

Morrison, James Army

[00:00:16.24] JOE GALLOWAY: When and where were you born?

[00:00:19.35] JAMES MORRISON: June 10, 1949. Concord, North Carolina in Cabarrus, Memorial Hospital.

[00:00:24.65] JOE GALLOWAY: All right. Who were your family members?

[00:00:28.18] JAMES MORRISON: My dad was J.P. Morrison, I'm a junior. And my mom was Louise Harrington Morrison.

[00:00:33.95] JOE GALLOWAY: Brothers and sisters?

[00:00:36.81] JAMES MORRISON: I have a sister Barbara Myers, which is Barbara Morrison, Carol Morrison, and then Barbie. And then I have a brother Gary Morrison, which is younger than me.

[00:00:48.98] JOE GALLOWAY: And you consider Concord your hometown? That's where you went to school?

[00:00:54.47] JAMES MORRISON: Lived in three houses up there all my life within a mile or two of each other. We've been there forever.

[00:00:59.11] JOE GALLOWAY: Been there forever.

[00:01:00.19] JAMES MORRISON: Yes, sir. As a kid growing up through school, all I wanted to do was work on cars. I was working in the body shop, and didn't think about the Army. Didn't know what Vietnam was. And I got a draft notice. And I went April of 1969.

[00:01:18.84] JOE GALLOWAY: 1969. What was your sense of the Vietnam War before they got you?

[00:01:26.32] JAMES MORRISON: Well, really I didn't know anything about it. We was in a little village-type town, just kind of knowing what was around us. I remember the jackets that said, when I die, I'll go to heaven because I've spent a year in hell. And I remember the black jackets, a couple of guys wearing them to come to a dance at our little school we went to.

[00:01:48.99] And I remember my sister's-- some of her friends talking about getting married to their boyfriends to keep them having to go in the Army. That's really all I knew about Vietnam and all. I had no idea what it was-- or didn't know anything about-- wasn't interested in the rest of the world. I just kind of marked my own little world.

[00:02:10.13] JAMES MORRISON: I took basic training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. And had really a lot of trouble with my legs. And so I pulled KP really more than I did-- than I got

trained. If it hadn't have been for the war being like it was, I believe they'd have put me out of there.

[00:02:23.57] JOE GALLOWAY: They'd have put you out.

[00:02:24.71] JAMES MORRISON: That's right.

[00:02:25.67] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did you go for advanced training?

[00:02:28.07] JAMES MORRISON: Put you on a slow-moving training from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, through the East Coast up to Fort Dix. Same deal up there, troubled legs, pulled KP so much one of the the cooks up there thought I was full-time. Every time he was working, I was.

[00:02:45.63] JOE GALLOWAY: Any of that training prepare you for what you faced when you got to Vietnam?

[00:02:50.98] JAMES MORRISON: Really it didn't, I don't think. It made you aware of a little bit of it. But to be honest with you, I did miss a lot. And we were taught you'd be fighting a bunch of old farmers, and that there wasn't much to it. And they kept talking about pulling out, pulling out. And we was told the whole time that they were going to be pulling out of Vietnam, which I was one of the guys fortunate enough to spend a year.

[00:03:15.23] But the training probably wasn't as good as it should have been. And I missed a lot, like I said earlier. But I really would have been ill if it had been harder than what I had. You didn't--

[00:03:27.83] JOE GALLOWAY: And those North Vietnamese regulars weren't exactly old farmers.

[00:03:32.18] JAMES MORRISON: They sure wasn't. And I realize it today when I see the documentaries and stuff on it, because we was up on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. And I realize when I see the documentation of it-- I thought because-- that people was either real young or real old and the mountains done it to them, but I realize all the-- even women and guys that were younger was in the bushes or the trenches on the Ho Chi Minh Trail up there, and they were pretty dedicated, to say the least.

[00:04:07.87] JAMES MORRISON: After a 20-day leave at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and I believe that was the weekend after Woodstock, because some of my buddies went off and wanted to go to Woodstock, and I didn't know what Woodstock was. All I wanted to do was go to Concord, North Carolina. And I didn't go home the first weekend, but my wife was coming up for graduation. We took a 20-day leave, went home, and then flew from Atlanta to Chicago-- from Charlotte to Atlanta to Chicago to Seattle, Washington.

[00:04:37.93] And it was kind of unusual there. We got to Seattle and Nixon was holding up troops. I'd been called by a friend of mine saying that, hey, you might not be going. Nixon is

holding up troops. And so I can't remember how many days we spent there. But we spent quite a few days there. And there were GIs everywhere. They were sleeping outside.

[00:04:57.91] You had to make a formation twice a day. And they would grab details out of it. So I got to where I avoided the-- kind of stood at the back. And plus, they'd even surrounded the barracks since 4 o'clock in the morning and grabbed guys for details out of that. And one guy jumped out the window and broke his ankle. It was a lot of confusion there.

[00:05:19.00] And what was real unusual about being there-- I finally heard my name called out. They started sending troops over. They didn't even send them home. Looked like 100,000 people in a big parade field, you see GIs everywhere. One of my best friends-- I'm standing there in formation fixing to go and being chewed out. I'd been told I missed two flights. And my best friend walked right by me. We were friends in school. And I stepped out of the formation and-- to speak to him, just briefly. And he said, you need any money or anything? I said, no, I'm good.

[00:05:52.79] He was a door gunner over there. He was going home as I was going over. And he ended up dying here pretty recently, in the last few years, with I believe cancer related to the Agent Orange and all.

[00:06:02.10] JOE GALLOWAY: Agent Orange. JAMES MORRISON: Yes sir. JOE GALLOWAY: So this is 1969?

