparing to send home to his mom and dad. And it was full of bullshit. It was just--

[00:47:55.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, my.

[00:47:55.45] WILLIAM BOCK: --absolute crap. And I said--

[00:48:00.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Don't do that.

[00:48:01.67] WILLIAM BOCK: --don't do that. Don't do that. You're a good Soldier. You don't have to invent stuff. Don't do that.

[00:48:07.21] He said, how'd you get a hold of that letter? I said, because I found it on the ground. I looked at it. I realized someone hadn't sent it. I wanted to find out who it belonged to. And sure enough, it's your letter. And you shouldn't be doing this to your parents.

[00:48:22.02] So I guess that was my object. I told them a lot about Korea because, a) first assignment, and b) it was on the DMZ, and it was cold, and Panmunjom was there, and it was different. But I certainly didn't share much other than I'm OK and so on and so forth.

[00:48:44.14] JOE GALLOWAY: How much news did you receive from the States about the war you're fighting? What's going on back there, the social and racial tensions?

[00:48:57.70] WILLIAM BOCK: We got the Stars and Stripes, a-couple-of-day-old editions. And everybody liked to read the Stars and Stripes.

[00:49:06.93] JOE GALLOWAY: And Armed Forces Radio Network?

[00:49:09.37] WILLIAM BOCK: Right. And we all know it was filtered. But we were very much aware that we were fighting an unpopular war. And with the number of replacements that

came in, that's when you really got an earful of what was going back. And as I said, the two assassinations in early '67 were just punches to the gut.

[00:49:32.05] And my R&R coincided with Tet. And after our three days was up, we went to the-- George Groves. We went over to George Groves. We went to the airfield-- the airport in Sydney to get our flight back, and we were told it was too dangerous to--

[00:49:52.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Flights were canceled.

[00:49:54.55] WILLIAM BOCK: Flights were canceled. So we spent four extra days in Sydney.

[00:49:57.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, tough--

[00:49:58.78] WILLIAM BOCK: So--

[00:49:59.17] JOE GALLOWAY: --tough, tough.

[00:49:59.77] WILLIAM BOCK: --yeah, it-- WILLIAM BOCK: Back then, the Army was so in need of young officers that you spent one year as a second lieutenant, one year as a first lieutenant, and then became a captain. So I was promoted to captain first week in June '68, and a week later, went home--

[00:50:26.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Went home.

[00:50:27.31] WILLIAM BOCK: --went home.

[00:50:29.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, you had decided to stay in for a career?

[00:50:33.04] WILLIAM BOCK: I still had a commitment. I still had a commitment.

[00:50:37.96] JOE GALLOWAY: And you kept that?

[00:50:39.19] WILLIAM BOCK: I did. I did.

[00:50:40.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did the Army send you?

[00:50:43.87] WILLIAM BOCK: I went to Aberdeen Proving Grounds and then got a call, or an order, to report to the Office of-- what do they call it, OPM? No, that's Office of Personnel Management. Tempo, right here at National Airport, the brick buildings there.

[00:51:08.50] So I reported there, and they told me I was being considered as an aide to a major general and that I was to meet him at the-- motel's still there, the President Motel? It's right up the street.

[00:51:27.92] CREW: The Americana?

[00:51:28.80] WILLIAM BOCK: The Americana motel. So I showed up in shorts and a shirt and told the motel manager, is there a room I could change into my uniform? And he said, yeah, Captain. Yeah, you can use my office there.

[00:51:48.62] So I changed into green and went into the room I was told to report to. And there was an Army major general, and he interviewed me. And next thing I know, I became an aide to Major General Charles W. Eifler, the commanding general of the US Army Missile Command in Huntsville, Alabama.

[00:52:08.00] JOE GALLOWAY: I'll be damned.

[00:52:09.05] WILLIAM BOCK: And he was a hell of a guy and a real-- he was a technocrat and a hard man, a good man, and ran a tremendous command. And he was promoted to Lieutenant General and asked if I'd like to come to Europe with him to be his aide in Europe.

[00:52:37.03] And, Joe, that was the decision. Do I stay in the Army or get out? And the idea of going to Europe as an aide to the deputy commander-in-chief, US Army, Europe, I thought would be a pretty interesting assignment.

