

Cruz, Allan USMC

[00:00:17.26] ALLAN CRUZ: I was probably just turning 20, 19 when I enlisted in the Marine Corps. I was on active duty from 1966 to 1970. I returned from Vietnam as a sergeant and went out as a lance corporal. I was with the 3rd Marine Division, Battery M-- Mike Battery, 4th Battalion, 12th Marines and Kilo Battery, 4th Battalion, 13th Marines.

[00:00:43.57] JOHN GALLOWAY: So, artillery?

[00:00:44.31] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. 155 self-propelled howitzers. Born in San Francisco on September 20th, 1946. My parents came over from the island of Guam after World War II.

[00:00:56.19] JOHN GALLOWAY: Alright.

[00:00:56.62] ALLAN CRUZ: My father had been in the US Navy. Native-- both my parents are natives to the island. Joined the Navy in 1934. Was captured when the island fell to the Japanese in '41 and POW through the war. Mom and Dad were married back on Guam in November of '45 and then came to the States, and I was born here in 1946.

[00:01:21.68] JOHN GALLOWAY: I'll be. Amazing background there.

[00:01:23.55] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir.

[00:01:24.51] JOHN GALLOWAY: You count Guam as your hometown?

[00:01:27.68] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. The family's based there. Half the family. There's a chunk of us in Hawaii, and then a bunch of us on the West Coast.

[00:01:35.55] JOHN GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:01:36.57] ALLAN CRUZ: Both my sons are back in Washington, DC right now. My youngest boy is a Navy lieutenant information warfare officer working at Fort Meade, Maryland. And my oldest one is an economic policy analyst working for the chief financial officer of the District of Columbia. And both their wives are, surprisingly, doctors. I don't know how the boys did that.

[00:02:08.60] ALLAN CRUZ: Marine Corps boot camp had been shortened to 12 weeks from 16 just so we could get the throughput to build the forces.

[00:02:16.76] JOHN GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:02:17.30] ALLAN CRUZ: That started in the late '65, early '66 timeframe. So 12 weeks at San Diego, MCRD San Diego. Two weeks at Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Pendleton, and then four weeks at Camp Pendleton at the MOS school, Military Occupational Specialty School. And after that, I was assigned to, surprisingly, 2d Marine Division, 10th Marines. Went out to Camp Lejeune, was immediately sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for a survey school.

[00:02:54.05] I was an 0844 fire direction man and working in the fire direction center. And Arty survey was one of the subspecialties of our field. So I went to Fort Sill Artillery School for survey school. Returned to Camp Lejeune in October of '66 and was immediately picked up on the latest draft going over to the WESTPAC ground forces. 2nd Marine Division at that time was pretty much in turmoil, just because every time they got fairly stable in terms of personnel assigned, all of us young ones-- the lance corporals and below would get stripped out from underneath the command structure there and then sent to WESTPAC.

[00:03:49.89] ALLAN CRUZ: By the time I got there in the country in '67, we were-- the flow of forces into country and the maximum cap of US forces in Vietnam kept growing so there was a big transition for us as we also shifted from a peacetime operation-- a peacetime Marine Corps to a wartime Marine Corps and grew in size at the same time. I think I was on one of the last troop ship deployments to Vietnam as a replacement battalion. We went out on the USNS *General Gordon* and sailed from--

[00:04:31.68] JOHN GALLOWAY: You went out as a unit?

[00:04:33.18] ALLAN CRUZ: No, sir. Actually we were individual replacements. There were 1,500 Marines on board the *Gordon* as well as 3,500 Army unit-- Soldiers total, several Army units that were picked up. So we left from San Diego-- Port of San Diego and went up to Oakland, picked up the Soldiers and then sailed out of San Francisco Bay and went across the Pacific to Okinawa.

[00:05:00.07] We were there for less than 24, 48 hours, and then went immediately into Da Nang or down to South Vietnam and dropped the Soldiers off, and then we were the last unit off-- last group of Marines off. So in that context, my experience was pretty much a World War II experience. A troop ship off the West Coast going out to the Pacific. And I can remember us standing on the bow of the ship going underneath the Golden Gate sailing out. And it was just exactly like--

[00:05:36.91] JOHN GALLOWAY: Going in World War II?

[00:05:37.39] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. And I remember when we got to Okinawa, we were so young and we were so full of ourselves. We were going to go see the elephant. And I remember when we went to drop our sea bags off to go into storage in Okinawa and draw our equipment for Vietnam, we would come rumbling into this large warehouse where they had all the issue-- turn in your sea bag, draw your other stuff.

[00:06:09.52] And we were pretty boisterous. I mean, we were young lance corporals and a couple of sergeants and some of the guys returning. And at some point, all the quote, supply kerfs coming out to issue us our gear were out of sight at that time, and those guys then came out on signal and they were all wearing their khakis or their summer service Charlie uniform, if you will, and they were wearing the ribbons.

[00:06:39.23] And every single one of those guys had a Purple Heart or 2 or 3 and that really quieted us down very-- I mean, you know what they were doing. They did it on purpose, and

they did it to make a statement which they-- which is a fair statement on their part, and it sure helped us start to grow up fast. Then we loaded back up on ship, dropped the Soldiers off down at-- we went to Vung Tau first.

[00:07:06.92] Then we went on to Saigon, then we went up-- Qui Nhon-- or Cam Ranh Bay, Qui Nhon, Quang Ngai. This is just going up the coast. And then they dropped us off at Da Nang. So the first impression was one of new sights. Not so much the heat and the humidity, but just everything was new. Everything was so new to us, and as a group. But that was our first impression, sir.

[00:07:40.52] JOHN GALLOWAY: What was your-- what were your initial duties?