[00:06:09.25] JAMES MORRISON: This is probably late August because I got over-- I probably went over in late August and got over there-- I left for Vietnam I guess September the 6th and got over there September the 6th.

[00:06:21.03] JOE GALLOWAY: So you were on one of those civilian airliner charter things?

[00:06:22.41] JAMES MORRISON: That's right. Yeah, we flew out of Seattle to Alaska, maybe 30 minutes in Alaska, 30 minutes in Japan or 15-- I might be a little wrong on time but not much longer, stopped in Japan and landed-- refueled straight to Vietnam.

[00:06:38.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Where did you land in Vietnam?

[00:06:40.34] JAMES MORRISON: Cam Ranh Bay.

[00:06:41.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Cam Ranh Bay. All right. You get off the plane, they send you to the repo depot?

[00:06:47.36] JAMES MORRISON: I think so. I remember getting off the plane. It felt like a wet mop hit you in the face. And then you're like it was different strange air you breathe. And everything was just strange to you. And they load you on a bus. And it had wire across it. I don't know whether that was to keep us in or keep the grenades out--

[00:07:02.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Keep the grenades out.

[00:07:04.13] JAMES MORRISON: And we took off. And I believe I spent two days down there.

[00:07:07.58] JOE GALLOWAY: 92nd Repo Depot.

[00:07:10.06] JAMES MORRISON: Probably what it was. I don't remember much about it. I remember that actually rockets did hit the runway. I think they probably done it for every plane that come in, but some rockets hit the runway as we came in. And you was shocked and pretty much scared to death.

[00:07:24.41] But I know we spent a night because we-- next morning I had detail waxing a jeep. And I always told the-- the whole time I was in Davos, I done paint and bodywork. So I thought I was going to get a job doing those trucks. I was told that's what I'd be getting. And so the closest I got to the truck was unloading those big tractor trailers at the mess hall at Fort Dix, New Jersey. And then they had a jeep that they wanted waxed, and we was on the detail doing it. And so I thought, this is my platoon.

[00:07:52.28] I told that sergeant who was in charge of the four of us waxing that jeep that he was so proud of the sprayed-on paint job that, I can paint better than this. My opportunity went nowhere. He wasn't interested in--

[00:08:04.18] JOE GALLOWAY: He didn't pick up on it.

[00:08:05.24] JAMES MORRISON: Didn't pick up. He sure didn't.

[00:08:06.47] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, they assign you to what division and what outfit?

[00:08:11.77] JAMES MORRISON: The next thing I know, they're going to send me to Chu Lai to the Americal Division, whoever they was. I had no idea. And we got on a C-130 and flew up to Chu Lai.

[00:08:28.50] We took about a-- I believe about a week jungle school. And you would go out during the day different training-- I don't remember much about the training. I remember those-- one time we were supposed to be setting an ambush, and I must have been on my mess, one of those little old things-- I don't remember what-- iguanas or something like-- looks like alligators. And he kept wanting to get by. And he was worrying me to death. I was scared at him.

[00:08:50.85] But we'd come in every night, take a bath. I'd be laying there in my bunk. It got to being hot. And there was a young kid from Atlanta, he was a spoiled little rich kid, had all his clothes on top of the bed, rolled up. And through the springs I would get-- his clothes was full of sand, so I'd get a sand bath every night. And when I went to my unit, he followed me like a shadow. He was there, too.

[00:09:14.61] JOE GALLOWAY: He was there, too.

[00:09:15.84] JAMES MORRISON: We spent about a week there probably in the jungle school.

[00:09:18.79] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, once you're through with that, where were you sent?

[00:09:22.38] JAMES MORRISON: OK, once we got through with that, they sent us to-- put us on a Huey helicopter, we called them slicks, to a fire base called LZ Professional. Now, when I got there, it was pretty tame, a tough place to be, but they called that area in there around Death Valley, May of '69 I believe it was, they call it the Lamar Plain Massacre. Half a battalion got killed and wounded there. It was as bad as Hamburger Hill, just didn't get the publicity, and even hit the fire base. But when I got there, it was a great big fire base and it was a pretty-- seemed pretty tame to be on it.

[00:10:02.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, but it had been hit before?

[00:10:05.18] JAMES MORRISON: Oh, it had been chewed up. They'd been hit on the valleys, and they had been hit before, I believe Christmas before, and maybe along about May of that year, too.

[00:10:16.86] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, what battalion and company did they send you to? You're an MOS 11 Bravo?

[00:10:24.33] JAMES MORRISON: 11 Bravo, infantry.

[00:10:26.37] JOE GALLOWAY: 11 Bush.

[00:10:27.36] JAMES MORRISON: That's right. The first set of boots lasted four months. And the next-- after that I believe I had-- the training got worse and I believe-- I fell and tore the first set up. I read about it in one of the letters I wrote my mother. And then I believe I had three or four sets the last month. We kept going farther out towards the border as they was pulling out, they kept sending us over towards Laos. And so the training got really bad over in there. But I was 11 Bravo.

[00:10:50.86] JOE GALLOWAY: And the company and battalion you went to?

[00:10:53.85] JAMES MORRISON: Company C, 1st Platoon, 1/46th-- 196th-- I guess that's the brigade.

[00:11:00.87] JOE GALLOWAY: That's a light infantry brigade.

[00:11:02.10] JAMES MORRISON: And I also say 198th. I never heard it being called 198th, but sometimes they associates 198th. I know some of my friends that got-- they got--

[00:11:10.46] JOE GALLOWAY: There were two brigades, the 96th-- the 196th and the 198th, I believe.

