

Clark, John R USAF

[00:00:17.58] JOE GALLOWAY: When and where were you born?

[00:00:19.74] JOHN CLARK: Saint Joseph, Missouri, January 29, 1947.

[00:00:25.91] JOE GALLOWAY: Who were your family members?

[00:00:28.77] JOHN CLARK: My dad, Roland Clark, my mother, Mary Louise Clark, and then older brother and sister-- they were twins-- Diane Harper and my late brother, Daniel Clark.

JOHN CLARK: My parents bought a business in King City, which is about 27 miles northeast of Saint Joseph. So basically I grew up in King City.

[00:00:56.03] JOE GALLOWAY: How did you come to enter the military?

[00:01:00.62] JOHN CLARK: I started college in '65. And at that time, there was not much known or there wasn't much of a draft. But over the four years-- when I graduated, I was 1A.

[00:01:15.92] And there were three of us that hung out together at college. We all learned to fly. And we all got our private tickets over two years. And we were very much interested in flying as a career. But--

[00:01:31.78] JOE GALLOWAY: But you were not ROTC?

[00:01:34.46] JOHN CLARK: No.

[00:01:35.06] JOE GALLOWAY: No.

[00:01:35.32] JOHN CLARK: No. OTS in '69. You take all the tests. And we were all going for pilot. So you take the test, the aptitude test, physical, all of that. And it's a flight physical.

[00:01:50.90] And you do that. And then your application is sent in by the recruiter. And then the Air Force looks at your record, compares it. And then they either accept you or reject you. They send you a letter and you have five days to accept it or reject it.

[00:02:06.12] JOE GALLOWAY: So, obviously, you accepted.

[00:02:08.66] JOHN CLARK: Yes.

[00:02:09.29] JOE GALLOWAY: And off you went to Lack, lovely Lackland.

[00:02:12.26] JOHN CLARK: Yes.

[00:02:13.13] JOE GALLOWAY: And this was what year and what month?

[00:02:15.96] JOHN CLARK: It was October 3, 1969.

[00:02:19.34] JOE GALLOWAY: What was your sense of the war before you entered the military?

[00:02:24.95] JOHN CLARK: I think we knew about it. My dad was in the South Pacific in World War II. My parents were very patriotic. So it was kind of an assumption, if you were called, you would answer the call.

[00:02:50.35] JOHN CLARK: Well, I had a bad eye. It was correctable, but I couldn't go for pilot. So I went for navigator. And that was out at Mather Air Force Base in Sacramento. And it's nine-month training--

[00:03:04.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Nine months.

[00:03:05.50] JOHN CLARK: --about 240 flight hours.

[00:03:09.73] JOE GALLOWAY: And what are you flying in?

[00:03:11.92] JOHN CLARK: T-29. It's a two-engine prop plane. It has navigation stations, three miles a minute, not eight. [LAUGHTER]

[00:03:24.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Any further training before you deployed?

[00:03:27.86] JOHN CLARK: Yes, there's kind of postgraduate navigator training. And it's either a navigator bombardier or electronic warfare. And I chose electronic warfare. And so that was an additional six months of training.

[00:03:41.69] After navigator training I went through survival training. And that was up at Spokane, Washington. And that was a two-week training, then electronic warfare training, six months, then went to water survival training at Homestead, Florida at the time.

[00:03:58.43] And then went to the EB-66 training at Shaw Air Force Base, Sumter, South Carolina. And that was five weeks. And we didn't fly there at all. We just became familiar with the aircraft.

[00:04:12.80] JOE GALLOWAY: Describe that aircraft for those who don't know what it is.

[00:04:17.13] JOHN CLARK: It's the Air Force version of the Navy A3D. It's a high-wing, twin-engine jet. And it was originally developed as a nuclear bomber for Europe, a tactical nuclear bomber.

[00:04:32.21] Subsequently, the F-105 assumed that role. So they made the B-66, the RV-66, or surveillance reconnaissance aircraft. And so it would fly in Europe and along the border with the Communist countries.

[00:04:52.13] Subsequently then they needed electronic warfare aircraft. So once again, they redid the B-66 to EB-66. And we had two models. EB-66C had four Ravens. The Raven is an

electronic warfare office that were in what was a bomb bay. And you had an ELINT capability, electronic intelligence collection capability.

[00:05:17.90] JOE GALLOWAY: So you're reading their mail down below.

[00:05:20.33] JOHN CLARK: Exactly. Exactly. And then the E model was sort of, as far as the mission, it had about three times the jammers that a B-52 has. So we were strictly a jamming platform. It didn't collect ELINT. And so you had a pilot, nav, and then Raven. And that was the only crew members on it.

[00:05:44.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, and your mission in that aircraft is to just scan everything down below to keep them from launching missiles?

[00:05:55.26] JOHN CLARK: What we would do, we'd usually go into the area early, the target area. And so we would set up our patterns based on the ingress and egress of the fighters or the B-52s. So we did covering jamming. And we would jam the acquisition radars, the early warning radars, and then the target-tracking radars, specifically the SA-2, Fan Song, and then also any AAA radars. So we had a full suite of jammers. And we even had a voice jammer that we could use.

[00:06:27.82] JOE GALLOWAY: How did they work?

[00:06:31.14] JOHN CLARK: Good question. We got very little feedback. Subsequently, there's been a lot written on them. And they worked very well. And for a while, and I think it was '67, '68, the North Vietnamese particularly targeted the EB-66s.

[00:06:49.41] JOE GALLOWAY: By fighter planes or anti-aircraft--

[00:06:51.90] JOHN CLARK: Yes, MiG-21s.

[00:06:54.96] JOE GALLOWAY: MiG-21. You weren't flying fast enough to run away from them?

[00:06:57.89] JOHN CLARK: No, no, you're a sitting duck, slowest thing in the air.

[00:07:01.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you lose some?

[00:07:03.19] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes. In '67, '68, I think they lost a couple in that time frame. And then for a while there-- and they determined that an EB-66 could not operate inside the lethal radius of the SA-2. So we would fly up to that radius-- it was about 27 nautical miles-- but we wouldn't penetrate into it because we were so vulnerable.

[00:07:31.26] JOE GALLOWAY: Even though you're jamming their acquisitions, they were acquiring you.

[00:07:36.75] JOHN CLARK: They can track on jam, too. You can track the jamming and then reduce the gain. So you can figure out where it's at. JOHN CLARK: It was a contractual flight out of Fairchild. And it was on World Airways.

[00:07:58.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, good old World.

[00:07:59.91] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes. No Coca-Cola. It rots dependents' teeth. So it was. It was--

[00:08:09.55] JOE GALLOWAY: Ed Daly's best.