[00:07:44.49] ALLAN CRUZ: Assigned to a-- ultimately assigned to a battery, Mike Battery, 4th Battalion, 12th Marines as a fire direction control man. That's in the fire direction center. We did the computation of the firing data for the guns. So each battery has the howitzers-- or the gun crews, support sections to do the ammunition and take care of the-- take care of the equipment, a fire direction control center, and a communications group, so we could talk to the forward observers.

[00:08:18.17] We compute the data, send it to the guns, the guns fire the weapons. And this was all before computers. So everything was graphical firing tables and tabular firing tables. So we got very, very good at our math in our heads. Very, very good. That's the way it had always been done up to that point, and it wasn't until the artillery computers started to be fielded or tested from Fort Sill in late-- late '67 or early '68 when they first started to get out there.

[00:08:49.23] Very different from artillery nowadays, but very very demanding, very demanding. And we were very proficient.

[00:08:58.69] JOHN GALLOWAY: Now was that your job throughout your tour?

[00:09:02.64] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. I just grew up within the FDC. Ultimately was a battery op chief. And then we centralized the fire direction centers for our artillery battalion because we started to learn how to mass our fires again and operate with a centralized fire control center for multiple batteries that were in various positions. And that then speaks to how the batteries were placed all throughout the DMZ because in I Corps up north, we were-- all of our firing positions were ranged by all of the North Vietnamese artillery.

[00:09:46.12] Between their 122 rockets and their 152 howitzer batteries, they could shoot further than we could. And so we set ourselves up in what's been termed Leatherneck Square but that-- basically, we had batteries at Gio Linh and Con Thien on the DMZ, down at Cam Lo and Dong Ha-- Dong Ha was right next to Quang Tri or north of Quang Tri-- and then out to the west was Camp Carroll, and then further south was Ca Lu, and then on out to Khe Sanh. So that basically gave us a firing line that extended from the shoreline to the-- almost to the Laotian border.

[00:10:21.91] JOHN GALLOWAY: Almost to the Laos border.

[00:10:23.02] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. So that was Khe Sanh, which was our furthest west. And still we started doing operations out there--

[00:10:29.17] JOHN GALLOWAY: And you were in a center controlling all of that fire?

[00:10:31.36] ALLAN CRUZ: Well, for our battalion FDC, yes, sir. And when I joined the battery, we were one of the few 55 SP-- we were the only 55 SP battery up there-- battalion rather. Because 4/12 had initially landed down on Hue/Phu Bai when the 3d Marine Division came into Da Nang. And then as 1st Division came in, as they were called into Vietnam, 3d MARDIV moved forward-- north, 1st MARDIV moved from Da Nang down to Chu Lai and-- but that gave us the operational spread that we needed for I Corps at that time. ALLAN CRUZ: The morning always started with a formation if we weren't otherwise on watch in the FDC. There were 24 hour-- 24/7 watches, communications on the guns, as well as in the fire direction center. We would all man all of our positions, if you will, when there was an actual fire mission. There were some work parties in the morning. The battery gunnery sergeant's tax on each section was 100 sandbags a day per section. And when we were really building up, especially after taking a significant amount of incoming and rebuilding, then it was like 100 bags of sandbags per man per day because you had to fortify the position and continue to do that. And we were making that transition from being in 12-man GP tents under canvas with sandbags along the side to actually digging in and getting bunkers made and going deep. One of the things about that was a 155 battery has its own wood. Why? Because all of our artillery rounds-- well, a lot of our artillery comes in pallets and a lot of the 105 battery artillery rounds came in wooden boxes. So we could scrounge wood pretty much anywhere and-- and we built-- we could build anything and did so. We'd make desks and firing charts out of the lids. We had all the hinges. We knew how to do that. So we got very good at finding and scrounging nails. The Seabees-- and the Seabees were real busy helping us do a lot of that work. And like them, we could scrounge metal materials and build anything.

[00:13:13.21] JOHN GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:13:13.86] ALLAN CRUZ: It just comes with-- comes with being a 55 battery.

[00:13:18.41] JOHN GALLOWAY: What were your living conditions like?

[00:13:21.77] ALLAN CRUZ: Well fairly good, sir. I mean, in that we had GP tents. We had sandbags around the side and trenches alongside them. Same thing for our fire direction center initially until the bunkers were built. All of that building started up when we started taking more incoming from medium sized artillery batteries and heavy artillery batteries from the North Vietnamese Army. Remember that '67-- '65, '67, it was still, quote, US forces and South Vietnamese forces fighting the Viet Cong.

[00:13:58.05] JOHN GALLOWAY: Sure.

[00:13:58.63] ALLAN CRUZ: But up north, it was us against the North Vietnamese Army. And a lot of people had to dance around that because that had other implications in the discussions about the war and diplomacy. It'd be as-- the same kind of dancing that went on that never-- that

made us feel bad, quote, because we invaded Cambodia and got into Laos. Yet that was where the Ho Chi Minh Trail was and why we weren't up and down that trail more aggressively is still beyond my understanding because it was a regional area. That was French Indochina, that was three separate groups, right? Cochinchina, Cochinchina?

[00:14:48.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:14:51.88] ALLAN CRUZ: Annam. Yes sir. Yes sir.

[00:14:55.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Indochin, Cochin, and--

[00:14:59.12] ALLAN CRUZ: Annam, right?

[00:14:59.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Annam.

[00:15:00.56] ALLAN CRUZ: Annam, yes. And so that was under French colonial times, and that only-- that was the transition in the '50s. We were involved in the early '50s and '60s, and just because the political lines across the border of the new nations didn't do that. And if you remember the great lengths to which we quote, we had a listening station in Laos up north. If this is Dien Bien Phu, we were up here.

[00:15:33.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Was that Lima Site 85?

[00:15:35.19] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir. And those airmen, we discharged from the United States Air Force, if I remember right. So that when we said that we had no US servicemen in Laos, it was technically true. And so there was a little bit of that dancing going on.

