

Marriott, Frank US Army

[00:00:14.05] JOE GALLOWAY: When and where were you born?

[00:00:17.08] FRANK MARRIOTT: Glen Ridge, New Jersey. August 22, 1946.

[00:00:21.91] JOE GALLOWAY: Excellent. Who were your family members?

[00:00:25.69] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well I'm an only child. I had just my mom and dad.

[00:00:29.31] JOE GALLOWAY: What did your dad do?

[00:00:30.90] FRANK MARRIOTT: He was a plumber.

[00:00:32.31] JOE GALLOWAY: And your home town, where you went to school?

[00:00:35.76] FRANK MARRIOTT: West Caldwell, New Jersey. And I went to James Caldwell High School. FRANK MARRIOTT: I graduated from high school in 1964, and started college that same year at Norwich University in Vermont, which at the time was an all-male military college. So I was I think two years ROTC, and then in your sophomore year or something like that you get sworn into the senior part of that, you take an oath and everything. That's when you get the \$50 a month, so that's how I ended up in the military.

[00:01:17.55] JOE GALLOWAY: So you were commissioned upon graduation?

[00:01:20.00] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes I was.

[00:01:21.42] JOE GALLOWAY: And that was what year?

[00:01:23.38] FRANK MARRIOTT: June '68.

[00:01:24.32] JOE GALLOWAY: '68?

[00:01:25.49] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes.

[00:01:26.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Man, Vietnam war is as hot as it's ever going to get.

[00:01:30.74] FRANK MARRIOTT: Joe, when I started the troop level in Vietnam was under 20,000. When I graduated was over 500,000.

[00:01:38.93] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:01:39.59] FRANK MARRIOTT: So quite a change.

[00:01:41.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Quite a change indeed.

[00:01:47.59] FRANK MARRIOTT: Of course before graduation I went to summer camp--

[00:01:50.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Right.

[00:01:51.52] FRANK MARRIOTT: --which is the officer equivalent of basic training. And that was at Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

[00:01:58.06] JOE GALLOWAY: For infantry?

[00:01:59.83] FRANK MARRIOTT: For everything. Everybody went there. And then when I went on active duty I went to IOBC-- Infantry Officer Basic Course-- down at Fort Benning.

[00:02:11.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Fort Benning. Benning School for Boys.

[00:02:14.96] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah, well actually that's what they called OCS. JOE GALLOWAY: OCS, yeah. FRANK MARRIOTT: Ours was more of a gentleman's course.

[00:02:20.78] JOE GALLOWAY: And anything beyond that?

[00:02:24.23] FRANK MARRIOTT: The only thing before I went to Vietnam was I did attend the Jungle School down in Panama. And after Fort Benning I spent four months or so out at Fort Ord, I was a training officer in an infantry AIT company, so--

[00:02:44.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about the Panama Jungle School, how good was it?

[00:02:50.73] FRANK MARRIOTT: The value to me was being acclimatized if you will, to the heat. They opened that plane door and it just hit you like a sledgehammer. And then we did patrolling, map reading, I spent a few nights in the jungle and I haven't been back.

[00:03:13.41] JOE GALLOWAY: So it was semi useful at least?

[00:03:16.20] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. Yeah, I think it gets you focused and gets you used to the idea of the climate and the conditions.

[00:03:23.19] JOE GALLOWAY: And they got four months worth of work at Fort Ord before they put you on the plane?

[00:03:28.65] FRANK MARRIOTT: Thereabouts. Yeah, something like that. FRANK MARRIOTT: I arrived on a big plane full of Soldiers, the biggest plane I'd ever seen, from Travis Air Force Base in October 1969.

[00:03:50.82] JOE GALLOWAY: October '69. Where did you land?

[00:03:54.66] FRANK MARRIOTT: First off at I guess Bien Hoa and then went to the replacement center at Long Bien, which was an ugly looking place.

[00:04:08.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Seriously.

[00:04:09.75] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well it's just a gigantic place with bunkers all over the place. There was nothing there.

[00:04:14.67] JOE GALLOWAY: The Vietnamese let it go back to jungle.

[00:04:17.82] FRANK MARRIOTT: Not a bad idea. And then-- I was only there a few days and we got orders to go various places.

[00:04:26.85] JOE GALLOWAY: So you went over without an assignment and went through the replacement depot type thing.

[00:04:33.99] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah, well on the plane they had us fill out a dream sheet. Where would you like to be assigned? So I said-- I still remember 1st Infantry Division, 9th Infantry Division-- I figured ride in a boat, why not?-- and I guess the 1st Cavalry or something.

[00:04:55.20] JOE GALLOWAY: And where did they send you?

[00:04:57.00] FRANK MARRIOTT: The Americal Division.

[00:04:58.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Of course they did. They only had you fill out that sheet so they could know where not to send you.

[00:05:05.46] FRANK MARRIOTT: I suppose so. But at that time, actually before that the My Lai thing was cooking and my recollection was that Lieutenant Calley was at Fort Ord when I was there. He was in-- well, the MP station was right across the street from where-- our BOQ. But I didn't know anything about the Americal Division. I really didn't.