[00:08:11.47] JOHN CLARK: Yes. And so we stopped at Anchorage and refueled, and then at Yokota refueled. And then we went to Clark Airbase in the Philippines. And that's where they had jungle survival training, commonly called snake school. And you would have a couple of days of classroom teaching. And then they'd helicopter you out into the middle of the jungle. And then you did overnight in the jungle.

[00:08:41.72] JOE GALLOWAY: And with people chasing after you?

[00:08:44.78] JOHN CLARK: That was another part of it, yes, yes. And our training-- I have to be fair to say our training was much better at that stage, '71, than what the original POWs got. So we had resistance training also. But it was more realistic than name, birth date, your service number or that type of thing. So we were, I think, better prepared.

[00:09:14.30] JOE GALLOWAY: And this training lasted how long?

[00:09:16.88] JOHN CLARK: It was a week at Clark Air Base.

[00:09:20.30] JOE GALLOWAY: And now you're onward?

[00:09:23.06] JOHN CLARK: We flew military air into Da Nang, and then from Da Nang military air to Krung Thep, Bangkok. And then they gave us a couple of days there just to get situated in the environment and time zone and all of that. And then we did a C-130 up to Korat.

[00:09:45.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Korat, Thailand.

[00:09:46.55] JOHN CLARK: Right.

[00:09:47.51] JOE GALLOWAY: And that's where you're going to be based for your whole tour?

[00:09:50.75] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes, sir, yes.

[00:09:52.46] JOE GALLOWAY: What were your responsibilities at this point?

[00:09:58.55] JOHN CLARK: As a first lieutenant, we would be doing ELINT duty officer. ELINT is electronic intelligence. And on the C model, we could do ELINT collection. And we had a recorder on it. And we had a pulse analyzer on it, that type of thing. So we did that. So the ELINT duty officer was doing the ground-based part of that.

[00:10:25.14] We also at Korat, we had F-105Gs, the Wild Weasels. And some of them had 12-track recorders on them. And on the ground we had a grip 75. And so you could read-- you could read what the recorders captured. And then you could estimate whether-- and they would fire anti-radiation missile-45-- Shrike-- or the AGM-78, the Standard ARM.

[00:10:59.84] And the Shrike was designed to mark a site. And so then other planes could roll in and bomb it. So it didn't have much of a warhead on it.

[00:11:09.08] The AGM-78, the Standard-ARM, was a big missile. The problem was they were very unreliable. Some of them would just come off the rails and dive into the jungle.

[00:11:21.17] But there was one, Mike Vasiljevic, he was a Bear. A Bear is a-- Raven is an electric warfare officer in the back of the F-105G. And he and Lucky Ekman, Colonel Lucky Ekman got a Bar Lock in the Vinh area in '72. So it could work. It just often would just dive into-

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[00:11:46.24] JOE GALLOWAY: It often didn't, but sometimes it did.

[00:11:48.26] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes. So we'd do that as newbies. And then you get your first flight in the EB-66C. And there's four Ravens there, one, two up front, facing forward, and three, four in back.

[00:12:04.06] And you took the spectrum, the radio electronic spectrum. And you divided it up. And so the Raven 1 was looking at the low-frequency transmitters. Raven 2 got a little bit more higher frequency. Raven 3 was kind of your-- he had the APR-2526. That's your threat-- RHAW gear. And he had that.

[00:12:31.15] And then 3 and 4 divided up the spectrum into the threat. And if one of them was looking for the SAM signals, then the other one was probably looking for AAA or other signals. So you'd start out in one or two and you have an instructor right next to you. And you were on downward ejection seats, which is a little unusual.

[00:12:55.94] But you would do three flights in one seat. And then if you were recommended, then you would move to another seat. And then some Ravens stayed in 1 and 2. As an experienced Raven you were upgraded to a crew leader. And so you managed the whole Raven crew. And that was, you could fly 3 or 4 position.

[00:13:24.36] JOE GALLOWAY: How long was a mission? How long were you in the air?

[00:13:28.92] JOHN CLARK: Two point two was if we were unrefueled. So we could do-- we could do one drop, cover one drop, and come back and land. Usually we would do two or three drops.

[00:13:41.80] JOE GALLOWAY: When you say drops, you mean fighter missions or bomber missions?

[00:13:46.29] JOHN CLARK: Bomber, right. We'd go in and cover for them.

[00:13:48.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Cover for them.

[00:13:49.22] JOHN CLARK: Yeah. We were pretty much first in, not that we went in all the ways, but we were first in and then pretty much the last out.

[00:13:58.22] JOE GALLOWAY: So you could be up there with refueling--

[00:14:02.72] JOHN CLARK: After we lost Bat 21, we went to combat search and rescue. And we flew five days straight, six point six hours each day. And that's three refuelings. But we didn't quite know what was going on. So we were trying to update our knowledge of the battle scene, as it were.

[00:14:29.99] JOHN CLARK: We lived in hooches. And you had two guys to a hooch. And then restrooms and showers there. And then you had kind of a rec room where you just meet, because you're flying at all times, day or night. And so some of your best intel was from your fellow aviators that had come back from a mission and found out something new.

[00:15:00.78] JOHN CLARK: Very diverse. We had people from all over, different backgrounds. We had a lot of field-grade people. The pilots, because they only had one pilot in the EB-66, they would select experienced reconnaissance fliers or experienced pilots for it.

[00:15:22.86] And so in the club, we would do our meals in the club. And we had tables. Each unit had tables. So we'd congregate there. And then you'd talk to the other people, too. So a lot of information was exchanged, because you might come in at midnight and somebody is in there and they're going to fly the next day. So you could brief them up there.

[00:15:46.96] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Did you form friendships with men from different racial and social backgrounds?

[00:15:54.10] JOHN CLARK: Sure, sure, absolutely, yeah. There is no difference. We were all doing the same thing, pointed in the same direction.

[00:16:01.79] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, back home, there were racial tensions, social tensions, antiwar protests, race riots. Does any of that come over to where you are?

[00:16:11.98] JOHN CLARK: Oh, absolutely, yes.

[00:16:13.72] JOE GALLOWAY: You knew about it?

[00:16:14.95] JOHN CLARK: Yes. Yes. We would get Stars and Stripes. It's the DoD publication. And they censor nothing. So yes. And the Bangkok Post, they had an English edition. So yes. We got it.

[00:16:31.95] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, did it affect morale, or--

[00:16:34.50] JOHN CLARK: Absolutely. Sure. Sure. You wondered-- we were there, we thought we were serving our country, doing what the country wanted us to do.