[00:15:57.43] ALLAN CRUZ: I know that one of our batteries-- the second battery I was assigned to, Kilo Battery, 4th Battalion, 13th Marines was initially stationed down at Cam Lo, the village in between Dong Ha and going out to Camp Carroll and Khe Sanh on Highway 9. And the Cam Lo Bridge was just north of that, where we crossed the Cam Lo River. There was always fighting down there.

[00:16:20.62] There were some heavy battalion sized, regimental sized fights and ambushes going on across Highway 9 and the '67 time frame as we were moving out toward the hill fights in that early '67 window of time, 881 North and South. Yes sir.

[00:16:37.45] And so that was the district headquarters. I remember our battery at that time making arrangements with the village chief to have some of their people help us with the sandbags. And so we'd set up working parties and pay them in either cooking oil or other food stocks and some cash, I think, but mostly cooking oil because that's what-- a commodity that they needed.

[00:17:07.46] And you'd see the folks in Dong Ha driving through. I mean, it was fairly well patrolled. We tried, you know. But yes, I mean, we saw the people of South Vietnam. I didn't see

them as any different from us, sir. They were just good, hardworking people just trying to keep their families together and function as a society.

[00:17:31.89] I remember we'd go out in some individual firing. We'd send a platoon out, further out on Highway 9 down to Ca Lu to support an infantry battalion's maneuver for a short while, sometimes next to a village. The kids would come out.

[00:17:48.60] We'd make sure we talked to the headman of the village or find somebody in charge, and make sure they understood what we were trying to do so we could try to keep them outside our wire and not try to come visit the camp at night just to preclude any-- I don't know, not friendly fire, but just to preclude any incidents that might come just because movement outside the wire at night.

[00:18:15.93] Certainly sympathetic to them. We were on their side. They were on our side. We were there to help them, and we believed that. And we acted accordingly, you know. I never saw them as the enemy, sir. Never. Never. Not up north, not I Corps.

[00:18:43.13] ALLAN CRUZ: For all our differences as-- in terms of backgrounds and where we came from-- Middle America, hometown, big city, farm-- the America of the '60s and late '50s, we were still a bunch of 19-year-old kids going through the same experiences, having made the same transitions. And so that was common enough.

[00:19:07.79] And also what I liked about it was the strength of that was feeling like you were part of something that was organized, had a sense of purpose, had a standard of conduct and expectation of achievement or performance, and demanded that from you. And that was-- that's not bad. That's not bad. That gives you a compass that stands you in good stead and will continue to.

[00:19:45.01] And it still does. And it still does. I think, that's why certainly with the Marine Corps, we feel more attachment to guys from our time frame or the Marine Corps as a whole and those loyalties to each other. Sometimes even though some of the guys, like you said, might have done two years, three years and four years got out, and 40 years later, we come wandering back through the front gate, looking for somebody that might have been in the old unit from that time frame. And hence, the reunions that you see and all-- that are going on 40 years after the fact.

[00:20:24.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Absolutely.

[00:20:25.43] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir.

[00:20:31.47] ALLAN CRUZ: For the Marine units out there, for us, I mean, we weren't in the big cities. Da Nang would have been our big city, if you will, or even Quang Tri. We were out in the field at our positions. So time off was time in between watches. There were never days off. There was just in between watch.

[00:20:52.53] And when you were off watch, you also had to, quote, do some time on mess duty. This was a lance corporal and below, or do some time on the perimeter at night because we took

care of our own perimeter. And then there was always a work party as we relayed all the barbed wire completely around Camp Carroll. Each one of our units along the perimeter took care of our segment of the wire. So that was an unending work party. The 100 sandbags a day per man or per section. We were busy.

[00:21:29.59] So off time, we'd listen to the radio. Some guys had tapes. All the gun crews-- I don't know what it was about the cannoneers, but those guys always had weights. And I never figured out where they-- they were there when I got there, but those guys were always pumping iron. And our 155 rounds are 90-some pounds apiece. So being able to move that much weight quickly is there.

[00:21:59.38] And when we were-- since this is the days before the hydraulic rams and loaders on an M109 Paladin that you might see nowadays with the Army, where it's all hydraulics. We would basically hand load the weapon and hand ram the rounds. And so that spoke to a set of arms and a strong back to be able to do that. And so the guys just kept it up. And that was one part of it.

[00:22:31.61] A lot of chess games, a lot of checker games, a lot of cards in between things. There was-- oh, I think at the end of the day, there might have been time for a beer call. We were limited to two cans of beer per person when it was available. Yes, sir. That was pretty much it.

[00:22:57.58] There was always proficiency. I mean, there was always training because when I first got there, it was like, OK, you're an FDC man that knows-- you graduated from MOS school. Let's see how good you are. And so you'd work.

[00:23:11.44] And with the artillery, we were computing data all the time because we were either firing missions, or we were working up the harassment and interdiction fires for nighttime firing. So there some 300 coordinates that would come in. It would take us about a half hour, hour to do the calculations on all of that, all that by hand. So we were always at it. There was never-- it was never ending that way.

[00:23:42.44] ALLAN CRUZ: Well, understanding how we were laid out on the ground with batteries on the border from the ocean going west, Gio Linh up north by Freedom Bridge, Con Thien across the strip, Gio Linh, Con Thien, Quang Tri or Dong Ha where we put a significant artillery presence down there just outside the combat base at Dong Ha where the airfield was.

[00:24:08.22] Cam Lo had a battery. Camp Carroll down here also had-- actually that was the Artillery Plateau. We must have had 40 tubes, artillery tubes between the Army's 2d of the 94th, 175 millimeter howitzer batteries attached to the 3d Marine Division. Army's 1st of the 40th, those were a 105 self-propelled battery. The Army Dusters I think was the 1st of the 44th. Twin 40 millimeter, you saw them on convoys all the time, sir, the Dusters. And then the convoy-- oh, and the quad-50's were also there. And I forget their designation.