[00:05:32.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, and that's where they're sending you?

[00:05:35.28] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yep.

[00:05:36.15] JOE GALLOWAY: To what unit?

[00:05:39.24] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, the initial order was just the Americal Division. Then I went up to Chu Lai and went through what they called the Americal Combat Center, which was probably four or five days. Same old stuff, don't step on a booby trap, useful things I suppose. But it was on the beach and I figured that's OK. Until the first rocket attack, which was the first day I was there. And I thought this could be a long year.

[00:06:17.85] So anyway we got orders and I was assigned to the 4th of the 31st, 196th Light Infantry Brigade. And they had a map there and I looked where they were stationed, if you will. And they were at LZ West and LZ Siberia, which at the time I think were the furthest west locations in the division.

[00:06:51.96] JOE GALLOWAY: And off you went.

[00:06:53.19] FRANK MARRIOTT: Off I went.

[00:06:54.78] JOE GALLOWAY: Helicoptered out?

[00:06:56.22] FRANK MARRIOTT: Helicoptered out. It was a cloudy, rainy day, it was during the monsoons. And the guy had to circle around a while before he found LZ West, which was like a brown mud spot on the top of this mountain and went down and--

[00:07:14.20] JOE GALLOWAY: Dropped you in the mud.

[00:07:15.67] FRANK MARRIOTT: Dropped me in the mud. That's right.

[00:07:17.13] JOE GALLOWAY: [CHUCKLES]

[00:07:18.67] FRANK MARRIOTT: West was about-- it was on a mountain, 445 meters, so it's pretty high up.

[00:07:27.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. How were you received?

[00:07:31.64] FRANK MARRIOTT: Oh, I guess I reported to the battalion commander and I was well received. The one thing that was disappointing is that-- in retrospect, it wasn't disappointing, but they didn't have a place in a unit for me right away. So I sort of hung around for a couple of weeks and then replaced a lieutenant in Charlie Company.

[00:08:01.30] JOE GALLOWAY: So what did you do while you were hanging out in the mud?

[00:08:05.17] FRANK MARRIOTT: I was what they call the LNO, liaison officer. So I fly back and forth from LZ West to LZ Hawk Hill which was the brigade headquarters. They had just moved from a place called Baldy. And actually that place was pretty nice, the brigade headquarters. And I-- probably about a week or so I stayed in a big bunker with some guys and actually a guy went to college with a friend of mine and so, anyway. And then finally I went out to West and got assigned

[00:08:49.63] JOE GALLOWAY: If you were a skilled bureaucrat you would have got yourself an assignment in brigade headquarters.

[00:08:55.57] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah, no one offered me that.

[00:08:58.93] BOTH: [CHUCKLES]

[00:09:01.81] FRANK MARRIOTT: Kind of put pins in a map, yeah. No, it didn't happen.

[00:09:05.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Back to the mud hole.

[00:09:08.02] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes.

[00:09:08.92] JOE GALLOWAY: And back to a platoon?

[00:09:11.44] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes. Got assigned to 2nd Platoon, and they had just come up on West. Introduced myself. Kind of intimidating all these guys-- they look like they've been out there two years. And my platoon sergeant initially was-- I don't know whether it was his second tour, I don't think so, but he was an E-6. He had about probably 10 years in or so.

[00:09:39.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Was he good?

[00:09:41.53] FRANK MARRIOTT: He was OK. His MOS was 11-Hotel which is a-- they don't have that anymore. It's a recoilless rifle.

[00:09:50.94] JOE GALLOWAY: Need a lot of those.

[00:09:52.24] FRANK MARRIOTT: Oh, yeah. Well they did have one on LZ West and his next job was being in charge of that. And I ended up with Shake 'n Bakes after that.

[00:10:04.86] JOE GALLOWAY: How were they?

[00:10:06.36] FRANK MARRIOTT: Very good. Yeah. I mean people tend to talk them down, but the guys I had were fine. They were well motivated and--

[00:10:15.59] JOE GALLOWAY: I've heard that from other platoon leaders that they--

[00:10:19.07] FRANK MARRIOTT: I didn't have a problem at all.

[00:10:22.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Describe for the audience the Shake 'n Bake.

[00:10:26.80] FRANK MARRIOTT: Shake 'n Bake-- well, in the day they had Shake 'n Bake chicken, which you shook up in a bag and put in the oven. So these guys had gone through basic and AIT--

[00:10:40.86] JOE GALLOWAY: AIT, and they were made a sergeant.

[00:10:43.34] FRANK MARRIOTT: --and NCO school. Yeah. And they were all college graduates. One guy had a master's degree. But they did a fine job.

[00:10:56.49] JOE GALLOWAY: They wanted to survive too.

[00:10:58.59] FRANK MARRIOTT: Absolutely

[00:11:05.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell us about the first time you take your platoon into the bush.

[00:11:10.89] FRANK MARRIOTT: I'm not quite sure whether it was just on a patrol or the whole company went. I think it was the latter, the whole company went. But LZ West was an ugly top of the mountain-- JOE GALLOWAY: Frontier fort. FRANK MARRIOTT: --all mud and bunkers. And then once you get outside the wire you were in nowhere land. There were several routes off the mountain, and I believe we took what we called the finger, because it was the easiest way. And that was it. And it rained every day, every minute. Not exactly a day at the beach.