[00:16:44.22] And then to read on some of the things, like Jane Fonda, and-- she went to Hanoi when we were in Southeast Asia. So yeah, she wasn't very popular. Didn't seem to understand quite the situation in the world as it is as opposed to as we would like it to be.

[00:17:03.20] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. If applicable, what did you guys do for recreation or off-duty time, if you had much of that?

[00:17:11.22] JOHN CLARK: We didn't have much. And people, you were on different schedules. But after we lost Bat 21, we needed some diversion. And we were flying long missions. So we did volleyball, very, very competitive volleyball.

[00:17:29.61] JOE GALLOWAY: Combat volleyball, some would describe it.

[00:17:31.25] JOHN CLARK: That's exactly, exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:17:39.30] JOE GALLOWAY: You've mentioned the loss of Bat 21 several times. Would you explain that?

[00:17:46.22] JOHN CLARK: Yes. Just to put it in perspective, we had bombed around the clock from January through March. And we thought the war was over, or the leadership did. And we thought we'd blunted the offensive.

[00:18:05.02] And we knew there was offensive coming. But we were looking for it coming down the trail, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, through Laos and then back through Khe Sanh into Vietnam or down to the Central Highlands. We were surprised. I had flown the night before on a C-model mission. And we were collecting. And I was an instructor then and taught.

[00:18:31.24] And then Bat 21 was Easter Sunday, 1972. And a lot of us never knew what day it was, because it was meaningless. It was, what are you doing today?

[00:18:43.57] And anyway, Bat 21 flew. And they were flying in to jam the radars in southern North Vietnam, just north of the DMZ. And that's what we'd been doing, because there was a big build-up in that area. But the rules of engagement--

[00:19:01.78] JOE GALLOWAY: This is 1972?

[00:19:03.55] JOHN CLARK: '72, yeah, March and then April. And the rules of engagement prevented us, the US Air Force and the Navy, at going after ground targets in North Vietnam unless they shot at you. And so General Lavelle got fired in that time frame because he condoned falsification of OPREP, saying yeah, they shot at us.

[00:19:32.70] And there were some packages where they knew the buildup was in the Bat Lakes area of North Vietnam, just north of the DMZ. And they'd been building up for some time. And so they'd sometimes--

[00:19:47.54] JOE GALLOWAY: This is for what they called the Easter Offensive?

[00:19:50.10] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes, exactly. And so they'd run two RF-4s across that area, high speed and collecting imagery. And then sometimes behind it-- and we actually participated in it, they had fragged us to support if anything happened. So we'd jam that area.

[00:20:11.11] So the Bat 21 is the call sign of the EB-66C model that was flying. And they were flying into the area from Laos. And they were jamming north of the DMZ. And none of us knew that the offensive had actually started on 30 March. And so they were already in northern South Vietnam.

[00:20:35.25] And the C model EB-66 had directional antennas. Well, directional antennas give you more power. And in jamming, you want power per megahertz. So that's an advantage. But you have to be pointed in the right direction.

[00:20:51.18] And none of us knew that they had driven across the DMZ and then set up. And so the SA-2 that shot them down was in the Quang Tri area. And it had pretty much a broadside shot at it. The jamming was going the other way.

[00:21:09.75] So by the time they got the missile guidance signal, it was-- the missile was well in the area and you had really short reaction time. There's also reports that the North Vietnamese reequipped their SA2s with optical sights. So you could, even if your radar was down, you could track planes optically and then give them very short notice.

[00:21:35.22] JOE GALLOWAY: So down Bat 21 went, shot down by a SAM-2. Lost the entire crew?

[00:21:44.79] JOHN CLARK: The pilot was still alive. And Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton was a navigator. And in the E model, he sat back into the right. And he said later he saw the SAM coming.

[00:21:56.37] And always if you have a visual-- the EB-66 was fairly maneuverable. It was a good flying platform. But it had lousy engines. So it was underpowered at that point in time.

[00:22:10.80] But they didn't react to it. There was some confusion amongst the Ravens in back. And so the pilot got different calls. And I don't think he got the visual on it.

[00:22:21.60] Usually when you were launched on, you would roll inverted. And the pilot had a pie dome above him, a glass, Plexiglas. And so once you had the SA-2 missile coming, then you'd do a split S away from it.

[00:22:38.04] And the SA-2 is a three-track system. You tracked the target. You tracked where the missile was. And then you estimated where the target would be.

[00:22:48.63] And so if you could induce errors by your jamming and your maneuvering-- and a lot of times we'd drop chaff also, as soon as we had a missile launch we would--. and we had self-protection chaff. We had 450 pounds of chaff on board. And so you'd want to induce as large an error into the system as possible. But once the EB-66 did a SAM break, you lost about 10,000 maybe 15,000 feet. So then you were vulnerable to AAA-- antiaircraft artillery-- and other threats.

[00:23:27.47] JOE GALLOWAY: So what got him?

[00:23:29.52] JOHN CLARK: It was the SA-2, direct hit. The pilot had his-- when you're on the ground, you have pins in your ejection seat. You don't want to eject on the ground. And so the comm-out signal is if you want the navigator and the EW on the E model to eject, you grab your pin. It has a "remove before flying" streamer on it. And you do that.

[00:24:00.92] And the pilot did that. And the navigator ejected. And it wasn't long after that the plane either came apart or was hit by a second SAM. They would sometimes launch multiple SAMs.

[00:24:16.59] And so the Ravens were probably killed instantly. It was a direct hit. Hambleton got out. And he was 52 years old at the time. And he was very knowledgeable on navigation and all that.

[00:24:36.22] And so when he got on the ground, then he went into the E&E, escape and evasion. And so we found out at that time that this was behind enemy lines, even though it was in northern South Vietnam. And so he did that very, very well. The pilot probably stayed with it too long and the plane either came apart or another SAM hit it.

[00:25:03.54] JOE GALLOWAY: And he didn't make it?

[00:25:04.44] JOHN CLARK: No, no, so five guys down. One of the Ravens, the brand-new lieutenant colonel had five kids, ages 5 to 16, and never saw him again.

[00:25:16.11] JOE GALLOWAY: Hmm. Did the one you're talking about who hit the ground and E&E'd, did he get away?

[00:25:23.85] JOHN CLARK: Yes, after a time. The rescue is phenomenal. And that's one of the things I wanted to hit on. Those guys were crazy, but great heroes. But he E&E'd.

[00:25:38.27] And I flew the next C model that morning. And they told us-- they took us into the back of the EB-66C. And they told us that Bat 21 one was down. And there was reports that they got six signals.