[00:11:15.45] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, they called-- some of the guys got-- I've always thought it was 196th, but some them-- on their DEFs it says 198th, but it was all the same. I don't think-- it was a little confusing there.

[00:11:24.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. All right, and where were they located? On this fire base?

[00:11:30.60] JAMES MORRISON: Well, we spent very little time on the fire base. We would come in-- we were infantry troops. We worked around the fire base. We would spend about six or seven days on the fire base. There would be four companies, about 100 people, give or take, and we would spend 20-some days to 30 days out in the field, and come into the fire base every-- and stay about five or six, seven days.

[00:11:56.16] JOE GALLOWAY: Boy, your clothes would be rotted off you.

[00:11:58.38] JAMES MORRISON: 20-some days of clothes would rot off. Matter of fact, one year-- one time we come in from about Christmas. And we got the direct order not to get near the helicopter pad because some general was flying in and we looked too gross for him to see. Needless to say, I was walking--

[00:12:16.51] JOE GALLOWAY: I think he should have seen you.

[00:12:18.03] JAMES MORRISON: I walked across a helicopter pad with my behind hanging out, and the sergeant major was flipping. But if I could stand to be around me, he could stand to see me.

[00:12:27.96] JOE GALLOWAY: There it is. Exactly right.

[00:12:31.77] JAMES MORRISON: And that phrase you said, there it is, you picked that up from Vietnam, didn't you?

[00:12:34.98] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, I did.

[00:12:35.83] JAMES MORRISON: Either, there it is, means you agree with the guy, because we were grunts, we complained a lot, you agreed with him. Or if it's something you couldn't change, you always said, don't mean nothing.

[00:12:45.94] JOE GALLOWAY: Don't mean nothing. That's right.

[00:12:47.17] JAMES MORRISON: There's several books written, Don't Mean Nothing, too. And one of them is written by a nurse who got to Vietnam, and pretty neat book.

[00:13:02.22] JAMES MORRISON: When I was on LZ Professional, we stayed a few days. I don't remember how long. And then out in the bush, most of the time they'd cut the top off a mountain and they would drop you in. We literally cut the tops off the mountains to where they fly the helicopters in. It'd take about four flights to fly by the time they flew all the supplies and the people in.

[00:13:21.77] I never will forget they, dropped me in with a group of guys, and supplies and all. And these grubby guys come out of the bush, they looked like they'd been there 100 years, there

might-- in a perimeter around the helicopter. And what really amazed me if you think about it, the old guys, which we thought old guys-- I don't think none of them were there three or four months. I don't know what happened to the ones that was over in May and all, they would take you in.

[00:13:44.97] I know there was two boys from down south, one of them was from Arkansas, one from Mississippi, a fellow named Danny Davis and Terry McKillum. A buddy of mine was-- one of them had took me, and I believe Danny had took me in and showed me the ropes, and that Terry McKillum had took my-- my best-- who became my best friend over there, a fellow named Joseph Dover, who we called him Dugan, who just passed away here about a year or so ago. They took us in and showed us the ropes.

[00:14:15.33] And then you learned to pair up with people. And I've got all the letters I wrote to my mom, and I read some of them last night. And it was amazing how we shared things. I write about sharing different foods they sent over. And people sharing them with us. You just can't imagine how it was. I could go on and on about-- a drink of water. You drank a water, you just pass it down.

[00:14:38.16] My folks would send Sun Drops over, which is made here in Concord. And I would drink-- they'd send six over. There was no way I wanted to carry six, so I'd take a swallow of one and pass it around. And I'd keep two. And there was a fellow from Rochester, New York, who said, you tell your family to send a case of them over, and I'll pay for getting a case over. But I never did. But I've got several references to different foods that they would send.

[00:15:02.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you form friendships with men from different racial and social backgrounds during your time in the Army that you might never have had in civilian life?

[00:15:12.12] JAMES MORRISON: Well, we sure did. It's like, over there out in the field there wasn't much racial problems. It seemed like the racial problems were more in the rear areas. In the field, I never will forget-- and he got killed August the 5th, 1970, he was an Indian from Culver, California, named Manuel Dick. D-I-C-K. I never will forget it.

[00:15:36.39] He startled me, really. We happened to-- was fixing to set up for the night, and all at once I saw a dark face underneath a poncho. He was wrapped up like a teepee and there was just that dark face. I kind of jarred it. I said, where'd you come from? Because he scared me. Where did he come from? Never seen him before.

[00:15:51.88] He said, well, it's-- I got off a helicopter earlier, he said. I said, well, you can't sleep there. He said, well, I'm sick. That's the way he said it. Just, I'm sick.

[00:16:01.11] And so me and my buddy from South Carolina, we built the best little hooch. In the letters I wrote my mother I read last night where the first three nights I got wet. We didn't build good ones. After a while me and my buddy built the best one built. It was almost airtight. We put him up. Now, he would write about how we took him in. And then he paired up with a boy named Bob Rodriguez from Mexico. But we took him in just like anybody else.

[00:16:23.55] If we drank a swallow of water-- it's funny in the South they had different water fountains. Over there we'd pass water around, wasn't no big deal. We passed food around. We learned with the Mexican guy, Bob Rodriguez, and Manuel Dick, if they said, taste this, be real careful because it's so full of hot sauce, it'd burn you up. But other than that, wasn't a problem.

[00:16:48.01] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, back home there was a lot of social tension, racial tension, antiwar protests, all that kind of stuff. Did any of that come over with the draftees?

[00:17:01.21] JAMES MORRISON: I think it was in the rear. Matter of fact, July the 30th, 1970, a real neat sergeant named Sergeant Ball on LZ Mary Ann-- if you read the book, Sappers in the Wire it tells about it. His family did not know it-- did not know till a couple of years ago what happened, but he'd run ahead and I talked to him. Well, anyway he was sweep-- he was sleeping in a junk-- a bunker with-- this is a great, white E7. Great guy.