[00:11:56.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Not a day at the beach

[00:11:58.57] FRANK MARRIOTT: You couldn't get across a river. I mean, even little streams were impassable.

[00:12:04.78] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. One assumes also for the enemy.

[00:12:10.09] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes, that's the good news. They don't want to mess around in that stuff either.

[00:12:15.58] JOE GALLOWAY: [CHUCKLES] So you didn't find any?

[00:12:19.54] FRANK MARRIOTT: Enemy? No.

[00:12:20.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:12:21.40] FRANK MARRIOTT: Not for a while.

[00:12:22.33] JOE GALLOWAY: Not for a while. Not till things dried up some.

[00:12:26.23] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. Pretty much. I think the monsoon ended in January or something like that and then we did encounter some VC, although in that area they were strictly fire a few shots, set booby traps, and take off kind of deal. They had been through the mill. The Marines had been there a while. But then the NVA every once in a while they'd like to come in there too.

[00:13:02.80] JOE GALLOWAY: Then it gets serious.

[00:13:05.27] FRANK MARRIOTT: In a heartbeat. Most of our casualties were from booby traps.

[00:13:10.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Booby traps. JOE GALLOWAY: When you were on top of the hill what were living conditions like?

[00:13:23.54] FRANK MARRIOTT: I saw that in the paperwork, the word accommodations were used. I laughed. My platoon bunker was about 8 by 10. At least it wasn't muddy inside. But all of them were infested with rats and had one of those little telephones like in World War II where you crank the thing and the light comes on. So at least I was out of the rain.

[00:13:53.83] JOE GALLOWAY: But rudimentary to say the least.

[00:13:56.36] FRANK MARRIOTT: Oh yes. Yeah.

[00:13:57.43] JOE GALLOWAY: And that was where you lived and slept and worked?

[00:14:01.99] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, yeah, we weren't there that often. The deal was that we had LZ West and also LZ Siberia which was about six kilometers to the west. So they always had like a reinforced platoon up there. But the companies rotated. So I was in Charlie Company. You'd be out of the field most of the time and then go up on a fire base for a while and then be replaced by another company, go back out to the field. And while you were on the fire base they sent patrols out. So you'd walk down the mountain walk back up the mountain. There were booby traps, there were VC, it wasn't like you were laying around.

[00:14:49.47] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah, I got along with everybody. My first CO was a West Pointer and I was kind of lukewarm about him. But after a while he was replaced by a guy who had come up through the ranks and gone to OCS, and that was great. We had a great company at that time. And he had done a tour with 173rd Airborne and so this was his second tour. And really-- he was from New York, so I spoke the same language from Jersey. And I think we had a real good company at that time.

[00:15:38.22] JOE GALLOWAY: And you're in NCOs?

[00:15:39.96] FRANK MARRIOTT: Oh, yeah. The NCOs as I mentioned, most of them had gone through the NCO school or others had been promoted up from the company. And the squad leaders were good guys. One guy had been in the 82nd. They withdrew that brigade, 3rd Brigade, and so he came up to the mountains and got an education. And then-- but he was a real good guy. He lives in Wilmington, North Carolina. And other guys were-- I had a fellow with a master's degree. He was from Nebraska of all places. Good guy. I mean everybody-- I got along with them and--

[00:16:35.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Back home you got antiwar protests, you got racial tension, race riots, things like that going on. Does any of that come over to where you are?

[00:16:52.47] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, my experience was the closer you got to the point of the spear the fewer problems there were. But when you go back in the rear to Chu Lai, that's where the problems were. And in college, I went to Norwich University, it's in the center of Vermont. And in those days nobody had a cell phone, there wasn't a TV set in the area where all of us lived. And so the news I got was when I went home in the summer and watched the 6 o'clock news. And I never went to a demonstration, I never saw a demonstration.

[00:17:38.33] But the racial issue of course, the spring of '68 when I graduated there was the King assassination, Kennedy assassination, I mean it was nuts. And to top it all off, I-- actually it was a summer before, I was in summer camp and my father-- I was an only child, so the battalion commander calls me and says your father had a heart attack and he's dying or something like that. I said, OK. So I had to go home back to Jersey. And to make a long story

short, he had a stroke. He was paralyzed from then on for nine years. He couldn't talk, couldn't move. So--

[00:18:30.28] JOE GALLOWAY: That's hard.

[00:18:39.41] FRANK MARRIOTT: Anyway, I'd go visit him in the hospital. Of course I was a plumber's helper in the summertime. But-- and people were yelling and stuff. It was down in Montclair. And finally he got home, but he was always in a hospital bed in our dining room from then on. But that's the closest I ever got to any riots or anything other than reading about it.

[00:19:06.91] JOE GALLOWAY: So you could get that same vibe in Chu Lai, but not out on the LZ.

[00:19:14.49] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, there was some, but really not much. My experience was that, as I said, the closer you got to the point of the spear the fewer problems you had. Everybody realized they had to depend on each other and it didn't matter what color you were or anything else. And it didn't.