[00:25:58.95] When you eject, if you don't unsnap your beeper, then when it kicks you out of the ejection seat, the beeper will automatically go on. So if it's a fighter and you only have two people on it, that's one thing. If you got six people and six beepers, it can get very confusing.

[00:26:20.98] So as a personal choice, a lot of us if we flew on the C model, we flew so that if the beeper went off, you had it disconnected. So if it went off, you knew the guy survived the ejection and was on the ground.

[00:26:40.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe the quality of the leadership in your unit as high as you could see it?

[00:26:47.21] JOHN CLARK: [CHUCKLES] The first squadron commander was pretty laid back. And you had experienced electronic warfare officers, Ravens, experienced navigators, and experienced pilots. So it worked.

[00:27:04.58] But he came back flying. And there were tree limbs and leaves in the aircraft. He had busted minimums. So he wasn't a strong flier.

[00:27:16.58] The next squadron commander was very, very gung ho and very mission focused. And he was a frustrated fighter pilot. So sometimes coming back from a mission, the F-4s will join up and the Weasels will join up.

[00:27:31.86] So one time there were three Weasels, F-105Gs. And you'd say, you'd do your call sign, one is in, two is in, three is in. And then he would sometimes dive down to catch up with them and then he'd say, four is in. He was lined up on the formation. But yes, he was a strong leader.

[00:27:56.04] JOE GALLOWAY: So pretty good. How were your junior officers and your senior NCOs?

[00:28:04.56] JOHN CLARK: Junior officers, a lot of us were in the same boat. We learned as we went. And so the experience of the Raven was more not in how much you've flown, but in how good a flyer you were.

[00:28:20.39] And there's some people that were brilliant but didn't fly well. So it was kind of a mixed bag. But there were people that said on Bat 21, there were four Ravens. And they would say that crew should have never flown together because they had some weak fliers on it.

[00:28:36.70] JOE GALLOWAY: When you say a weak flier, what do you mean? Because they're passengers, right?

[00:28:42.88] JOHN CLARK: Well, you're intercepting all of the threat signals, all the signals that are out there, including Army signals and Navy ships. So you had to-- and we didn't get any training in Army signals or Navy ships. You just learned it from other people. And so some people were quick to recognize the signals, what they were related to, whether it was acquisition radar, whether it was a target tracking radar, or GCI radar, ground control intercept. And so depending on what type of radar it was, then you would look for signals related to that that were going to be a threat to you.

[00:29:31.18] JOE GALLOWAY: And that's what made you good at your job and a good flier?

[00:29:35.65] JOHN CLARK: Absolutely. Absolutely, yes. Yes.

[00:29:40.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe significant missions that you flew?

[00:29:45.28] JOHN CLARK: One of the most interesting was the Ho Chi Minh Trail ran from North Korea through four passes into Laos.

[00:29:54.07] JOE GALLOWAY: North Vietnam.

[00:29:55.42] JOHN CLARK: North-- yes, sorry, sorry, into Laos. And then it would come down. And then it would either come into through Khe Sanh, the Quang Tri area, into northern South Vietnam, or go on south to the Central Highlands area and all that.

[00:30:10.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Through the Ia Drang Valley or Cambodia.

[00:30:13.75] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes, yes. It was a regional war. It wasn't just Vietnam. And the North Vietnamese, during the wet period, the monsoon period of time, they would pull back the SAMs from the passes. It was too muddy. They couldn't get through very easily. So they would pull back. And so that's why we kept track ourselves of where we thought the SAMs were.

[00:30:40.18] And so during the dry period, then it was very active. And I was only at Korat for a couple of months and an F-105, a Wild Weasel got shot down. And they both ejected. And the pilot was alive on the ground. And they got picked up the next day.

[00:31:02.44] But the Bear, as they called him, the electronic warfare officer in the back, was in his chute. And he was determined to be dead. So they left him. You don't risk additional people trying to collect bodies. And so there were times when it was heavily manned, Mu Gia Pass. And that was the main pass.

[00:31:28.12] One of the most interesting flights I had was we had set up-- and I was in an E model-- and we set up just outside the lethal range of the SA-2. We knew about where it was at. And we set up upwind from the site.

[00:31:46.09] And we carried 450 pounds of chaff. And so we dropped chaff on a figure eight pattern. So we were always turning away from the SAM because the wind was blowing us towards it. And we did that.

[00:31:59.18] And then when it was determined that the chaff was over the Mu Gia site-- and we were jamming also. So we'd get-- chaff reflects the radar signals. And if you're jamming chaff, it'll reflect that also.

[00:32:20.48] And so we were looking for something to happen. And the F-105s went in. F-4s went in. They didn't react at all. So I think we caught them by surprise. And so I think that combination was very good against SAMs.

[00:32:34.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, you did your whole tour at Korat.

[00:32:38.05] JOHN CLARK: Right.

[00:32:38.74] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. When did you switch to B-52s?

[00:32:44.18] JOHN CLARK: I did the tour. And we were extended because of the bombing. And I was trying to get into RC-135s. RC-135s is a heavily modified Boeing 707, 720 as an intel collection platform. And for an electronic warfare officer, that's the epitome of flying. And it was one of the best Cold War missions.

[00:33:11.03] Well, SAC had those. They belonged to the Strategic Air Command. SAC also had B-52s. So as a first lieutenant, I got sucked back into B-52s, which is why I took the assignment to Korat. I wanted to get out of going to B-52s. So it wasn't a very humorous time.

[00:33:33.26] JOE GALLOWAY: You weren't too happy about that.

[00:33:34.13] JOHN CLARK: No, no, but nobody cared.

[00:33:36.74] JOE GALLOWAY: They weren't inquiring as to your wishes.

[00:33:39.65] JOHN CLARK: No, no.

[00:33:40.70] JOE GALLOWAY: They stuck you in them.

[00:33:42.19] JOHN CLARK: Yeah. So you had to transition to B-52s. And the training at the time was at Castle Air Force Base in the valley in California. And that was three months.

[00:33:57.37] And then I went to Ellsworth, Rapid City, South Dakota, B-52Gs. And we checked out in the B-52F and got to fly B-52Gs. So then we got checked out locally in them. And then I was put on a crew and then headed for Guam.

[00:34:20.09] Pretty much most of the flyers were on Guam. There was just a skeleton staff left back at Ellsworth. So the different bases would-- their fliers would go together and serve for the - four-and-a-half to six months at a time. So then I went to Anderson Air Force Base.

[00:34:42.61] JOE GALLOWAY: In Guam?