[00:17:30.94] He was my platoon leader for a while. Matter of fact, I got questioned for him getting killed. Somebody threw a grenade at him and killed him. And I really believe that some of the black guys over there threw the grenades in trying to kill the other guy because they resented the guy that was trying to do the right thing. And there was a handful of them.

[00:17:53.86] Matter of fact, there was a boy named Clyde that I'd forgot his name, from Monroe, North Carolina that I read in my mom's letters here several years ago. We called him the Soul Train. They were some real neat guys. They kind of floated when they walked. They carried the machine gun. And Clyde carried the machine gun. And Leroy was a big tall kid with an afro. And another boy named Scott.

[00:18:17.74] And we got along so good where that I never-- I'd come in with bad feet one time, and I wrote in a letter to my mom that Clyde was there on the-- they had a quad 50, which had four .50 caliber machine guns. And I pulled Clyde out of the field. I didn't even remember that till I read it in the letter.

[00:18:31.54] I pulled Clyde out of the field. And he was there. And I was so excited to see somebody I know. Race didn't matter. I was so excited to see-- And I wrote my mom that I felt so much better because I was the only one-- I didn't know anybody there. And there was Clyde. He took me in. He showed me where to sleep. And I didn't know-- I forgot he was from Monroe till I read that. And I'd really like to get in touch with him. Out there in the field, it didn't matter.

[00:18:57.68] JOE GALLOWAY: It didn't matter.

[00:18:58.43] JAMES MORRISON: It didn't matter. And everybody done their part. And matter of fact, that Bob Rodriguez I'm talking about, I've got a little story I could tell you about him. So much respect for him, but nobody really knows what a great guy he was, just-- great guy.

[00:19:18.80] JAMES MORRISON: The last month or so, I just pulled up Vietnam era music. And I go to Spirit in the Sky and all that sort of stuff, took at Woodstock and all. I call it acid rock over there, some of that stuff. We played it. And I didn't know I had a radio, but I was reading my letters last night, and I did buy a radio. And of course, we never could--

[00:19:38.09] JOE GALLOWAY: So you were getting Armed Forces Radio?

[00:19:40.04] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, Armed Force Radio station. But we never could play our radios except on the fire bases. So you had to carry that radio for 20-some days and listen to it four--

[00:19:48.05] JOE GALLOWAY: For four days.

[00:19:48.74] JAMES MORRISON: Four days. And I was talking about batteries and I wrote my mom telling them to get batteries. But then I wrote them back and told them, I said, don't worry about batteries. I bought some when we come in for R&R-- I mean, not R&R, but for stand down. And so I remember the radios blaring on the fire bases, but I didn't remember me having one. But I did because I read where I had one. But the radio culture-- we loved that radio station. I can't remember-- they had some little jokes and i believe they had Chicken Man.

[00:20:17.54] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you remember some of the songs?

[00:20:19.12] JAMES MORRISON: Good grief.

[00:20:21.88] JOE GALLOWAY: Besides, We Gotta Get Out of This Place?

[00:20:24.29] JAMES MORRISON: We Gotta Get Out of This Place. I'm just having brain fade on the--

[00:20:29.66] JOE GALLOWAY: You drawing a blank.

[00:20:30.38] JAMES MORRISON: The House in New Orleans. JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. JAMES MORRISON: There were tons of them. When I hear them they just all goes back to-- matter of fact, I guess-- I wish I had the names, but-- you just subconsciously hear that. You really don't think about the names or what it was about. When you hear it, you just kind of perk up.

[00:20:55.11] JAMES MORRISON: It's a sad way to run a war, but the lieutenants only lasted-- they would only stay out in the field for six months. OK, I remember writing last-- stuff I was reading last night, I wrote my mom how we had one guy we didn't get along with, and we were grumbling, complaining. And then he said that-- he split up in platoons. And I wrote that some guys went and put their hooch right beside of him when they set up, because they knew he always had the smoothest place.

[00:21:21.93] And then I also wrote that we had a new lieutenant that was our platoon leader, but I wished he was our company commander. We had a lot of good, sincere sergeants, a lot of good sincere lieutenants. But they were put in a hard place because my last time out was-- we left LZ Mary Ann July the 31st, 1970.

[00:21:51.90] OK, I was trying to get out of the field. I was 30-some days-- almost 30 days from going home. And we had a new lieutenant from near Chicago area that was ready to win the war.

And me and him was really back and forth. He didn't listen to anything I said. And I tried to get him to get me out, but he said, no, you've been here longer. We need you here. And really did. But he wouldn't listen to anything I said because he'd been programmed by the Army that he was in charge.

[00:22:17.64] Well, we got hit. When I was talking about Manuel Dick getting killed, and seeing my best friend, who was the commander's radio operator, got killed, and several of them got killed that day.

[00:22:26.44] JOE GALLOWAY: This is when Mary Ann was overrun?

[00:22:28.83] JAMES MORRISON: No, I was before it was overrun. I left when it was overrun. I was gone. It got overrun May of 1971. I believe it was May. 200--

[00:22:36.83] JOE GALLOWAY: You were gone by then.

[00:22:37.86] JAMES MORRISON: I was gone. 200 on the fire base.

[00:22:39.30] JOE GALLOWAY: But they were still hitting it every now and then.

[00:22:43.40] JAMES MORRISON: I never was on it when it got hit. But my company was on Mary Ann when it got overrun-- 200 on the fire base, some say more, 83 killed-- 30 to 33 wounded in 45 minutes, 20 come out of the company I was in that-- my company was probably down to 85 guys. So my company was on the fire base--

[00:23:00.76] JOE GALLOWAY: And took some heavy casualties.