[00:19:39.83] JOE GALLOWAY: This may seem a funny question, but what did you do with your time off, if you had any?

[00:19:46.43] FRANK MARRIOTT: I saw that question. I don't remember having any time off. The rotation for our company, or all the companies, was we were out 70 days and we'd go back for three to Chu Lai on what was called stand down.

[00:20:03.23] JOE GALLOWAY: For three days?

[00:20:04.34] FRANK MARRIOTT: Three days and back out for 70 days.

[00:20:06.89] JOE GALLOWAY: How very generous of them.

[00:20:08.83] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah, really was.

[00:20:09.50] JOE GALLOWAY: What did you do with all of those three days?

[00:20:12.20] FRANK MARRIOTT: I drank a lot of beer.

[00:20:13.97] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you have barbecue on the beach?

[00:20:15.86] FRANK MARRIOTT: We did. Steaks that I would throw away but they tasted pretty good at the time.

[00:20:20.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Knock yourself out.

[00:20:22.96] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. And they had floor shows too.

[00:20:24.74] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah?

[00:20:27.17] FRANK MARRIOTT: And they took all our weapons and everything. But there was always some guy who had a smoke grenade who'd set it off during a floor show. But everybody looked forward to stand down. And we could go in the ocean, too, which really helped the jungle rot, I think.

[00:20:48.92] JOE GALLOWAY: You have specific memories of the popular culture at that time? Really, music?

[00:20:56.33] FRANK MARRIOTT: Oh yeah, the music was great.

[00:20:59.03] JOE GALLOWAY: What were you listening to?

[00:21:02.60] FRANK MARRIOTT: I'm not a real fan, but the music changed over at the time I was in college, from the Beatles and Stones and kind of rock and roll to-- of course the Beatles got a little weird at the end and--

[00:21:18.66] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, Creedence Clearwater.

[00:21:21.06] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah, Creedence Clearwater and all that stuff. One memory I have of Chu Lai was I had a strobe light to call in helicopters at night. And in the hooch where the guys lived in the rear they had these fans-- ceiling fans-- and that song In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida was playing. Crank that thing up, I turn on my strobe light and it was pretty cool with the fans.

[00:21:45.75] BOTH: [CHUCKLES]

[00:21:46.95] JOE GALLOWAY: Have a light show.

[00:21:48.15] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes. Christmas, the captain gave me a bottle of whiskey, which I don't drink. I forget, I guess I shared that with the guys in the platoon. And we were on West and we left the next day. I do remember that and I had gotten stuff--

[00:22:09.36] JOE GALLOWAY: Day after Christmas?

[00:22:10.52] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah.

[00:22:11.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Down the hill or back to the rear?

[00:22:13.92] FRANK MARRIOTT: Down the hill. Oh, you couldn't walk to the rear it was too far. Down the hill to Hiep Duc, which was the village-- that's H-I-E-P D-U-C. And that was about six kilometers or so down the mountain.

[00:22:30.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Was there a Special Forces camp there?

[00:22:32.73] FRANK MARRIOTT: No, that was-- they had a place called LZ Karen where they had some guys there. The nearest Special Forces camp was Tien Phuoc and that was in the next valley. I did go there on a helicopter one time. But I guess those guys were either Special Forces or just MACV advisers or something on LZ Karen, but it was a tiny little place.

[00:23:03.32] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you get turkey and stuffing for Christmas dinner?

[00:23:10.04] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, that was right before I got out to the field. So the short answer is no. But I did eat a turkey C-ration.

[00:23:17.99] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh good.

[00:23:18.59] FRANK MARRIOTT: To celebrate.

[00:23:19.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Thanksgiving no different?

[00:23:23.90] FRANK MARRIOTT: Not for me.

[00:23:30.50] JOE GALLOWAY: How was the quality of the leadership as high up as you could see it?

[00:23:36.71] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, my initial battalion commander I thought was a real good guy and he was rotated out. And his replacement I think was a good man. I think it was his first tour if I was not mistaken. And you know, at least he'd get out and go to the field and talk to guys and stuff like that. He was replaced by a guy I didn't like at all, who had been in Africa. And he'd been in the Korean War, but first time in Vietnam. And he was I thought aloof and arrogant, my personal impression. I'm sure he was a good person but I didn't care for him.

[00:24:36.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Agh, two out of three is not too bad.

[00:24:39.91] FRANK MARRIOTT: Then after him there was another guy. I didn't know his name.

[00:24:42.88] BOTH: [CHUCKLES]

[00:24:46.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Can you describe significant actions, operations, in which you participated? Did you get into any really big fights?

[00:24:57.20] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. It was in the spring of '70 and we were operating west of the river, kind of the western part of the area of operation, and crossed the river. The shortest guy in my platoon lost his rifle and almost his life and some guy grabbed him and pulled him out. We continued up-- of course, losing your rifle-- JOE GALLOWAY: That's pretty bad. FRANK MARRIOTT: --was not good. There was a North Vietnamese soldier on the trail. He was killed. So we gave the guy his rifle. The problem was the minute I saw that guy-- he had a new, clean AK 47, rations-- right away I knew we were in trouble.