[00:34:43.63] JOHN CLARK: Yeah.

[00:34:44.68] JOE GALLOWAY: And how was that duty? How was it different from what you were doing with 66s?

[00:34:55.69] JOHN CLARK: One part I left out is before I left Ellsworth, I had a meeting with a squadron commander. And he said, John, he says, you're only going to be over there till we get our POWs back. So you'll only be over there for a couple of weeks.

[00:35:10.88] And that's what I thought. And that's what a lot of people thought. And the POWs came out. And they brought them through Guam. Clark Air Base has a big hospital. So they do Clark and then Guam and then to Hawaii.

[00:35:26.32] And all the POWs were out and we were still there. And we were flying combat missions. So the B-52Gs could carry 27 internal bombs and could fly from Guam to Southeast Asia and back unrefueled. And so they'd fly in a three-ship formation, DASC formation they called it.

[00:35:47.83] So it was a 13.2 hour mission. It was about a 20, 21 hour duty day. And so that kept going. And we thought the war was kind of over, but it kept going. So it lasted until, I think, September of '72.

[00:36:06.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Now, you said there's a 21-hour work day.

[00:36:12.59] JOHN CLARK: Yes.

[00:36:13.79] JOE GALLOWAY: Break that down for us. What's it look like?

[00:36:16.61] JOHN CLARK: You would show up about two and a half hours early. So you would do your mission planning and your mission briefing. You would get your intel briefing. And you would do your coordination, three planes, how you were doing that and all, and then how you would fly.

[00:36:32.09] And then you took off on the minute. SAC was very, very precise. And you would take off, you would form up, and you would go through your equipment, all of your electronic jammers, you would check them out. And if you had some--

[00:36:52.19] JOE GALLOWAY: And now your job on this B-52 is the electronic warfare officer.

[00:36:57.29] JOHN CLARK: Right. And we shot celestial navigation too, periscopic sextant shots for practice. But B-52 is pretty good. You have two navigators, the radar navigator, who's also the bombardier, and then the navigator. And so we would check out our equipment. And then it was dead time.

[00:37:21.45] And later on, they put up some training equipment in the Philippines, so we could actually do some training going to and coming from. But at that point in time, we were flying combat missions. So we would fly in country. And you had a clockface route, counterclockwise around.

[00:37:44.76] And then you had primary targets, secondary targets, and tertiary targets. And some targets, if you didn't have good information, either radar, then you'd go to secondary. If you had weather problems-- we also, we would drop off F-4Ds that had the navigator, the automatic navigation system that was very, very accurate.

[00:38:22.29] And you would do formation off the F-4 and then do it. And that was so you could drop during cloud cover. You could drop in all weather. B-52 is-- you could drop in all weather, but if you wanted precise targeting, you needed better weather.

[00:38:48.14] JOHN CLARK: One of my last missions, and we'd been doing this awhile, but it was an E-model mission. And we orbited virtually over Haiphong Harbor. And this is in a sitting duck airplane. And we had the jammer and-- the jammers and all of that.

[00:39:04.94] But at that point in time, the North Vietnamese defenses were really beaten down. And we had a fairly good sense of security, despite the fact that we were virtually in one of the highest threat areas, or what was one of the highest threat areas.

[00:39:22.34] And we also had a comm jammer. And we could use it only if we got the code word to use it. And the Hanoi/Haiphong defenses were generation one command and control. You had manual detect, manual track. And so any time you have something like that, then it's harder if you come in from different directions, that type of thing.

[00:39:51.76] So they had a problem with tracking their own aircraft. And so in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, my observation was it was either a SAM day or MiG day. But it wasn't both, because they'd shoot down their own aircraft. They couldn't tell the difference.

[00:40:08.24] And that, I think, turned out to be a MiG day. And a Navy F-4 got shot up. And it was exiting the area below us. And it went out to sea in the Gulf of Tonkin towards its carrier. And any time you have a plane shot up, then your wingman or another plane will fly on the wing for it.

[00:40:29.68] And then the flying conditions in the F-4 deteriorated. So they both punched out. And the wingman comes up and gave the coordinates to Big Mama. Big Mama was the Navy Jolly Green Giant. It's a CH-53.

[00:40:48.61] And Big Mama copied it and got the coordinates. And they said, no sweat. We've got them. And they did. The Navy owned the gulf. The MiGs rarely flew in that area because the Navy was-- they had good surface-to-air missiles on their aircraft-- or on their ships.

[00:41:13.21] And they also had Red Crown. Red Crown was kind of the GCI in the gulf. And they would broadcast warnings also. And they called it tee-ball. But they decided that to get the

information to crews quickly, they would come-- they came up with-- and it was a multi-input to Red Crown and others.

[00:41:41.98] But they'd broadcast, Bandit, or Bullseye, Bullseye 0120 at 45. And Bullseye was Hanoi. And it would give you the direction the MiGs were flying. And if they said, Red Bandits, that meant it was a MiG-17. If they said a White Bandit, that was the 19. If it was Blue Bandit, that was a MiG-21. And so you could use that and then egress from the area.

[00:42:17.65] One time we were up in the Fish's Mouth area, which is southwest of Hanoi. And we got one. And it was coming our direction.

[00:42:29.50] And they did not use their radars. The North Vietnamese rarely used airborne radars. And so we had to depend on other means. And their missiles were infrared missiles.

[00:42:41.05] And we had a radar jammer on the EB-66. And we could jam the air-to-air radars, but if they aren't using them, they're strictly using ground control intercept.

[00:42:52.42] And that's when we had the comm jammer. If we got the signal, we would jam. And we would put out about 500 watts straight noise. Or if you modulated it, it would put out 1,500 watts. And so it would jam those frequencies they were on.

[00:43:08.71] The problem is you get harmonics from that. And then you can't hear the signal to turn it off. You did it very carefully.

[00:43:23.61] JOHN CLARK: 2 April, when we lost Bat 21. And of course we knew them all. And we had hope for a long time that more were going to show up. And Hambleton was on the ground about 12 days.

[00:43:41.43] And they lost a Jolly Green Giant with the crew trying to rescue him. And the whole crew was killed. They had an open mic on the Jolly Green Giant. And they didn't hear the call to turn left. And they turned right, right into the ground fire.

[00:43:57.90] And about 15 to 17 guys were killed trying to get Hambleton out. And they realized they couldn't go in via the air. And so they floated a SEAL team. SEAL team in this case was just two people, Lieutenant Tom Norris and his South Vietnamese counterpart. And they floated down the river.