[00:24:51.21] But with that layout, we had overlapping range fans that allowed us then to support either each other or the infantry battalions as they go through and try to clear first up to the DMZ, up to Mutter's Ridge on the left, or through the DMZ when we finally started going

into--east of Cua Viet-- north of Cua Viet on the river, and go there with the special landing forces.

[00:25:24.13] So in that context then, when Con Thien got almost overrun in early '67, everybody took rounds that night, all at the same time. That was a very well coordinated, planned attack. They had massed their artillery and fired on all the bases at the same time. We returned counter-battery fire on the positions that we could. But then again, very quickly, we realized that the main point of their assault was Con Thien right up on the DMZ.

[00:26:00.04] And they got into the wire that night, but we fired a couple thousand rounds that night. And so that was a big night. That was a big night for everybody involved. The NVA forces did not take Con Thien, but it was interesting to see how all that worked.

[00:26:26.85] And this is in contrast to-- I remember the first time we fired into the DMZ, we had to make copies of all our logs, charts, firing tables and send that down to regimental headquarters so that ultimately that firing data could be validated and everybody was then comfortable where our rounds actually landed inside the DMZ. Because we were purposely firing into the DMZ to return fire from artillery positions or other reconnaissance teams.

[00:26:56.89] We fired a lot of support for the reconnaissance teams that were up operating in the DMZ and west. And I'm sure the other teams from either the Army or the Navy SEALs up that way. That was a part of it. But because we were a medium artillery unit and our role was general support reinforcing, we participated in almost every operation anywhere north in that time frame, sir. All of them.

[00:27:34.25] Remember, we used to-- we also grew up, we grew up with artillery and units because the old model, peacetime, had been an artillery battalion with one battery attached. And that battery was DS or direct support to the infantry battalion. And it moved where the battalion went so that battalion always had artillery support that could take care of their maneuver and whatever the infantry was up to at that point, or the grunts.

[00:28:00.92] And our GSR units were either-- as they came into our fan, we either fired them or we displaced platoons along with them, which was not unusual. So that not only was there a 105 battery of six howitzers attached to the infantry battalion, but our platoon or our entire battery was also assigned to them in direct support for that operation.

[00:28:24.77] JOE GALLOWAY: And that's 155s.

[00:28:26.24] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir. Yes sir.

[00:28:33.68] ALLAN CRUZ: I remember the first time we got hit up on Camp Carroll, it was an artillery barrage that-- literally a barrage. That lasted a long time. And the rounds were coming into our position. This was my first time, quote, under fire. My corporal had told us what to do. Basically, we had our helmets and flak jackets next to us. We were on cots inside our tents next to the sandbags.

[00:29:12.01] When the first round landed, it immediately woke us up because it was about two or three o'clock in the morning, rolled off my cot into the hole, got my flak jacket and helmet on, ran to the FDC bunker, which was what we were supposed to do. Well, it wasn't a bunker at the time. It was the tent with the sandbags around it. And then we got up on the charts, started computing data that we got from the FOs or anybody that could give us a target.

[00:29:40.21] And I remember leaning over the charts, plotting the targets. The canvas of the tent, because we had no overhead cover, just like a skin on a drum. The timpani effect or the percussion effect of that wafting on us as we were plotting. When the rounds would come closer, we'd pull the charts off and jump down into the trench, right outside the tent, and then put them back up. You could hear the communications guys talking to the FO. You could hear the rounds going out from our guys because we were firing counter-battery.

[00:30:19.43] And it felt-- on a personal level, sir, it was good to know that I could function, that I withstood the test, if you will. And now, either that was because I was very young and stupid, or I didn't know enough to be scared yet. But at least, I knew enough to do my job. And that, there was a great deal to be said for that. I would have not wanted to start that tour failing to do that. That would have been wrong. I would have let down the side. I would have been wrong.

[00:31:00.75] ALLAN CRUZ: I do that all the time, sir. I ask my guys, what was your best day? What was your worst day? And-- best day. One mission, gathering report from the FO that we got secondaries. That told us we were hitting our targets. We were on target, and we were hurting them. And they were shooting and their fire dropped off just as soon as that happened, right afterwards. And there was an exultation that just went through all of us because we know we got them. Yeah, we got them. Yes sir. That was an artillery battery that we were trading rounds with. And so there was that.

[00:31:47.09] Later on, I know that as a battalion op chief, being able to coordinate the fires of several batteries, because I had all the FDC sections for the batteries in one place, in one centralized fire control and covering multiple missions. And that felt good. So that spoke to you-- many times, whether it's civilian or our military life, a lot of our personal sense of self is your job, and knowing that you did your job and did it well adds to that, and like, any time.

[00:32:25.64] That's why when guys get laid off, it's so devastating sometimes because you've taken away something essential to them, their self identity, their self worth. And so finding that was the best, you know. I think finding that was certainly that, sir.

[00:32:49.32] ALLAN CRUZ: We had a howitzer blow up. It killed three guys. And I wasn't-- I was in the FDC bunker at the time that mission went off. Or no, pardon me, I wasn't. We were firing nighttime H&Is, harassment and interdiction fires. I was off watch in the rack about two, three, four o'clock in the morning and-- big explosion.

[00:33:16.62] Got under the FDC and try to figure out what was happening. Because our immediate reaction was that we were getting hit, but that was the only explosion. And it turned out that-- as we understand from the investigation later on, we were almost out of ammunition, 155 howitzer ammunition.