[00:25:52.13] JOE GALLOWAY: You were in trouble.

[00:25:53.12] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah, so we went right--

[00:25:55.49] JOE GALLOWAY: Somebody fresh off the trail.

[00:25:57.53] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes. Yeah, yeah. And so we went back on stand down and things started happening. And right when we got there-- I was the last group to come on a helicopter, I got in a Jeep. To make a long story short, the Jeep flipped. I wasn't driving. I broke my collarbone. So I end up in the hospital and they were rocketing the hospital, which if you've ever had a broken collarbone, it hurts, you have to climb under the bed.

[00:26:29.58] Anyway, I was out of the field for at least a month because of my left shoulder. I couldn't carry a rucksack, couldn't carry a rifle. But I went back out to LZ West and I was the night duty officer. So I slept in the daytime and at nighttime I'd handle all the radios and artillery fire and stuff like that. And the North Vietnamese were there and they hit pretty hard, and we lost some guys. And the other companies lost some guys. And I finally healed up enough to go back out and at that time I was company commander. Much to my chagrin. And I thought they were--

[00:27:10.98] JOE GALLOWAY: You were a captain by now?

[00:27:12.19] FRANK MARRIOTT: No, I was a first lieutenant.

[00:27:13.32] JOE GALLOWAY: First lieutenant.

[00:27:17.16] FRANK MARRIOTT: We went down west and were walking through a place I'd been through 20 times. And the point element-- I hear all this yelling, and holy cow, words to that effect. All of a sudden bullets are flying. And they had walked into a NVA laager site, guys in hammocks. And everybody goes [GASPS]-- our guys, their guys. So we had to-- I fell down on that paddy, my rucksack went on my head, and I couldn't get up. I had to roll sideways. And, anyway, we got to a dike area with some trees and I did a Fort Benning deal, set up a base of fire and called in artillery. We attacked it from the side. Guys came back with bullet holes in their shirts, their canteens. And I said, all right, we'll try plan B.

[00:28:18.49] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, plan B.

[00:28:19.62] FRANK MARRIOTT: Plan B was more artillery and at almost dark an airstrike. And that was the scariest day of my tour. So I was in charge. It was very close, danger close, and the bombs-- shrapnel came through the laager, tree branches were falling down and bouncing around

[00:28:48.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Did the bad guys leave or did you leave?

[00:28:51.11] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well we stayed there that night. And then they must have left. You know they're not stupid. I think they hear the FAC, and it was those white phosphorus rockets. They probably had it up--

[00:29:03.77] JOE GALLOWAY: That'll discourage you.

[00:29:05.09] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes. But that-- I didn't think I was going to make it through that night.

[00:29:10.39] JOE GALLOWAY: If they had stayed you probably wouldn't have.

[00:29:14.68] FRANK MARRIOTT: Could be, depending upon how much it was. My sense was that they were pulling out. And a couple of days later-- I may be a little wrong with the chronology-- we went further down on what we called the French road, which was the only road-- it wasn't a road, it was a dirt track-- and caught a bunch of them on the road at night. And--

[00:29:39.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Heading the other way.

[00:29:40.32] FRANK MARRIOTT: They were headed out, with wounded. And we had papers. You know, Private Nguyen is excused from duty, kind of thing. I couldn't read them, but we had scouts that could.

[00:29:56.71] JOE GALLOWAY: We want to talk about your most vivid memories. Tell me about the worst day you had during your--

[00:30:04.19] FRANK MARRIOTT: I just told you.

[00:30:05.12] JOE GALLOWAY: You just did. Tell us about the best day you had.

[00:30:09.53] FRANK MARRIOTT: No contest. Going home.

[00:30:10.94] JOE GALLOWAY: Going home.

[00:30:18.44] FRANK MARRIOTT: I met an Australian, first part of my tour was when I was on Hawk Hill. And they had not Australian, but Korean, Korean Marine unit. And this guy was the liaison with the brigade and the Korean Marine unit. But there was a language barrier so I didn't really get to talk to him. None of the others, other than hearing the New Zealanders on the radio usually swearing about something.

[00:30:50.51] JOE GALLOWAY: That can be amusing.

[00:30:51.92] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes. And as far as Vietnamese are concerned we had scouts. Each platoon had a Kit Carson Scout. My first one I think his real name was Nguyen Van Ly, but everybody called him Twenty because that's all he could say. That's how old he was. And Twenty was killed shortly after I took over the platoon.

[00:31:17.50] He went out with the company and there was a booby trap and he had a head wound. He's mentioned by the way in that Keith William Nolan book Through The Valley. And Twenty was admired by all of us. And then his replacement, I knew more about the VC than he

did. But the other two guys were OK, Jack and Ky. Jack was a local guy from Hiep Duc and Ky was from Nui Loc Son.

[00:31:49.06] JOE GALLOWAY: What did Twenty do to make him admired by all?

[00:31:53.41] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well in August when they had the big-- it was before I got there-- when they had the big fight with the North Vietnamese that's been written about, he helped out a lot. And he knew-- he had been trained in North Vietnam. So he knew what was coming.