[00:44:21.00] And they moved Hambleton, who was a golfer, from his position to the river. And they moved him around the buildup of the North Vietnamese. And so he wouldn't stray into areas where-- which were strong areas of defense. So they routed him around to the river. He got to the river.

[00:44:44.34] And then Mark Clark, a lieutenant, he'd been shot down. I think he was a back seater in of an OV-10. He was a FAC. And so you had two of them on the ground.

[00:44:55.02] And Mark Clark was in better shape. He hadn't been on the ground that long. So they floated down the river and they got Mark Clark, got him back. And then they went back for Hambleton. And Hambleton had been there on the ground about 12, going on 13 days. And he was very weak and he was starting to hallucinate.

[00:45:17.79] And he had made it to the bank of the river, but he couldn't help out much. But they got him, picked him up, and then went back and rescued him. So a, tremendous tremendous-
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[00:45:29.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Tremendous rescue.

[00:45:30.72] JOHN CLARK: Yeah, and tremendous bravery and courage on their part. And later Tom Norris, the Navy SEAL lieutenant, he got the Medal of Honor for it. Very, very richly deserved. But it took great cojones to do that. Tremendous.

[00:45:51.91] JOHN CLARK: It was mainly letters. They had MARS, which is shortwave radio. And you could get back to a station in the US. And then you were prepared to pay for-- like if it was--

[00:46:08.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Pay for a collect call home.

[00:46:09.33] JOHN CLARK: Right, right. And Senator Barry Goldwater was a MARS operator, shortwave operator. So some guys got relayed back to their family via him.

[00:46:19.98] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, yeah.

[00:46:20.88] JOHN CLARK: So I don't think anybody called. It was just--

[00:46:24.99] JOE GALLOWAY: It was too much of a pain in the butt, trying to teach your mama how to say, over.

[00:46:32.03] JOHN CLARK: Over, yes, yes. JOHN CLARK: We were extended over there past our one year. And then you finally got an end of tour. And I was 24 years old and single and--

[00:46:54.87] JOE GALLOWAY: You're now a captain?

[00:46:56.28] JOHN CLARK: No, no.

[00:46:57.18] JOE GALLOWAY: Still a lieutenant?

[00:46:58.50] JOHN CLARK: Right, yeah. And you could do circuitous travel back. And circuitous travel, you could go to Bangkok. And then if they awarded you circuitous travel, then you'd hop on-- they were embassy flights. C-41 would come, go around the world, to the West, through the Pacific, and back. And then the other one would do it from the East.

[00:47:25.35] And they took embassy pouches to different locations. But you had to be prepared to-- it couldn't cost more than if you took a regular routing back. So you had to be prepared for that. But at that point, you have nothing to lose. So I did it, so went to--

[00:47:47.49] JOE GALLOWAY: You caught one going which way?

[00:47:49.44] JOHN CLARK: West.

[00:47:49.98] JOE GALLOWAY: West. So you're going to Europe.

[00:47:52.59] JOHN CLARK: Right, correct. So we went to India and overnighted there. And then we did Dhahran-- we did Pakistan. And then we did Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and then into Torrejon, which is outside Madrid. And so then you went on leave at that point in time.

[00:48:15.22] So my brother had won a Young Columbus contest, a paper boy. We both had paper routes. And he won it. And he had been to Spain and Portugal.

[00:48:24.78] And so, I went out to the Valle de los Caidos, Valley of the Fallen, and toured the Prado and all that based on his experience. And then caught an overnight train to Paris. And then you're so excited to be in Paris that you stay up and tour around. And then I caught the train to Calais and then the ferry across to Dover and then took the train to London.

[00:48:58.02] And so, did London and then Frankfurt. And I wanted to go to the Munich Olympics, but they'd had the shooting there and that was off the table. And I had caught the London flu in London. So I was recuperating. And then I flew back to Philadelphia, a commercial flight from Frankfurt, probably World Airways again. And then took the van over to Philadelphia, and I think \$37 flew into Kansas City and saw my family.

[00:49:34.33] JOE GALLOWAY: Finally made it home.

[00:49:35.71] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes, yes.

[00:49:36.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Sounds like a route that kept you away from the antiwar people.

[00:49:41.98] JOHN CLARK: We traveled in smaller groups. And I was never exposed to any, how can I say, harsh antiwar. And in California in training, '70 and '71, we would go in uniform to Sacramento and all that.

[00:50:02.23] But we had short hair. And at the time everybody else had long hair and beards and mustaches. So everybody knew who you were. But we travelled in smaller circles, I guess you'd say. And if we were traveling commercial, you'd fly in just civilian clothes.

[00:50:20.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, you were determined to stay in the Air Force for a career?

[00:50:24.90] JOHN CLARK: No, no. No, I wanted to fly. Coming out of school, I really wanted to fly. I had my private ticket. I was working on my commercial license. But I knew I'd never be an airline pilot because of the one eye. Although it was correctable, they want you at 20/20 or 20/30 in both eyes.

[00:50:42.36] And so I was going to do my time and then press onto something else. But when I really wanted to get out I couldn't get out. And then you move on to something that's very interesting. So then you stay in. So it just happened over time.

[00:50:59.58] JOE GALLOWAY: What did you move into that was more interesting?

[00:51:02.94] JOHN CLARK: RC-135s.

[00:51:04.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah, you finally made it.

[00:51:06.69] JOHN CLARK: Finally made it, yeah. And RCs, the home base is Offutt Air Force Base. And then you forward locate, forward operating bases, FOBs, they called them. And we'd go to Eielson Air Force Base at Fairbanks, Alaska, Kadena on Okinawa, Mildenhall, which is about 90 miles northeast of London.

[00:51:34.62] JOE GALLOWAY: London.

[00:51:35.16] JOHN CLARK: And then at the time we were flying out of Athens, the old airport downtown, and on the Greek Air Force side of the-- they shared the runway, kind of like Honolulu does with Hickam.

[00:51:50.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Now, how long were these forward base deployments?

[00:51:55.95] JOHN CLARK: 28 days.

[00:51:58.32] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah, so you had time to go and enjoy yourself.

[00:52:00.72] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes. And they were built around the phased maintenance on the aircraft. And so if you were broke for three or four days, then you'd add that on when the airplane was fixed again. And we flew routes. Each one was different. So it was fascinating.

[00:52:20.19] And we flew 16-hour flights. We'd take off behind two tankers at Mildenhall and Eielson Air Force Base and would top off the second tanker before we entered the sensitive area. So we had good options if we had something go wrong.

[00:52:38.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you have any difficulty readjusting to life after the combat tour?