[00:23:02.39] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, if you ever see the pictures of where it was hit, my bunker-- and I helped build it. I got pictures on the internet. Well, I took pictures of us building that bunker and digging the trenches. The bunker I'd have been in was either one or two. And all that's just blew all to pieces. That was where they come in on Mary Ann.

[00:23:18.63] But anyway, we were leaving Mary Ann on the 5th-- on July 31, we got hit on the 5th. This captain, five days in the field-- a lieutenant, ready to win the war. They told me, he's on the radio trying to get you home, he's trying to get you to escort the Indian's body out. He had a whole different outlook on the war. And on the 8th, we got hit again. And the platoon in front of us got chewed up. Our other machine gunner got killed. And he died, I know he died, but he was calling for me.

[00:23:55.83] JOE GALLOWAY: Your LT.

[00:23:56.76] JAMES MORRISON: The LT was. And he was laying there bleeding and sighing, everybody lined up like cord wood, dead, wounded, whatever, probably about 15.

[00:24:03.93] And he says, oh, I didn't understand. I didn't understand. And he didn't understand.

[00:24:10.79] JOE GALLOWAY: And he didn't get a chance to learn.

[00:24:13.37] JAMES MORRISON: No, he didn't get a chance to learn. I mean, he's my boss. The first day in the field, he's my boss. I've been there 11 months. He's been there one day, he's my boss. And he really didn't understand. But they were pretty hard on officers to do that.

[00:24:29.61] JOE GALLOWAY: The smart lieutenants, somebody told them, listen to your sergeants.

[00:24:35.41] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, but where he was, it was circumstances. It wasn't really his fault. There wasn't nothing he could have done. I was trying to get him out of the valley. I was on point. The first time I got hit. And they called us back. And it wasn't-- nothing he'd done was his fault. It was just one of those things. But he did pick up the machine gun, they told me, fired it. And he got shot and killed trying to do what he was supposed to do. And you've got to give him credit for that.

[00:25:04.05] JOE GALLOWAY: Gotta give him credit.

[00:25:05.03] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, he done the best he could with what he was trained to do.

[00:25:14.39] JAMES MORRISON: Well, really, I didn't remember the real good days. But after reading my letters that I wrote to my mother-- I write about the fact that we're sharing food, everybody saying, well, your parents send-- your family sends the best packages of anybody. They sent the right stuff. They even-- the best thing I ever eat in a year.

[00:25:38.60] And I didn't actually eat at the Whiskey a Go Go in Australia, and I ate at some other restaurant in Australia, had steak in Australia. But the best meal I remember eating and I-- my mom and my wife-to-be wanted to figure out how to send-- they sent American bread, take the air out of it, wrap it in tinfoil, put it in a tin cracker box. And when it came there it was fresh.

[00:26:05.21] Well, back in those days, they-- mustard had just come out in a squirt bottle. And I've got a picture of me with a-- you see the mustard bottle sticking out of my pocket. But the best meal I remember eating was the SPAM, the mustard, and a soft white American bread. Because even if you was in the rear area, you had bread that was from Japan. It was hard and I always thought as a kid growing up, we eat hard bread because it was cheap, and soft bread was better.

[00:26:36.65] I didn't know it, I didn't remember doing it. But I remember that the guys said-- in there from my mom's letter, said the guys really appreciate the meal. It's the best they ever eat. A guy who I don't even remember, he was my sergeant who got wounded by our own artillery, he said that-- Sergeant Pierce said, Ray said that-- the best food he'd ever eat. And I guess that was the best moments, the few moments.

[00:27:01.21] It's like a guy told me-- I had a fellow said-- tell me, said, you sure can change personality, because you-- we cut up a lot. We clowned around a lot. I did especially. But then all

at once your attitude would change. And you had to do that. And so I guess the-- those little moments, I guess that made it a-- I remember in the--

[00:27:23.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Rather than one really good day, it's a lot of small snips from a lot of days.

[00:27:28.74] JAMES MORRISON: Well, in a letter I wrote, it was sure was good. I had fresh water. I took that fresh water, I washed my waste up, got a cool breeze. That was a galaxy.

[00:27:40.14] JOE GALLOWAY: That was a great day.

[00:27:41.52] JAMES MORRISON: Great day.

[00:27:51.31] JAMES MORRISON: I guess the two worst-- I about got to bring it in two. I got started thinking about this. Probably-- and there's an article in the New York Times written June - December 26, 1969. And there happened to be a reporter on the fire base when we come in from LZ Professional. And for some reason we walked up LZ Professional. It was real hard.

[00:28:14.79] The side we'd come up on wasn't as steep as the rest of them, but you got up there you were washed out by it. Well, we had walked up-- I didn't realize it, but they had said everybody-- the president or somebody had said everybody in Vietnam was going to get a Christmas meal. So we missed-- we was a day-and-a-half out. So in a half a day, almost in a run, we came in because we thought we were going to spend seven days on the fire base.

[00:28:42.75] And we hadn't eaten in three days. The helicopters hadn't been coming out. And we come in on the fire base. And they said the turkey dinner was going to be ready at 2 o'clock. We got in about 12, and really should never have walked that fast. And so we opened up the C-rations and gorged ourself, and eat probably twice what we're supposed to. And then eat the Christmas meal on-- at 2 o'clock. The turkey and the dressing is hot.

[00:29:09.08] Well, then we find out that they're going to send us back down to the fire base, that we're going to spend the night at the foot of fire base. And if you go on the Internet and pull up LZ Professional, December of 1969, you will see how much water we're standing around, where we're sleeping. Now, I can show you within about 50 feet of where I think I slept.