[00:32:09.37] JOE GALLOWAY: How they were going to do it

[00:32:11.87] FRANK MARRIOTT: Got everybody ready as much as you could.

[00:32:19.04] JOE GALLOWAY: He was in fact a defector?

[00:32:22.06] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yes. All of them were.

[00:32:29.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Now did you have much, if any, contact with villagers, South Vietnamese peasants?

[00:32:37.26] FRANK MARRIOTT: Just when we went to Hiep Duc which was in a controlled fire zone. I've got a map here but-- that was where they had a little popular forces group there and all that. If we went there we just passed through. So-- but the people I saw were out in the middle of nowhere. Those are the people I had contact with. Probably all VC, I'm sure they were. But these--

[00:33:04.20] JOE GALLOWAY: But these are people you're seeing out there, small farms, that kind of stuff?

[00:33:09.70] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. Hamlets.

[00:33:10.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Hamlets. JOE GALLOWAY: How much contact did you have with your family back home?

[00:33:22.55] FRANK MARRIOTT: Just letters.

[00:33:23.39] JOE GALLOWAY: Letters.

[00:33:24.95] FRANK MARRIOTT: The first day I got to Hawk Hill I ran into one of my Norwich classmates who was the signal officer. He said, hey Frank, you want to call home? I said, sure. So I called my mother I think and my then girlfriend, now wife. But it was kind of-- if you ever made a MARS call you know. Hello. I love you. Over. And that was all. Other than that it was all letters.

[00:33:54.71] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. How much news did you get about the war you were fighting in and what was going on back home? Did you see Stars and Stripes once in a while?

[00:34:08.61] FRANK MARRIOTT: The answer to that is virtually nothing. The only time we did get Stars and Stripes. And the Americal had a little newspaper.

[00:34:16.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Armed Forces Radio?

[00:34:18.66] FRANK MARRIOTT: We didn't have a radio.

[00:34:19.90] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't have a radio?

[00:34:22.29] FRANK MARRIOTT: We wouldn't have listened to a radio in the field. So the only thing I remember about that is we went-- walked up-- we were back on LZ West sitting on the bunker line and some guy said, I'm cleaning this up, holy cow, some National Guardsmen shot and killed some kids at Kent State. And so that happened. And none of us could figure out why they had live ammunition or what they were doing, but I didn't really learn about that or much else until years later. FRANK MARRIOTT: I did eventually get a Starlight scope but they were--

[00:35:12.44] JOE GALLOWAY: They were old by then.

[00:35:14.60] FRANK MARRIOTT: --sort of primitive at that point. Just this kind of green thing and it came in a case. And the only other thing was, since I was hurt they gave me this locator, an FM radio, to use in what was called a beacon strike. And I didn't know exactly what it was, but I would be given a time, set this thing up, turn it on, and I could actually talk to the pilot. And-- you know, and they were going out west and blowing up trees and stuff. I don't think-- I mean, that was the impression I got. Supposedly, it would give them a fixed point on the earth from which they could take an azimuth and drop their bombs on a target. But the target was not--

[00:36:02.25] JOE GALLOWAY: But they were not really dropping bombs at your command?

[00:36:05.75] FRANK MARRIOTT: No. This was far away. Far away.

[00:36:07.51] JOE GALLOWAY: You were a LORAN point or something.

[00:36:11.88] FRANK MARRIOTT: Right. Yeah. Now I was on the business end of two Arc Lights. And the first one was at night, didn't know what was happening. We were on the radio. Stop where you are, set up. So we did. It's dark. Next thing you know, boom, boom, boom. The earth is shaking and everybody's going, what the hell is that? Finally figured out what it was. And then the next one I was on West and knew it was coming. So I had a grandstand view and could actually see the planes at 30,000 feet. And that thing hit. It was out in the western part of the valley. Holy mackerel. I don't know what they hit, but God it was a sight to see.

[00:36:57.45] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about going home.

[00:37:04.62] FRANK MARRIOTT: That was great.

[00:37:06.63] JOE GALLOWAY: You finished your year?

[00:37:09.21] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. Right before-- this was a bit, maybe a month or so before I left, they brought me back to LZ West and I was really again the night duty officer there. And then almost at the end I got on this helicopter because the guy wanted to know where our place was. Next thing I know the guy turns back and says we're going down to do a prisoner snatch. I said, no you're not. Not with me in here.

[00:37:45.81] But anyway, I literally changed places with the door gunner in the air. I was the door gunner they went down and tried to grab some schmuck, which they didn't do. But I fired that whole box of ammunition. The pilot wanted me to stay on. I guess I ended up back in Chu Lia and got on a plane to Cam Ranh Bay. And I don't think I had a uniform. So I went to this big place where they had uniforms and got some khakis to put on.

[00:38:22.94] And the night before I went to-- they must have had a little officer's club there. I ran into another one of my classmates from Norwich, another guy. Actually he had been in my company freshman year. And I flew back to Seattle. And then since I wasn't getting out I went right back to Philly to my wife's family. And it was wonderful.