[00:52:51.13] JOE GALLOWAY: So you voted to go.

[00:52:53.89] WILLIAM BOCK: Yeah. His driver--

[00:52:55.43] JOE GALLOWAY: You voted to stay in the Army--

[00:52:57.28] WILLIAM BOCK: Stay in the Army--

[00:52:58.14] JOE GALLOWAY: --for a full boat.

[00:52:59.47] WILLIAM BOCK: Yeah. Yeah, that was a step toward it. But that was the key thing. I could have probably gotten out then and decided this was a tremendous opportunity to learn--

[00:53:14.11] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your return home from Vietnam go smooth, or did you run across any problems?

[00:53:21.07] WILLIAM BOCK: Very smooth. And I talked with a good friend, Bobby Geller, who was a fraternity brother. We were both artillery officers. He came home and went to law school.

[00:53:32.17] And Bob and I met in '71 or '72, and then did not see each other until probably 2005, 2006. We had lunch together, and we started talking about his re-entry. He went to law school.

[00:53:54.09] And he said, I never told a soul that I'd been a Soldier or that I'd been to Vietnam. And he said, it was not something he talked about and not something you volunteered. And I told him, I said, I'm shocked. I can't believe you just told me that.

[00:54:12.14] And he said, yep. He said, that's the way it was. And he said, how was it with you?

[00:54:17.20] And I said, Bob, I came home to a military environment, lived on a military post as an aide to a major general, and then off to Europe as an aide to a lieutenant general. And everybody looked like me.

[00:54:30.89] He said, what are you talking about? I said, we'd all--

[00:54:33.02] JOE GALLOWAY: All green.

[00:54:33.20] WILLIAM BOCK: --been to Vietnam. We all had greens on. And you could immediately look at someone and tell what rank they were, what branch they were, where they'd been, and who they served with, what kind of job they had, and how well they do it. And furthermore, you had your name there.

[00:54:52.79] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:54:53.60] WILLIAM BOCK: So there was no touchy-feely. Everybody knew. Everybody had a common experience.

[00:55:01.01] JOE GALLOWAY: And you were inside the perimeter.

[00:55:03.56] WILLIAM BOCK: Absolutely. Absolutely. And there were obviously discussions about Vietnam and the efficacy of the war and so on and so forth. But "inside the perimeter" is a great description of it. You were pretty much insulated.

[00:55:23.57] And I told you, Joe, when I met you and General Moore at the Newseum, that one of the things that, quote unquote, "brought me back home"-- because way in the back of my mind, I was always aware of the fact that being in the Army was something different, and I was never ashamed of it-- in fact, proud of it.

[00:55:44.36] But I didn't flaunt it. It was just I'm a member of the United States Army. And I came home from Japan and had to go through CINCPAC for a debriefing and decided that I was going to go out and see the Arizona Memorial.

[00:56:00.95] And I was in greens and went down to the dock. And a young, very attractive Navy coxswain pulled the launch in, did a magnificent job. She pulled it in and brought it right to the side. And there were a lot of tourists in T-shirts and shorts and so on.

[00:56:20.69] And they got on board the launch. And I hung in the back and was the last one on. And she was standing there, and I saluted the ensign on the stern and said, permission to come aboard?

[00:56:35.06] And she returned the salute and said, yes, sir. Please step aboard.

[00:56:39.98] So I stepped onto the launch. I looked down, and there was probably 30 or 40 faces all glued at me, glued on me-- tie and green coat and hat and ribbons and all that stuff. I didn't know. Should I smile? So I put a pleasant expression on my face and started walking down between the rows.

[00:57:05.23] Some old guy says, hey, Major. How you getting them shoes so shiny? And with that, everybody laughed. It was a good icebreaker.

[00:57:14.41] And I felt accepted. They were not-- he was interested in how those Corfam shoes could be so shiny. And I told you that story, to you and General Moore. But it was another step in accepting the fact that you were accepted and no longer that other group, if you will.

[00:57:38.70] JOE GALLOWAY: How much contact have you had with guys you served with in Vietnam over the years?

[00:57:45.42] WILLIAM BOCK: A good bit sporadically. One of my best friends, I met in Munich, went to Vietnam. We never served together in Vietnam. But a Soldier, retired Special Forces colonel-- we were very close over the years.