[00:33:35.42] We had large stocks of 155 gun ammunition. There's an extra retaining ban. Those can be milled down because they have the-- I think the gun howitzer-- gun ammunition had two retaining bands, and ours had one. And so back in the States, they got milled down. And anyway, one of those rounds went halfway up the tube and blew up.

[00:34:02.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Blew up.

[00:34:02.74] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. And that's so. And fortunately, we didn't lose the whole gun crew because there were only three guys firing H&Is. Harassment and interdiction fires are scheduled throughout the night. We'd target a grid, battery one round-- six rounds go out-- three times a night. And so we'd fire them sometime before noon-- or before midnight, sometime-- sometimes around midnight, sometimes at three o'clock in the morning, or whatever. We'd just spread it out.

[00:34:30.41] And so that, we lost three good guys. Two guys going home, one new guy. All within their-- one month in the country, and one month from going home kind of thing. So that was a bad night. That was a bad night, sir.

[00:34:51.67] ALLAN CRUZ: Mostly the-- well, certainly the ARVNs because we had one battery of 05's attached to 4th Battalion, 12th Marines, and that was Bravo battery, 1st Battalion, 13th Marines. If I could make-- may I digress for a second? 3rd Marine Division's artillery regiment is the 12th Marine Regiment. Okay? The 5th Marine Division's artillery regiment is 13th Marines. When 1st Marine Division-- 3rd Marine Division was in Okinawa at the beginning of the war. 1st Marine Division was at Camp Pendleton.

[00:35:27.43] When 1st Marine Division got orders to move as a division into Vietnam, we reactivated-- the Marine Corps reactivated 5th Marine Division and established them at Camp Pendleton. 5th Marine Division was the World War II-- one of our World War II divisions, 3d, 4th, and 5th had been at Iwo Jima. And so 13th Marines started to send-- that artillery regiment started to send batteries out to us. And our 4th Battalion was, in fact, one of them.

[00:35:56.15] And so hence Kilo, 4/13. We had a battery of ARVN 05s attached to us at the same time. So there was some there. Every once in a while you'd see an Australian adviser. And that was kind of neat, but not often. We didn't have large-- the Australians as a unit, were down south, III, IV Corps, somewhere down there.

[00:36:24.29] JOE GALLOWAY: But they did have some Mike Force people with Australians attached.

[00:36:30.05] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. Yeah, further out. Yes sir.

[00:36:31.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Further out toward the border.

[00:36:32.93] ALLAN CRUZ: Right. And we might have shot for them, but we wouldn't have known it, unless there was a heavy accent on the radio that night.

[00:36:45.98] ALLAN CRUZ: Letters, you know, nothing like today, sir. You saw the paradigm shift. Then a letter from home, like World War II, the telegram was bad news. Now, families expect you to call after everything. And if they haven't heard from you--

[00:37:05.01] JOE GALLOWAY: You're in trouble.

[00:37:05.97] ALLAN CRUZ: Or they worry. They expect the worst. And so once again, technology changes everything. I can remember making-- going down to the amusement park in San Francisco when my dad was in Korea, and mom having my brother and I make recordings on the vinyl to mail off to dad. And for us in Vietnam, it was letters.

[00:37:30.54] And every once in a while, especially when I was out at MARFORPAC in Hawaii at the beginning of the war out there, at the beginning, we'd break loose the teleconference room and bring the families in, and then have them talk to their members in Kuwait, their family members in Kuwait. And that was a nice thing to see happen because we could do it. We had the technology.

[00:37:52.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Nowadays they're hooked up online and--

[00:37:55.03] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir. And satellite phones are going all the time. It must drive the commanders nuts. It must drive the PAOs nuts, you know.

[00:38:01.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Yup, exactly.

[00:38:02.29] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir. And God only knows what's being said, or everybody will know what's being said because it's out there now.

[00:38:08.23] JOE GALLOWAY: Exactly. How much news did you receive about the war?

[00:38:13.96] ALLAN CRUZ: Well, Stars and Stripes. Mind you, we did not have CNN on 24 hours like we did in Iraq. So that whole dynamic was very different.

[00:38:24.04] JOE GALLOWAY: You did have Armed Forces Radio.

[00:38:26.68] ALLAN CRUZ: Armed Forces Radio to that extent. The occasional clipping, but we were there. I remember when President Johnson announced that he was not running-- I shall not accept-- I will not seek and I shall not accept the nomination of my party-- that went through us like wildfire. We were very angry. I was very angry about that.

[00:38:50.15] Nobody else had a choice, you know. Whether we were drafted or enlisted or volunteered, we were in place in time for a set period of time. We didn't have the option to go, you know, I think my personal political ambitions--

[00:39:08.00] JOE GALLOWAY: I gotta quit.

[00:39:09.05] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, it's getting a little too hot for me. I think I'll bow out of this one. That's not an option we had sir, so with no sympathy for anybody else that took that option.

[00:39:22.99] ALLAN CRUZ: Let's see, I extended-- so I came home on leave, extension leave, and then went back out. I had a four-year enlistment. I had been in country a full 13 months at that point. In that time frame, I had seen guys that had gone home when I got to my unit, come back on their second tour of less than a year in between. And we were still growing. We hadn't started the withdrawal yet.

[00:39:56.51] And so on the four-year enlistment it made sense to stay where I was. Now, had I been a rifleman in a platoon that had turned over four times in three months, I would have gone through a very different thought process. The numbers just don't work.

[00:40:13.52] But at that point, I was a sergeant, a battalion watch chief. I was good at what I was doing. It made sense to stay because I felt that I was doing the right thing. So hence, I extended. When I came home after 21 months in Vietnam, now I was a Sergeant, and I guess I was lucky in that I went back to a job in the Marine Corps, because I still had a year to do, that made sense in terms of my Marine Corps experience, because I went back as an Arty operations instructor at the artillery school at Camp Pendleton.