[00:29:28.04] Well, they give us our mail, but didn't give our packages. They'd been holding them up for weeks. I had plenty of them. And the mosquitoes were probably 10 foot deep. It was like a beehive. And I would get up. I'd wrap up in a poncho liner. Next thing they're in there with you. And I was ill because it had just kinda been a bad day. And so I ended up getting my little red flashlight out, reading my mail, and I said, if a sniper shoots me it'll put me out of my misery.

[00:29:57.87] And then the next-- I guess the worst, really the worst military time we had was even though we lost a third to two thirds of our company, about four times the last four or five months I was there. We never was in no big combat missions, but we got hit four or five times. But I guess the worst time was August 5, 1970, when my friends got killed and August 8, when

we got hit again. Because on the 5th it took us a couple days to get a couple of bodies out. It was-- it was really bad.

[00:30:27.66] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, were these occurrences while you were out on patrol, or while you were back on the fire base?

[00:30:35.39] JAMES MORRISON: Well, see, in August it was out on patrol in the area, in around LZ Mary Ann. It was triple canopy jungle. You couldn't see 10 foot in front of you when we got hit. Where I was talking about mosquitoes and letters, see, we'd come into the fire base for Christmas, and was pretty excited about-- after walking what was-- should have been a day-and-a-half walk to come in, or run really to get in, we was pretty excited about staying in, but they sent us back down to the fire base at the bottom. And the mosquitoes are just terrible there in the rice paddies, and all, just terrible.

[00:31:05.52] We usually we slept on a hill, it was a little better there. And so it was just a miserable night because you eat all that food, which you shouldn't have. And then you're trying to go to sleep, you're mad anyway, and the mosquitoes are just eating you up. They were just 10-foot deep.

[00:31:25.56] In those mountains later you had the leeches. The leeches would get so full of blood, you'd shake three or four out of each pants leg, not even know it was there. It was little black ones. But you had mosquitoes, leeches, the North Vietnamese. And that was always up there and they all eat you up.

[00:31:39.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Jolly place.

[00:31:40.62] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, yeah.

[00:31:48.30] JAMES MORRISON: Well, we worked usually as a-- just Americal, just with our company. Sometimes we worked maybe two companies in the same rice paddy. We worked some with the South Vietnamese army.

[00:32:03.63] JOE GALLOWAY: South Vietnamese army.

[00:32:04.46] JAMES MORRISON: And then they had-- I remember they had some Special Forces-type guys. Now, I don't remember the names of them that worked with us some. They were a lot better. But most of the time we worked by ourself. We never worked with any of the other ones that I know of.

[00:32:21.27] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. You did work with the ARVN though?

[00:32:26.10] JAMES MORRISON: Worked with them, some, not a lot. Yeah.

[00:32:29.18] JOE GALLOWAY: What did you observe? Were they good soldiers? Not so good?

[00:32:34.14] JAMES MORRISON: They were there. JOE GALLOWAY: They were there. JAMES MORRISON: They were there. The other group I'm talking about, and I don't remember the name of them, they were more like mercenaries or something. They were paid mercenary-type people who we worked with. They were a lot more serious.

[00:32:48.30] JOE GALLOWAY: They were serious folks.

[00:32:49.98] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah. A lot more serious.

[00:32:58.45] JAMES MORRISON: For a long time we never got near a village. One time when we came out-- we literally walked out to our AO, which was a pretty long walk. They'd usually fly us out because it's a long ways. We actually walked through the town of Tam Ki up to a road up into the mountains. And they were pretty neat. I've never-- I've got a picture of a little kid. He wanted to show off, and he climbed up a coconut tree, and turned around where I could take his picture, and to show off for us.

[00:33:30.46] We were near a landing strip in Tam Ki one other time, and I remember talking to kids and all. We'd give them candy. Matter of fact, there was a little girl, the side of her face was messed up. She said, GI grenade. And I guess she got too close. And I don't think she stepped on it on purpose, but it was also on this road that we pulled-- they pulled us out of the mountains, and a few times at Tam-- out in Tam Ki, another little dirt road that-- and they would pull us out to there and the kids would give them candy and stuff. They were so neat.

[00:33:59.89] Matter of fact, there's a fellow named Tom Brown had given some of them money to go and get something. We had to pack up and leave. And so when we come back there a few weeks later, the little guy-- Tom Brown-- Tom Brown had his money. It was \$4 or \$5 he'd given him. He was going to go in to ville and buy some candy-- and buy some popsicles or something.

[00:34:22.99] And then I've got pictures of them taking a machine gun apart and clean them. One kid, probably 12 years old, said-- looked in the mouth and said, VC so-and-so. They were so smart. And like when I was on the bridge duty I felt-- a little kid come swimming across the-- probably 150-foot. And he was so smart, asked about did we have washers and dryers. He'd been reading about the United States.

[00:34:45.19] And I think at Christmastime I got a little depressed about them because I knew how tough they had it. And they were just so-- the kids were so full of energy. And they just loved the GIs because we'd give them candy. And we liked them. The officers wanted to just run them off. They didn't like them.

[00:35:07.66] JAMES MORRISON: Everything was mostly letters. I wrote my mom 335 pages of letters. And it's on all kinds of paper. Matter of fact, in one of the letters it was on-- some of it was on notebook paper. And I wrote the fact that somebody there-- his mom had been-- thought she wanted to write, sent 300 sheets of notebook paper. So carrying 300 sheets was hard. And we would wrap it up in a plastic bag, and put it in our right pocket.