[00:52:44.15] JOHN CLARK: No. Well, I kept going back. So I did two Bullet Shot-- so I did two in 1973. And then our unit was pulled back to Ellsworth. And then the Yom Kippur War, I was scheduled to fly that night, a training flight.

[00:53:04.46] And it was like at 2 o'clock, get up, something like that. My phone went off at 2 o'clock in the morning. And it was bring your all-weather gear. Bring all your stuff with you. And you were going on alert.

[00:53:21.68] And this is when the Egyptians and Syrians had launched their attack on Israel. And it didn't go well initially for Israel. And Nixon decided to increase our alert status. And so they put as many people on alert as they could immediately, and as a warning shot to the Soviets not to mess with it.

[00:53:50.30] And the US had a tremendous logistic supply to Israel. So it was very impressive, how it was done. But it was also very terse at the time, too, because we didn't know exactly what was going on. And we just knew that the war was on over there. And it hadn't gone well for the Izzies early on.

[00:54:15.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you stayed in touch with the guys that you flew with back then?

[00:54:20.16] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes.

[00:54:21.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you all have reunions?

[00:54:23.01] JOHN CLARK: Well, I was in three different units. B-66s, and I try and stay in touch with them. But they're getting older, like I am.

[00:54:34.44] B-52s, it was a much smaller-- we did alert, a lot of alert when we weren't flying. And so you didn't have the bonds, although a lot of the crews that went to Guam and U-Tapao, Thailand. U-Tapao was Arc Light, Arc Light was B-52Ds. And they could carry 108 bombs. And it was a short mission for them to fly to bomb in Southeast Asia as opposed to the G models.

[00:55:04.74] And so I do to a certain extent. And the RCs I spent five years in. And a lot of those guys came to this area also. And we cross paths periodically.

[00:55:20.73] JOHN CLARK: It definitely changes you. And you're living in Asia. And you learn the cultures very quickly. And you learn the differences in the cultures.

[00:55:31.38] And that really changes you. It's a whole different world. They don't think like we do. But in Thailand, the Thais were very knowledgeable on support to the US.

[00:55:50.13] And they're a royal democracy, like Britain is. You have the king. And then it is a democracy. But they felt threatened. And so we were helping alleviate their feelings of threat from the North Vietnamese.

[00:56:09.96] And the war didn't end when we left, as history tells it. And the killing fields occurred after that. And my last tour in B-52s was Arc Light to U-Tapao, Thailand. And it was just a show of force. We didn't fly any combat missions.

[00:56:34.06] But we did training missions. And we'd do 45 days at U-Tapao, Thailand, which is on the Gulf of Siam, and then 45 days at Guam and Andersen Air Force Base. And we set nuclear alert there.

[00:56:47.30] JOE GALLOWAY: These are setting alert?

[00:56:49.08] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes, and training missions. Yeah.

[00:56:54.40] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you think your time on those tours affect the way you think about troops coming back from our wars today?

[00:57:03.13] JOHN CLARK: Absolutely. Absolutely, yes. And it's with gratefulness that we see them being treated much better. I had a cousin that was in Desert Storm in the National Guard. And he got treated royally when he came back.

[00:57:23.70] It's just a period in history. The first time I went to Guam, our crew sat down. A two-star general had kind of an interview with us. And the war wasn't going well. The war was lasting longer than it should have been. It was crazy, crazy times.

[00:57:44.43] And he said, you want to know what it was like 100 years ago? Read Kipling. And it does. History repeats.

[00:57:53.94] JOE GALLOWAY: What lessons did you take from those tours that you would like to pass along?

[00:58:03.17] JOHN CLARK: Unity of command. In Southeast Asia, when I was flying in EB-66s, we were part of the 7th Air Force. When I was on Guam and U-Tapao, Thailand, we were part of SAC. And the two didn't communicate a lot together. And you can't have that.

[00:58:23.94] And the example is that I mentioned in LINEBACKER I, we didn't lose a B-52. We had some shot up, but they went to Haiphong. And they had a couple shot up. And they landed at Da Nang. But they didn't lose any.

[00:58:44.19] For LINEBACKER II, they decided that SAC, that was SAC's case. So they planned it. And they just dusted off old--

[00:58:55.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Can't do that.

[00:58:56.27] JOHN CLARK: --war planning. No. And they flew it very stupid. And the crews didn't fly it stupid. It was the planners. And it was-- you can't have your planners 8,000 miles away in Omaha, Nebraska. And if we'd captured the lessons learned from LINEBACKER I, LINEBACKER II would have been a cakewalk.

[00:59:18.63] I mentioned at Hanoi, the air defenses, the command and control, manual detection, manual tracking. The crews, I joined a crew that had flown LINEBACKER II missions when I went to Guam the first time. And they said that after-- it was-- I think it was the

24th of December, the crews just trashed the club. And they were so disappointed we would fly in the same altitude, the same time, the same tracks, night after night.

[00:59:53.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Same flight path.

[00:59:54.03] JOHN CLARK: Yeah, yeah. And so anybody can figure that out. But they didn't. But they lost six B-52s in 24 hours. So they stood down.

[01:00:04.11] And the crews were really, really good, excellent crews. And they came in different altitudes, different air speeds, different times over the target. And that's a nightmare for a manual detect, manual track, command and control. So we learned that. And in Desert Storm, they had unity of command. So they did that.

[01:00:35.07] One of the things that got a lot of Air Force crews is that as a flyer, you only had a collateral clearance, secret, no form. And part of that was if you were shot down and captured, which was entirely possible, then you could only tell them so much. You couldn't tell them--

[01:00:55.60] but in our intel briefings, a lot of times they were a joke. And the fighters, the fighter-bombers, they wanted to know what the target was. And if the intel officer said, I can't tell you that, they would just screw themselves through the roof, because they're going in there laying out their lives and you don't even know what the target is.

[01:01:17.34] JOE GALLOWAY: It makes no sense.

[01:01:18.60] JOHN CLARK: No, no. And it's much better now. So there were lessons learned. They were learned.

[01:01:24.42] And training was another one. I told you we didn't fly the EB-66 till we got to Korat. So it was all new. And we had our airframe, the EB-66, was not well known.

[01:01:40.06] So we had F-4s identifying us as hostile aircraft. And if an F-4 locked onto us, we would jam it, if they stayed locked on. And they knew that if they got jamming, it was us, or dropped chaff on it and that would break the lock.

[01:01:58.44] But they didn't have much training either. And that was one of the lessons. They said a pilot's a pilot. We'll put him anywhere. And they didn't get much-- Red Flag came after Vietnam.

[01:02:12.36] The Navy did Top Gun while we were still involved in Vietnam. So there was a big difference. The Navy pilots performed much better in '72 because of Top Gun.