[00:40:53.51] So now, I was teaching the guys coming in from boot camp about their first MOS. And so all my experience as-- overseas led directly to my credibility and competence as an instructor, teaching the guys that were following after me. So that was a plus.

[00:41:12.84] So what I'm trying to say is that I had an assignment that makes sense, that gave me a great deal of satisfaction in terms of what I had been doing. A very different experience from a young draftee Marine Corps or Army that got out, and then was immersed back into the public. When I got out of the Marine Corps and was in school here at San Francisco State years later-- well, in '71-- it was like nobody valued any of that time.

[00:41:49.29] There were still some divisions on campus obviously, but it was like, oh well, none of that time counted because you weren't here in school, or you weren't back here. And so that led to that. But I think the other thing that was good for me was that I had stayed in the Marine Corps Reserve. And so the guys that I was talking to, I had access to, and monthly dealings with guys who were just like me. We'd grown up in the service, back from Vietnam, going to school. And so we were not cut adrift as completely as-- and isolated-- as perhaps, many other guys were. And then hence, the subsequent problems.

[00:42:33.12] JOE GALLOWAY: Your reception from family and friends?

[00:42:35.97] ALLAN CRUZ: Oh, strong. Sir, I mean, generations of military. So there was no other-- my best friend from high school who was a judge in the city now had been the leader at San Francisco State, leader of the student strike. And so there was a couple of times there where we had some long, you know, three o'clock in the morning. Ron, what the hell were you thinking of? Al, what the hell were you thinking of? And so that was back and forth.

[00:43:13.79] But you know, I still see him and his wife. At the time, he went into VISTA volunteers, and-- both he and his wife, that's where they met. So it wasn't that he skipped service to his country. He just found another path.

[00:43:32.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Served in a different role.

[00:43:34.22] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir.

[00:43:35.83] JOE GALLOWAY: How much contact have you had with your buddy Marines?

[00:43:41.77] ALLAN CRUZ: From that time frame?

[00:43:42.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Since you got out.

[00:43:44.86] ALLAN CRUZ: Like a lot of units, sir, Kilo Battery started doing reunions about 2004. So 40 years after the fact. Our battery commander and one of our XOs did the first reunion back in Washington, DC. We do one every two years. We've got another one coming up in 2016. We usually get 40 to 50 guys there. We've tracked down a lot of the guys since that time frame.

[00:44:12.76] And since we were a war-raised unit, activated for Vietnam, and then deactivated at the end of Vietnam, it's a fixed population. We're all doing different things now. A lot of the guys have died just because they were in their 50s and 60s. So we've kept away that way.

[00:44:36.73] Mike Battery does the same thing. They've been meeting for 10, 15 years now. Those guys, though, the peacetime battery in Okinawa in the mid '60s or early '60s, started the reunions. And then those of us from the Vietnam time frame have sort of continued it on, so-- and they're still meeting.

[00:44:57.56] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you have any difficulty readjusting to civilian life after your tour with the Marines?

[00:45:07.62] ALLAN CRUZ: I think that answer is yes, but it was-- let me temper it with this. A lot of the people that I was dealing with were former Marines because I was still in the Reserves. At some point it was-- I didn't-- I certainly never felt that I had to, quote, one, ignore or isolate that time from-- that part of my life from my everyday life. And the skills and the things that I learned in that time frame certainly stood me in good stead in my corporate life.

[00:45:48.72] The ability to lead a project, get work out of guys, bring my young project engineers along, like bringing second lieutenants along, and letting them learn their job, and then become successful that way. So, you know, perhaps some differences. But-- and some extra effort to kind of understand why I was feeling the way I was about certain things that are-- certain groups. But not so much that I was scarred for life. No, no, no. Not at all.

[00:46:28.83] ALLAN CRUZ: If you were there with us at that time frame, regardless-- sir, I'd even talk to a guy from 1st Air Cav, OK.

[00:46:35.90] JOE GALLOWAY: [LAUGHS]

[00:46:38.25] ALLAN CRUZ: Though if we were young sergeants together, you and I would have been rolling around on the grass because-- JOE GALLOWAY: Chewing each other's ears. ALLAN CRUZ: Absolutely. Because my unit was just better than yours. But we were from that time frame. And regardless of which side of that-- what unit, and where we were at that time frame, we were part of that time frame. And that's an important bond.

[00:47:01.11] And I think what I like now about it, looking back, is that having done my homework and having read everything I could get my hands on to understand what else was going on that we were a very small part of in our little world, did it still make sense in the grander picture? And understanding at least why and how we got there, and then hence, therefore, where Al Cruz fit into that thing, and why and how he got to where he was, and what he left there. And it certainly didn't hurt me in the rest of my Marine Corps career.

[00:47:35.39] JOE GALLOWAY: How did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans coming home from combat today?

[00:47:43.20] ALLAN CRUZ: Today? OK, veterans today. And I can speak to that because I spent two tours in Iraq. And so I think we're coming back with more information today than not. I certainly feel as strongly bonded to the Iraqi guys and the Afghanistan guys as I do to the guys from Vietnam, partially because I was part of both groups.

[00:48:11.15] Obviously, levels of responsibility are slightly different. But on an individual basis, your responsibility is the same. You watch out for each other. You take care of each other. And so we extend that through a lot more programs to help veterans find jobs, and things like that here in the area that it's there. It's more than just lip service to, oh, you're back. Oh, great. Thanks. Welcome. You know, but we're there. No patient--

[00:48:44.19] JOE GALLOWAY: How did you end up pulling two tours in Iraq? Are you still in the Corps?