[00:58:03.60] None of the guys that I really served with have I stayed in touch with, with the exception of Buck, who got killed. And his memory-- I met his son. I've talked with his son. I attended the funeral of the mother of a Soldier in our unit.

[00:58:22.25] I was reading the Post, and it said that this woman had died, and at one time, had a husband and three sons serving in Vietnam at the same time. And this is before Saving Private Ryan came out. But I was well aware of the--

[00:58:44.10] JOE GALLOWAY: There were restrictions on that.

[00:58:46.53] WILLIAM BOCK: And I don't how it happened. But I saw his name there, contacted the funeral home, got the name of the man who was handling the funeral arrangements, and said, I knew your brother in Vietnam, and was invited to go there and spent some time at the funeral with them all and talked to his son and gave him my recollections of his dad.

[00:59:16.74] And his son was 43. And I marveled at the fact that he was 16 years older than his dad when I knew him. And it shows you the breadth of time.

[00:59:32.16] I've contacted a few other friends, a few other guys I knew. And we never really established a bond on the phone. It was, yeah, I remember you and so on and so forth. But there was no continued followup. And I think part of the fact is that I wasn't so much part of a unit the entire time, but moved around a good bit. Yeah.

[00:59:57.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your time in Vietnam change you and affect your life afterward, for good or ill?

[01:00:04.53] WILLIAM BOCK: I don't think it had a real dramatic effect on my life, partly because I stayed in the military, and it was just part of what you were doing. I think what I related to you early on in the conversation about the impact of what we-- the four of us-- actually, the five of us-- did at Gettysburg.

[01:00:29.09] And we did a little research and found that 14 young men from Gettysburg paid the ultimate price. And originally, three vets-- one who served in Vietnam, two who did not, and a wonderful woman, Sue Colestock, who lost not only her brother but her husband, formed a small committee and decided to talk with the college about presenting a memorial to these people.

[01:01:03.08] The college was a little reticent because there already was a generic memorial. But they pushed for the fact that these 14 needed to be recognized. And the initial reaction was no.

[01:01:18.71] Well, the vets of the community responded fairly strenuously. I wrote a long letter to the president. She wrote back personally. And the situation was turned around.

[01:01:32.76] And last November, we dedicated a memorial to our comrades. We had 327 people attending, many classmates and vets, but most importantly, spouses, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters that came as far away from Alaska and Montana. And we held a panel discussion Friday night.

[01:02:00.35] We had a indoor ceremony because it was sunny but 29 degrees and the wind blowing, an indoor ceremony, and then an outdoor dedication. Pennsylvania National Guard flew in a Blackhawk, which was a tremendous hit for the college-- students as well as those of us there. But the gist of the ceremony was a honoring of these men and their sacrifice.

[01:02:30.80] A member of the uniformed services, one of our classmates, stood up and announced the name of each man. A chime was struck. And then, dramatically, a picture of them from the yearbook and how they looked in uniform was flashed on the screen.

[01:02:49.25] And the shock was intense. And people, first of all, recognized people, recognized what they looked like 50 years ago and what they looked like 48, 47 years ago. And then we look at ourselves and see how we've aged.

[01:03:06.86] And these guys will forever be 24, 25. And there were audible gasps. And then I made some 30 to 60-second comments about each man, personal comments. And you can't tell a man's life in 30-- but you can tell a few things about them.

[01:03:25.53] And there were tears. There were hugs. It was an emotional, emotional time.

[01:03:33.53] And, Joe, this is a proof of what the granite slab looked like. It was quarried in South Africa, weighed 2,600 pounds, sent to Barre, Vermont, for polishing, to Georgia for engraving, and then back up to Gettysburg.

[01:03:58.67] And when the decision was being made about where to place it, the college president, Dr. Riggs, said, we're not going to put this monument out in some quiet portion of the campus. We're going to put it in the wall of the new College Union Building.

[01:04:18.34] JOE GALLOWAY: There you go.

[01:04:18.66] WILLIAM BOCK: So every student, from today for 100 years, is going to walk by that memorial and see what these young men did and what the price of freedom was 50 years ago. And I proposed to them that we provide an additional plaque because one of the things we discussed was, how can we make Vietnam relevant to people who the war is just something in the past?