[00:38:53.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Now you weren't getting-- separating from the Army at that point?

[00:38:57.76] FRANK MARRIOTT: No. I still had some time left. And since my father was paralyzed I would have preferred to be-- I probably didn't have to go at all if I'd have put in for a compassionate assignment, but that's not in my DNA. Anyway, when I came back I had a few months to do and I wanted to go to Fort Dix because it was only like an hour from my folks. That was not to be. I ended up in Baltimore, at Fort Holabird, as the public information officer.

[00:39:33.94] JOE GALLOWAY: Of course I mean nobody in the whole Army asks to go to Fort Dix.

[00:39:39.70] FRANK MARRIOTT: Except me.

[00:39:40.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Except you. And of course they have to deny you pro forma.

[00:39:45.07] [CHUCKLES]

[00:39:46.75] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. I should have said, whatever you do don't send me to Fort Dix.

[00:39:49.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Don't send me to Fort Dix. They would have sent you straight away.

[00:39:53.65] FRANK MARRIOTT: That's right.

[00:39:55.33] JOE GALLOWAY: So how was Holabird?

[00:39:58.33] FRANK MARRIOTT: Holabird, it was an office and I was really ill suited to that after my year's experience. And they had a newspaper they put out. Of course, Holabird at that time was the Army Intelligence School so most of what they did was secret. And it was when the Army got caught spying on civilians so every day all these helicopters would come in and you'd see all these generals hats trying to figure out who to blame. But I didn't-- I had two E-6s that worked for me and they did all the work. I basically didn't do much.

[00:40:37.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Wow. You were just working the clock out?

[00:40:41.59] FRANK MARRIOTT: You're right. And my wife and I were anxious to-- I was married by then. I got married right when I came back. We were anxious to leave Baltimore.

[00:40:53.10] JOE GALLOWAY: I can understand that. So finally you're separated from the Army?

[00:40:59.64] FRANK MARRIOTT: Right.

[00:41:00.24] JOE GALLOWAY: Still a first lieutenant? Or captain by then?

[00:41:02.46] FRANK MARRIOTT: No, first lieutenant.

[00:41:03.57] JOE GALLOWAY: First lieutenant. What did you decide to do after combat and the Army?

[00:41:12.67] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, I got married right after I came home. And fortunately my in-laws had a place at the Jersey Shore in Ocean City. So we thought it would be a real good idea to go there, which is what we did for the spring and summer. And I worked again as a plumber's helper. [CHUCKLES] But as-- when fall comes you have to leave because there's no work.

[00:41:42.00] So to make a long story short we ended up at Disney. Both my wife and I worked at Disney when they first opened, on their opening day. And the reason we were is because one of my other classmates who was a good friend of mine and also a Vietnam vet, his dad worked for Disney, and Doug had been hired in Orlando. He said, come on down--

[00:42:06.06] JOE GALLOWAY: So you're talk at Disneyland?

[00:42:07.89] FRANK MARRIOTT: No, I'm talking Walt Disney World.

[00:42:10.11] JOE GALLOWAY: Walt Disney World, yeah.

[00:42:11.34] FRANK MARRIOTT: So we came down, we both got hired. And in a year though I started law school. I didn't work there very long.

[00:42:20.11] JOE GALLOWAY: And you started law school?

[00:42:21.97] FRANK MARRIOTT: Right.

[00:42:23.47] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did you go?

[00:42:25.06] FRANK MARRIOTT: Stetson University down in Florida.

[00:42:27.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Stetson's a good school.

[00:42:29.47] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. Thank you. I was accepted and started at Rutgers in 1968. And my father was home, paralyzed. I had this Vietnam thing hanging over my head. I thought to myself, this isn't going to work. So I dropped out. When I came back I contacted Rutgers and went up to see whoever she was, some kind of dean. She said, what do you want? I said, well, I'd like to be readmitted. She said, you quit. I said, well, yeah, I had problems. And she didn't want to hear about it. She basically told me to get out of her office and that was that. Welcome home.

[00:43:07.56] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Stick it in your ear, Rutgers.

[00:43:11.25] FRANK MARRIOTT: Precisely. I haven't given them any money.

[00:43:16.30] JOE GALLOWAY: Why should you?

[00:43:17.88] FRANK MARRIOTT: Exactly

[00:43:20.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you have any difficulty readjusting to civilian life after the Army and the war?

[00:43:28.65] FRANK MARRIOTT: I don't think so. I was so happy to be home and with my wife and-- she's shaking her head. But I don't think I had a problem. I had a problem adjusting to school after that, it took me a while. But other than that I was ecstatic.

[00:43:53.66] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you kept in touch or made contact with guys you served with over there?

[00:44:00.38] FRANK MARRIOTT: Oh, yeah, we have a big group. What happened was the captain's RTO became a police officer and ultimately a police chief and had a company roster, with Social Security numbers and. I don't know how he did it, but we have a group of 40 or 50. And so-- and incidentally--

[00:44:22.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Just from your company?

[00:44:24.20] FRANK MARRIOTT: Right. Charlie.

[00:44:24.83] JOE GALLOWAY: That's pretty good.