[00:48:49.85] ALLAN CRUZ: No, Sir. I retired in 2005. I did eight years enlisted. When I was in the Marine Corps Reserve and when I finished school in '75, I received a direct commission. I was a staff sergeant, infantry company gunnery sergeant at the time-- acting company gunny. And then I got a commission as an artillery officer, and an infantry officer secondary. And so then I had a rifle company, had an artillery battery, was an artillery battalion XO. I commanded 3d ANGLICO, Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company in the '93, '95 time frame,

[00:49:23.82] in the Reserves. Got called up on active duty for Norway, got called up for the Gulf War, our battalion went to Norway. And then I got called up again in 2002 for the war there. I was the deputy commander for 1 MACE, which was the reserve augmentation command for 1 MEF, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force under General Conway at that time.

[00:49:48.18] And then-- so I went into-- I was G4 forward at that point, and where we did the force flow into country, so we set up all the life support areas. I had three months to set up life

support areas for 65,000 guys in Kuwait. So that's what got me into country. Then I stayed there for 11 months. I was back stateside for about six weeks. And then I got called back up-- not called back up, I got sent right back up on my second tour, my second tour in Vietnam-- or in Iraq rather. Yes, sir.

[00:50:23.76] JOE GALLOWAY: What year?

[00:50:24.96] ALLAN CRUZ: 2004, and then I retired in 2005. April, 2005.

[00:50:30.27] JOE GALLOWAY: How many years in service when you quit?

[00:50:32.22] ALLAN CRUZ: 38, sir.

[00:50:33.30] JOE GALLOWAY: 38.

[00:50:34.23] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes, sir. I timed out. I was 60. They were surprised--

[00:50:38.91] JOE GALLOWAY: They weren't going to let you go any longer.

[00:50:40.05] ALLAN CRUZ: No, not a communist. No, sir.

[00:50:42.00] JOE GALLOWAY: See if you have been an old grizzled warrant officer five, you could have stayed until you die.

[00:50:46.95] ALLAN CRUZ: Probably, sir. Probably.

[00:50:49.86] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today in our society?

[00:51:02.33] ALLAN CRUZ: Hm. Well, I think there's a certain level of awareness, but I remember in the '60s reading books about, quote, when the guys talked about the war in the '60s, they were talking about the Korean War. Not World War II. They were talking about the Korean War.

[00:51:24.14] I think we still have an awareness of Vietnam as a war or in a time frame because most of those of us from, quote, that 19-- the Baby Boomer generation, are still involved in things nationally and day to day. Why? Because we're the age we are. We're in our 60s and 70s. And we're either coming off our corporate lives and retirement from that, or we're still involved in some way, shape, or form.

[00:51:53.04] But when you refer to the war before Iraq, that was the Gulf War. Not even Somalia. Certainly not Vietnam. That was the Gulf War. Matter of fact, if I had been commissioned, if I had been commissioned as a second lieutenant in '66, I would have been retired in '86, four years before the Gulf War, 14 years before the Iraqi war.

[00:52:20.28] So I think we remember it primarily because there's a lot of effort by the Vietnam generation-- and I refer to-- when I say that term, I don't mean the guys that didn't go, I mean the guys that served over there-- to keep it in front of the public's eye. But that's a two-edged sword, sir, because-- and I'm speaking as a Vietnam veteran kind of guy.

[00:52:46.58] At some point, we were supposed to get on with our lives. That's what our parents did. They came back from World War II, and got on with their lives, and had us and raised us. And we're not-- you can't remember all the good things and all the bad things and pat yourself on the back or cry woe is me for the next 40 years of your life just because of something you did for 13-- 12 and 26 back in 1960 and 1970.

[00:53:17.76] You're supposed to move on, contribute to society, raise your kids. Make sure they eat their vegetables, you know, and then get them launched properly so that they can contribute. So you can't have both the negatives and the positive forever.

[00:53:33.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Did you take away from Vietnam more that was positive and useful than you invested in blood, sweat, and tears?

[00:53:42.92] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir. Of course, you know. I mean, I was one of the lucky ones that-- I wasn't maimed. Hell, not even wounded, sir. I mean, did I get picked up and moved around a little bit by an artillery round or two? Sure. But I didn't have a lot of the negatives and have to deal with that like a lot of the guys that did. So it was a plus for me in that respect. I don't mean I made out. I mean, I didn't have significant other problems to deal with at the same time.

[00:54:26.75] JOE GALLOWAY: Right. In the end, what did the Vietnam War mean to you and your generation?

[00:54:44.44] ALLAN CRUZ: Hm. It seemed like not as a rite of passage-- not as a rite of passage, because that's the wrong connotation, but it was something that might come up in an every generation and just happened to come up in ours. Because you started with our parents' involvement in World War II, their re-involvement in Korea, and my dad went to both. In high school, in '62, it was a Cuban Missile Crisis. I was a sophomore and coming up on that. The Everly Brothers ran off and joined the Marine Corps. You know, that kind of stuff.

[00:55:24.34] So there was a possibility of that. We were in the Cold War. There was an expectation that there might be a hot war at some point in that process. And it just came up that it was the Vietnam War was the next arena, where that in fact flared.

[00:55:41.10] So it was always a possibility that a war like that would happen in each generation. And therefore, we should be prepared for that. And there was an expectation that each generation would be able-- would be prepared for that, and be expected to contribute in one way, shape, or form as part of that effort.

[00:56:03.40] JOE GALLOWAY: We got lucky.

[00:56:04.26] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir.

[00:56:09.00] JOE GALLOWAY: What lessons did you take from Vietnam that you would like to pass on to future generations of Americans?

[00:56:17.15] ALLAN CRUZ: Lessons. I think certainly a lesson-- there are enough facets of any particular conflict, both pro and con, and the arguments for either side are pretty powerful. And at some point, there's got to be a dialogue about the whys and wherefores of us going forward and doing something.