[00:35:35.88] And sometime our stuff would get wet. So I ended up putting my writing paper up in the top of my helmet. And I might be writing a letter, and say, well, I'm waiting for a helicopter. And I might write over a period of a couple of days. But usually it went out pretty quick.

[00:35:50.82] I called home one time through that two-way radio. JOE GALLOWAY: MARS radio. JAMES MORRISON: That was a disaster. I never got the hang of that. One time at Chu Lai on stand down I waited three hours to talk for three minutes. I felt guilty about that because the line was so long. And then when I went to Australia, I called home and talked to my wife-to-be and my family. And I probably spent-- it probably cost my wife what she made that week for me to talk 10 or 15 minutes. And that was all the conversations we had.

[00:36:26.62] But I would write anybody that would write me. And I cannot believe-- I was telling Audie a while ago, I cannot believe-- I'd forgot about all the packages, all the letters. I got 29 letters one day, which--

[00:36:39.19] JOE GALLOWAY: In one day?

[00:36:40.39] JAMES MORRISON: In one-- well, yeah, but they'd been laying there for a while. But I got 29 letters. I wrote-- I sent out 20-some Christmas cards. And I wrote, I believe I was able to get to the rear and buy something. I write that I forgot to send my-- I didn't send my wife anything for Valentine's, but--

[00:36:55.34] It's amazing. And you feel like in the Vietnam war we were forgotten. But it amazes me-- like I saw a letter, a note that I sent a young girl from-- maybe a nursing student in college had sent me a letter from New Jersey just because-- I don't know how she got my address. And I'd give her address to one of the guys whose girlfriend just dumped him.

[00:37:17.42] And I would give out addresses because I was getting married when I got home. And I wrote in there that I'd given addresses of the people who was writing me. And the packages-- it's unbelievable how many-- I didn't remember how many packages I got until I read the letters I sent my mom telling them about the different packages people sent. But anyway, the letters-- the letters and packages, pretty amazing. I mean, I didn't realize I got so much support from home, but I really did. You forget about it.

[00:37:44.49] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, how much news did you receive about the war you were fighting in and about what was going on at home? You see Stars and Stripes once in awhile?

[00:37:54.80] JAMES MORRISON: We had Stars and Stripes a little bit. As a matter of fact, one time I remember reading Stars and Stripes and its claim that Americal Division is so-and-- our company found a big weapons cache, and it was a whole bunch of rusty rifles. It wasn't much of nothing, something nobody wanted.

[00:38:09.74] We really didn't get much from home. I might would get a-- I remember, or when I read my letters I wrote my mom that I had read the newspapers that they had wrapped their

packages in. And I really didn't get much from home except for the newspapers that the stuff was wrapped in. Sometimes you didn't have time to read them anyway.

[00:38:38.35] JAMES MORRISON: You feel-- first of all, I worked so hard to get out of the field. I was 30 days-- trying to get out 30 days early because a lot of times they did that, and I was pretty scared. After having a bad August we finally made it to LZ Judy, which one of the-- while I was on the way to Judy, real close, one of the worst helicopter crashes happened-- in Vietnam happened inside of Judy. It was a Chinook, 30-some killed, two survived.

[00:39:07.04] Finally made it to Judy. Two days from processing home they want to send me back out again.

[00:39:14.10] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you go back in the field?

[00:39:15.69] JAMES MORRISON: Well, they called infantry guys grunts, and I grunt complained all night long, whining to anybody that would listen to me. A lieutenant up above me had listened to me all night, complain. The next morning, they said, the lieutenant wants to see you. He was going to be my new platoon leader. He wants to see you.

[00:39:36.68] And I went up there, and I'm sure I had attitude. And I said, what do you want? He said, you better come up with something wrong with you, he said. We're going to try to get you in. I said-- I went up to our head doctor, medic. We just had two killed weeks before. He was the main medic. I went up to him. I said Doc, I said, my teeth are bothering me. He said, that's not good enough. He said, your eyes are burned. You can't see. I said, sounds good to me. He said but you got to go see the captain.

[00:40:09.79] So I went to see the captain. And he said, they said you've been out here a long time. You've done a good job. He says, I'm going to try to get you in, he said, if you do me one favor. I said, what is that? He said, my wife's a nurse at Chu Lai, sitting at the hospital back there. Will you tell her I'm OK? And I told him I would.

[00:40:31.12] OK, they sent me from LZ Judy to LZ Mary Ann. I got to see a doctor there. I tell the doctor I'm having problems with my eyes, which I'm not telling the truth. And he says, well, your company's coming in for stand down in a couple of weeks. We'll get you checked in a couple of weeks. I said, well, I'm hoping to be home in two weeks. And so he said, well, you'll have to go see the sergeant major.

[00:41:02.77] So I go see the sergeant major at Mary Ann. And he said, I don't need no sergeant with bad eyes. I'm going to see you out. He really gave me a hard time. He said, but you better be on a helicopter coming back here before lunchtime. Well, I just knew that if I got back to Chu Lai that they weren't going to see me again.

[00:41:26.03] And so I got to Chu Lai, went to see the captain's wife, told her he was OK, waited one day to go to the doctor. But then it was time to process out. And so then when I come back to the rear, it was real easy-- real good. We had a first sergeant back there. And he was talking about race. He was a black gentleman, the best first sergeant I ever had, the biggest man I had

ever seen. He went and got in the field where the action was, and he was all over the place. And I wish I could remember his name.

[00:41:57.38] JOE GALLOWAY: He was the company top?