[00:44:25.65] FRANK MARRIOTT: We get together every couple of years, usually when they have either the 196th Brigade, or 31st Infantry Regiment groups. It's a lot easier. And so, yeah, I'm still in touch with those guys and-- great bunch of guys.

[00:44:49.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you think your Vietnam experience changed you and affected your life afterward, for good or for less good?

[00:44:59.81] FRANK MARRIOTT: That's hard to say. I don't know. It's a good question but I don't know what I would have been like if I didn't go. I couldn't have looked myself in the mirror, I'll tell you that. So I figured I had to do it, I did it, and I'm done with that now.

[00:45:17.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. Did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about guys who are coming back from today's wars?

[00:45:30.54] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, yeah. I think I appreciate-- I mean that's a cliché anymore but I appreciate their service and sacrifice. I understand. They send you to a place that's like Mars, and then you come back here, and at least now people are saying thank you for your service.

[00:45:51.27] JOE GALLOWAY: They say-- well, yeah-- but then they send you back over there eight times, ten times.

[00:45:56.25] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. That's not right.

[00:45:58.35] JOE GALLOWAY: It doesn't seem right. It doesn't seem like you can expect a man to do eight combat tours and come back the same man you sent over.

[00:46:08.52] FRANK MARRIOTT: I don't think so. Unfortunately-- well I wouldn't say unfortunately, but coincidentally-- my grandson leaves in 12 days, he's going to be a medic. He leaves for basic training.

[00:46:23.44] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today in our society?

[00:46:30.77] FRANK MARRIOTT: I don't think most people remember it at all. People my age do. But the younger people they don't seem to have a concept. You know Vietnam is where they make running shoes and shirts and stuff like that. I don't see much of any lessons learned, that's a whole different story I guess. But you talk to somebody in their 40s or even 50s, they were in grade school or junior high and they saw some movies and that's about it.

[00:47:21.46] JOE GALLOWAY: Any questions?

[00:47:23.63] CREW: No, I don't have any questions.

[00:47:31.95] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your Norwich experience help prepare you for the Army or Vietnam?

[00:47:38.91] FRANK MARRIOTT: Oh, sure.

[00:47:41.52] JOE GALLOWAY: I mean you got four years of military college, same as West Point.

[00:47:47.28] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. Except I went home in the summertime and got that great job as a plumber's helper. But yeah, sure, I was used to being in a military organization and taking orders. So it was helpful. Leadership, being a lieutenant a lot of people make fun, but at that level-- not you-- but at that level a platoon leader is a platoon leader or should be. And if you can't, your guys will let you know in a hurry.

[00:48:27.43] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. And sometimes brutally.

[00:48:33.50] FRANK MARRIOTT: True.

[00:48:39.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Are there lessons you took from that Vietnam experience that you would pass on?

[00:48:48.16] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well, personally, I felt it was an obligation to serve. I signed up, I took an oath, and that was that. Now I understand people have the right to disagree. I don't think they have the right to blow stuff up and burn buildings down. But I think one thing that's-- if anything is positive that's happened since Iraq and Afghanistan is that people do say thank you for your service. Of course there was a 40 year period when nobody said anything. But I don't know that the politicians have learned much.

[00:49:33.53] When I heard the words nation building in conjunction with Iraq, I was like, you've got to be kidding me. You can't take an alien culture like that and expect it to end up like Iowa or New Hampshire or something like. That's not going to happen. They're going to forget all those thousands of years of killing and hatred. It shouldn't be a problem.

[00:49:56.19] JOE GALLOWAY: Shouldn't be a problem at all. JOE GALLOWAY: Have you visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in DC?

[00:50:07.58] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. Several times. The first time I think was with my guys from Charlie Company. We met in a hotel. I got a picture of it, and it was very moving.

[00:50:20.62] JOE GALLOWAY: You've heard about the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration, you're part of it.

[00:50:26.59] FRANK MARRIOTT: I have now.

[00:50:28.09] JOE GALLOWAY: You have now.

[00:50:28.83] FRANK MARRIOTT: I didn't before now.

[00:50:30.76] JOE GALLOWAY: What do you think about that?

[00:50:32.41] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well that's great. I hope it's successful. And I hope people in the country take part, there's some education imparted. The movie version of the Vietnam veteran got to be this drug addled lunatic who couldn't make it. And I think that there's people like that, but most of the people have done quite well that I know.

[00:51:01.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you think you ought to say? Or tell us about?

[00:51:09.33] FRANK MARRIOTT: Well the one thing I thought about when I went through all my stuff is I have pictures of our scouts, other than Twenty, who already got killed. And I remember distinctly asking them-- because at that point towards the end of my tour it was obvious we were pulling out-- I said, what are you guys going to do when we leave? And the answer was, I don't know. And I'm afraid they got killed.

[00:51:39.13] JOE GALLOWAY: Some of them they did.

[00:51:40.93] FRANK MARRIOTT: Yeah. I don't know.

[00:51:44.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Has anyone given you your Vietnam veterans lapel pin?

[00:51:50.35] FRANK MARRIOTT: No.

[00:51:51.67] JOE GALLOWAY: Ah. We better remedy that then.