[00:56:54.86] So a lesson learned from comparing Vietnam time frame to now, to do we reengage in the Middle East, in Iraq or not, deals with the lead-- the run up time to Vietnam was years-- little bit of involvement, advisers, growth. After a 10 or 12-year war that we've just come through in Iraq, even though we got out. And now, we're talking about going back in again, and yet we still have discussions that seem to me not to learn the lesson from our involvement and how we got into Iraq.

[00:57:31.21] So when I hear of people talking about, we will have trainers on the ground and they won't get involved, and then I'm saying, you know, somebody must have just--

[00:57:44.80] JOE GALLOWAY: I've heard that before.

[00:57:45.43] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir. Must have deleted the memory bank from the last ten years in OIF I and II. Because any time you have troops on the ground, then there's a potential for harm, then there's a potential for more involvement. And so somehow I don't understand why we're lulled into that sense of, this is a first time adventure. We should know better by now.

[00:58:11.45] But you tell me how a person's rewarded, and I'll tell you what decisions he's making. So it's a timeline. If I was going to commit resources for a ten-year war, you go about it a different way than if you think you're going to go in there for six months and come back out. I honestly thought-- this is Al Cruz personal--

[00:58:35.21] I honestly thought at the end of Iraq OIF I, that we were then going to stay in that part of the region of the world like we did in Korea, for the next 50 years. We were fully set up to, quote, support the next experiment in democracy by giving that whole area stability, like we gave the South Koreans stability after the armistice with the North Koreans and made them a strong.

[00:59:02.15] Even Vietnam today, from my last trip back there, I swear to God, sir, it's like we won. It's like we won. The political stays in their lane. The financier money guys stay in their lane. So the economy is strong.

[00:59:17.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you ever envision Iraq finding itself in that position?

[00:59:25.15] ALLAN CRUZ: Well, that's a stretch, sir. That's a stretch. Not without-- I mean, it would be like if we were, quote, members of the British Indian Empire at the time of partition, and your family was going to go to Pakistan and my family was going to stay in India, we both would have had hopes for a strong Pakistan and a strong India.

[00:59:52.70] But you forget the other elements within that society that are still thinking in terms of, hey, I've been a Muslim for 15,000 years or 5,000 years. I've been a member of this tribe, this part of the world in the North-West Frontier for 300 years, and I've been a Pakistani for 42 years. So there's other dynamics at play.

[01:00:24.14] And for Iraq to become as stable as we would like, like South Korea, I would think that there's got to be a way to bring economic prosperity to that area that everybody shares in so that the option of just more fighting is truly viewed as the worst possible option as opposed to the only option.

[01:00:53.52] ALLAN CRUZ: I like it, sir. I think that-- I remember when it first came up. I remember how we felt when we first saw the designs. We didn't like it. It wasn't like the World War II monuments. Lots of stuff has been talked about-- the architect Maya Lin, was that her name?

[01:01:17.36] JOE GALLOWAY: That's right.

[01:01:17.99] ALLAN CRUZ: OK, and because it wasn't a white marble monument like we saw from World War II guys, we didn't like the design, and therefore, we didn't like her. And quite frankly, sir, we said some things about her that she did not deserve. She took some heat from the veterans community that she did not deserve.

[01:01:41.39] And she was just a standard American kid. Her family had come over to this country. She'd gone to school here. She had all her credentials as an architect. And you know, she had every right to be in that competition. And good for her that her design won out. And quite frankly, we like that monument now because it's unique.

[01:02:01.78] JOE GALLOWAY: It is unique.

[01:02:02.59] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir. And the names on it, the way they're placed, the concept of the circle, because the beginning and the end names match up, come around again. I think we didn't understand it at the time. I remember I didn't go back to DC when it was dedicated, but I kind of now wish I had.

[01:02:32.88] What I really like about the Wall, the memorial, is that-- and this is something I read. This is not Al Cruz original, but since it became a place where we brought things, the museum that has grown up around the things left at the Wall doesn't have-- it's not a choice of a curator that's making selections. It's stuff that we, as Vietnam veterans, have brought to the Wall. Whatever that might be. And that makes it even more unique. That makes it even more unique.

[01:03:02.94] JOE GALLOWAY: They've got a warehouse full of that stuff.

[01:03:04.47] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir.

[01:03:05.25] JOE GALLOWAY: You said you revisited Vietnam, tell me about that.

[01:03:09.57] ALLAN CRUZ: That was about five years ago, sir, five or six. What was nice about that visit was we went back and saw every position that each one of us, veterans, had been at while we were in country. So we went and saw it today-- being an artilleryman, sir, I had my battery centers. I had my old maps and I had my GPS. I could stand on the battery center of each one of our battery positions.

[01:03:36.28] I'm standing on some guy's driveway. Because down Highway 9, there are homes now, developments. And the population has tripled. It's a young country. After 50 years of war and us killing off two generations-- or the fighting of-- between us, the French, and themselves. There's a vitality to the country that's there. They treated us nice. They were very happy to see us.

[01:04:04.24] North Vietnam was-- Hanoi was a little still standoffish. Even though they won as far as they're concerned, they still kept us at a distance. But it was like we'd won, sir, down south because the economy was driving everything. Two rice crops a year, plans on how to build five-story houses where there's a shop on the bottom, families on the second deck, children on the third deck, mother and father on the fourth deck, and a plan to support that and keep them healthy in that arena.

[01:04:41.68] And so it was very, very good to go back in that sense. And I'm sometimes surprised that some of the other veterans from that time frame that I talk don't want to go back. I don't know what their concern is or why not. Maybe it was a real negative for them all the way around.

[01:04:59.89] JOE GALLOWAY: I think it's more the old ghosts than any fear of what they might see.

[01:05:05.50] ALLAN CRUZ: Yes sir.

[01:05:06.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, sir, thank you.

[01:05:08.74] ALLAN CRUZ: OK. Thank you very much for your time, Joe.