[01:02:26.25] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today?

[01:02:31.98] JOHN CLARK: I don't think it's remembered very well at all. I think people see Full Metal Jacket or some of the other movies and they think that's the way it was. And it wasn't

that way at all, from what I saw. it was people trying to make a difference and trying to give Southeast Asia a chance to evolve, and Vietnam. So the way we pulled out, that's a tremendous dark spot on our history.

[01:03:06.74] JOHN CLARK: When it was being built and you saw the layout of it, I wasn't a fan of it at all. And I went to the dedication of it. And I don't think anybody-- and they did-- it was the 13th of November, the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans-- so it was right after Veterans Day.

[01:03:30.26] But the fact that each of the people is remembered is a big factor. And when they dedicated it, they had each name read at the National Cathedral. And it took three days. And they had different people reading the names. But it brings to the mind the people that gave their lives for this.

[01:04:00.38] And how Vietnam is viewed today, it's very interesting. Lee, the father of modern-day Singapore, a lot of people said, well, it was for no-- we didn't make any progress in Vietnam. He says, no, no, no, you gave Southeast Asia, the countries, the time to build themselves. And if they had been overrun in, say-- if South Vietnam had been overrun in '67, '68, something like that, some of the other countries wouldn't have developed.

[01:04:37.07] So interesting perspective. And I can't speak yea or nay on that. But it certainly is-- it changed Southeast Asia. There's no doubt about it. And it did give the countries the time to mature.

[01:04:56.30] JOHN CLARK: No, I think it's great. I think it's great. I think to understand history, first you need to study it and learn it and then apply it. But you don't want to keep making the same mistakes over again.

[01:05:10.52] JOE GALLOWAY: It's kind of pointless.

[01:05:12.18] JOHN CLARK: Yes.

[01:05:13.31] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you received your Vietnam Veteran lapel pin?

[01:05:17.43] JOHN CLARK: I don't believe so.

[01:05:18.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, we best fix that then. I'll pin it on you.

[01:05:23.78] JOHN CLARK: I have my River Rats.

[01:05:25.37] JOE GALLOWAY: And you got your River Rats there. Yeah, the River Rats are-- we were thinking about going to attend their next reunion in San Antonio, I think, or Corpus Christi.

[01:05:40.68] JOHN CLARK: I think it's San Antonio.

[01:05:41.67] JOE GALLOWAY: San Antonio. Thank you for coming in.

[01:05:49.32] JOHN CLARK: Combat search and rescue, we Americans do it differently than a lot of countries. And we put a lot of emphasis on it. And as mentioned, Bat 21, we got Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton out on the ground.

[01:06:04.83] Later on that summer, I think it was in May, Major Bob Lodge, the leading MiG killer pilot for the Air Force, and his back seater, Roger Locher, were air-to-air with the MiGs. And they had shot down one MiG already. And that gave them three MiGs. And they were lined up on a fourth MiG, a MiG-17. And they were hosed by a MiG-19. And they went in.

[01:06:35.36] Roger Locher ejected. Major Lodge did not eject. And the reason is they were read on to a very sensitive system at the time. It was Combat Tree. And it was the ability of certain F-4s to interrogate the IFF on the MiGs. Because if he didn't have that, you had to have visual on the aircraft that you were shooting at. Even if it was a missile shot, you had to have a visual on it. So that gave him a possibility of doing a head-on pass, which we had and the North Vietnamese didn't have.

[01:07:07.64] But security of some of these systems was so drilled into you. I think that's why he didn't eject. And so he rode it in. Roger Locher, and it was deep into North Vietnam, and I think it was near the MiG airfield Kep, K-E-P.

[01:07:25.73] And Roger Locher, Kansas farm boy, he did E&E. And over 23 days, he moved about 11 or 12 miles around any buildup. And they teach you in survival school what you can eat and what you can't eat and how to determine the difference. And so, he was in good shape.

[01:07:45.77] And he also knew the sound of F-4s and 105s as compared to MiGs. So he didn't waste his battery. He was silent for a couple of days. And then he moved away from the airfield and further out. And then he came up when he heard an F-4.

[01:08:03.32] And so then they mounted a rescue deep into North Vietnam. And they actually picked him up. And so they did suppression on the airfield and suppression-- they had MiG CAP all around there and all that. So to fly a MiG-- a Jolly Green Giant that far into North Vietnam is a miracle and make it back. And they did.

[01:08:24.68] And Roger Locher served another 27 years, and full colonel, and did some of the sensitive things in the Pentagon. So a great story and-- a great American story. Nobody has the capability we do. And we sometimes lose too many people, which we did in Vietnam at times. But it was because we didn't know what the threat was.

[01:08:57.24] MARC HENDERSON: Was there anything else that you wanted to end with?

[01:08:59.97] JOHN CLARK: Yeah, yes. Since we're talking Vietnam, when I was at Hickam, my neighbor across the street was a pathologist at the CILHI, Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii. And that is uniquely American. And periodically at crash sites, you'll get bones and fragments of bones and all that.

[01:09:26.07] And they get, even from WWII, they get things from Indonesia, Solomon Islands, New Guinea area. And they'll identify them. And they have perfected that to an art.

[01:09:38.97] And the Unknown Soldier in the Vietnam Unknown Monument, his family put it together that their brother's son might be in there, and so-- because he had gone down in that time period in South Vietnam. He was a FAC. And they exhumed the remains and they identified it. We are leaders in that. And we do it across the board. And again, no other country does that.

[01:10:11.99] But as a flyer, the fact that you realize people are going to come and get you and they are going to make every effort possible, that gives you a great deal of satisfaction. And you realize it's very, very tough, but we had tremendous success. And I think there's a book coming out this year or early next year on combat rescues in Vietnam. And that would be Bat 21 and then Roger Locher.

[01:10:42.74] MARC HENDERSON: And so that gave you great peace of mind when you were flying those--

[01:10:45.35] JOHN CLARK: Yes, yes, yes. And then to tie it back into the Vietnam Memorial, you realize they're gone, but they're not forgotten. And I grew up in a small town, small high school. And we lost two guys in high school, or after they graduated from high school, in Vietnam.

[01:11:04.55] And also my cousin, we were virtually brothers. We were about six months apart in age. And he went into the National Guard and he went out to Fort Ord for basic training. And he died in-- it was a very serious form of meningitis. There was an outbreak there. And I think there were about eight guys that died in that.

[01:11:29.87] And it was common in World War II, but just luck of the draw. And his mother was a Gold Star mother, but you're left with what could have been.