[01:04:50.38] JOE GALLOWAY: It's ancient history.

[01:04:51.43] WILLIAM BOCK: It is. And I was mowing on our little farm one day, going around and around and around, and came up with something and proposed it to the college. And they agreed to put it on a brass-- actually bronze-- plaque nearby the memorial. And if you've been to Gettysburg or any Civil War battlefield, there's a Hotchkiss gun or a six-pounder or something. And then there's a plaque nearby that tells you what you're looking at.

[01:05:19.27] JOE GALLOWAY: Right.

[01:05:19.87] WILLIAM BOCK: So the plaque that stands next to the memorial says, Do not view these names engraved in cold black granite as indistinct figures from a very different time-- a decade of conflict which raged generations before you were even born. Look at them and see them as students very much like yourselves-- our classmates, who lived, loved, and studied here at Gettysburg College and then went off to serve their nation and died.

[01:05:51.04] And that afternoon, somebody left a single red rose on that plaque. And we all realized, message sent, message received-- being able to recognize 14 forgotten men, bring a college community together to realize their sacrifice, being able to deal with the emotions of their next of kin, and welcoming them back to Gettysburg after all these years. That probably, Joe, had more of an impact than the actual time I was there.

[01:06:36.59] I do remember one time, though, at the Army War College, I was assigned there as a captain-- senior captain by this time-- in '74. And I was with a bunch of battalion commanders and brigade commanders, the creme de la creme, as you know. And we were all in a van going somewhere.

[01:06:57.76] And at the Army War College, you could start any conversation with "battalion command," "OER," or "Vietnam." Those were the three buzzwords. You could just toss them out and get people talking.

[01:07:09.61] And that was the conversation. And I piped up and said, you know, gentlemen, I'm going to talk a little bit out of turn here. But you came out of Vietnam with awards and decorations and experience. And your commitment and your expertise there resulted in promotions and continued service to the country. And you should be proud of that.

[01:07:37.64] But let me tell you what happened to me last Saturday. My wife's 1968 Impala needed a starter. And I went to a junkyard and walked into the trailer and told them what I needed.

[01:07:50.98] And some guy with a ponytail and a greasy jacket got up and went out. And I said to the owner, can I go with him? Yeah, sure.

[01:07:59.62] So he jacked up a car, crawled underneath it. And his jacket hit the bumper and pulled it up. And his back was just one stripe of purple holes.

[01:08:11.55] And I said, was that a mortar round or a machine gun? He says, I don't know, he said. But they took a lot of metal out of me.

[01:08:21.61] Well, we ended up talking, and he had a lot of problems. And I got him hooked up with the VA and spent about six months dropping by his trailer and talking to him. And he had alcohol problems and, I guess, what's now PTSD.

[01:08:37.87] But I told them this story. And I said, we're the lucky ones because we came out pretty much unscathed. And you guys are going to be the future leaders of the Army. And Vietnam was an experience for you that you have learned to live with, like all of us.

[01:08:56.21] But for guys like this, it's totally changed their lives. And you multiply that by not only the 58,000 that lost their lives or the hundreds of thousands that got wounded, but the ones that are still carrying the scars and are maybe not fortunate enough to have had a good enough education when they went over or an isolated community, or didn't have much to come back to--no loving families or girlfriends or wives and so on.

[01:09:37.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial?

[01:09:41.74] WILLIAM BOCK: Very much so. And I had the opportunity to read the names twice at the 25th anniversary and then, I guess, two years ago.

[01:09:51.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[01:09:52.38] WILLIAM BOCK: Two years ago, I read it again. And one time, I was able to read Buck's name. I signed up in advance far enough.

[01:09:59.04] The other time, I just went down close to midnight and said, I'll volunteer if someone doesn't show up. 20 minutes later, they asked me to read the names.

[01:10:14.99] WILLIAM BOCK: I think it's, in some cases, long overdue. And in other cases, it's something that the public needs to be made aware of, and not to especially thank Vietnam veterans, although that's part of it, but just to realize when we send young American men and women to war, that we should be aware of the total costs.

[01:10:53.90] And I get very disturbed when I hear people talk about, oh, we ought to go over there and do this and that. Well, unfortunately, the "we" is not the person talking.

[01:11:04.10] JOE GALLOWAY: Usually not.