[00:41:59.16] JAMES MORRISON: He was the company top. OK, He told me, he says-- I started telling him my whole problem I had, all the guys that need to get out of the field, how bad it was. And he says, I want you to do me one favor. I said, what is that? I always said I wasn't going to get a haircut. My hair was very, very, very long. Extremely long. He said, I want you to get a haircut. I said, well, being as you asked, which you could have made me. I did. And he said, nobody bothers you. Don't let nobody mess with you. He said, you're going home.

[00:42:30.89] And then I got on-- we processed out there and I flew into Seattle, Washington, caught the last two seats on the bus about midnight, going up the steps in the airport, and an MP says, Sergeant, straighten that tie. Well, I almost went ballistic, but I pulled on my tie and kept walking. He didn't understand.

[00:42:55.92] And then I caught a flight home, and I come on back in the middle of the night, showed up in North Carolina.

[00:42:59.16] JOE GALLOWAY: No demonstrators? No antiwar folks?

[00:43:02.73] JAMES MORRISON: I would say if-- probably Seattle wasn't as bad as Oakland from what I understand. But I'd say they was all stoned by midnight.

[00:43:11.34] JOE GALLOWAY: They were all gone.

[00:43:12.51] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, they were all done. The only thing had-- I remembered the sergeant. And like I was talking about the lieutenant a while ago, he just didn't understand. I started to go ballistic--

[00:43:22.92] JOE GALLOWAY: You could have choked him with that tie.

[00:43:24.72] JAMES MORRISON: That's right. Sergeant, straighten that tie. Grabbed my clothes, get the last two seats on the bus, me and that little boy from Atlanta that I was talking about, aggravated me to death. The last time I saw him, the one that dropped the sand on me--

[00:43:35.44] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah.

[00:43:36.29] JAMES MORRISON: --the last time I saw him, he was heading to Atlanta and then to Miami, and I was headed to Charlotte, North Carolina, and Atlanta. And when I come home, people always talk about that. When I come home, you were so excited to be home. And you told people that. And they said, yeah, that's great. But they really didn't understand. And so that was a little bit of a gray area. But now to be honest with you, nobody could have no more support than I did from people sending me letters, sending me food, and that sort of thing.

[00:44:07.31] But it was a different world when you come back. And you really felt lost. And the nurses who was over there had to feel more lost than we did because they had been doing so much major things, and dealt with so much death and that sort of thing--

[00:44:23.43] JOE GALLOWAY: I could have never done their job.

[00:44:25.32] JAMES MORRISON: No, and they had to have been 80 years old. I mean, I felt kind of lost, and didn't know what you need to do, but these nurses and doc-- the nurses over there, these female nurses in a man's world, doing operations and that sort of thing. I've just got so much respect for them. I read an article about them. So much respect.

[00:44:41.45] JOE GALLOWAY: They were great.

[00:44:42.20] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah.

[00:44:42.53] JOE GALLOWAY: I spent a week with the 85th Evac Hospital nurses, doctors, techs-- doing these interviews.

[00:44:51.38] JAMES MORRISON: Where were they at?

[00:44:53.16] JOE GALLOWAY: At Qui Nhon.

[00:44:54.64] JAMES MORRISON: Qui Nhon.

[00:44:54.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, they dealt with all our wounded from the Ia Drang. Now, did you still owe the Army any time when you got home?

[00:45:02.63] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah. Yes, sir. Three months. It's funny, the letters I write to my mom for the first three or four months, and I write about extending. And I read in one of them where one company had 29 people one month to extend-- or to reup to get out of the Army-- to get out of Vietnam. You could reup and get out.

[00:45:21.20] And they said-- I read articles where Americal Division had so much-- the morale was so good they were reupping out there. The reason they were reupping was to get out of the field. But I kept writing about extending, extending, but that didn't last but three or four months. And I quit mentioning the word extending.

[00:45:37.81] JOE GALLOWAY: You didn't mention that no more.

[00:45:39.79] JAMES MORRISON: No. If that helicopter had picked me up, if they had told me I could get out of the Army-- and it was picking me up at 12 o'clock-- if I'd wait till four, I'd have been afraid to wait till 4 o'clock. But I went to Fort Carson, Colorado. And it worked.

[00:45:55.33] JOE GALLOWAY: And did your last three months.

[00:45:56.49] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, I got a real good job out there. I got assistant PS NCO, personnel. But they sure picked the wrong man for the job. I mean, I'd been in the infantry. I wasn't no desk clerk, and done a terrible job.

[00:46:07.95] But there we handled early outs for school. And my brother was going to Central Piedmont. And I kept writing my brother who was in high school, go to college, go to college, go to college. And those letters I got at my mom's, I keep reading them about-- go to college, go to college. Well, he was going to school at Central Piedmont

[00:46:26.13] So I got to early out to go to school, which-- my sergeant was flipping because I'm getting out and only been there three months, and he wanted me for six. But I told him-- I felt real bad. He offered to give me a good job, give me a break. I was able to live off post with my wife and keep regular hours while we were out in the field for a week or two. So it was really-- he really got me a good job.

[00:46:50.38] So I told him, I said, you want to go to Germany, I want to go home. I said, I'll work holidays, I'll work nights. I said, it don't make no difference. I said, whatever it takes to ease me leaving, I'll do. And he says-- and so I got out. I had my wife with me then. I got married-- come home September 6, got married on the 13th. And so she was at Colorado with me. So it was pretty neat.

[00:47:15.99] But with the early out for school really-- it kept me having to go get a real job. I got out of the Army early to go to school, but I was only getting \$300 a month in Vietnam, and I ended up getting 205. And my wife's working in the mill. And so I went to school for a while. And I work for myself now. And I was able to do that. So that was one advantage that the Army gave me by going to school.

[00:47:44.37] JAMES MORRISON: I'd go to school and a job. And before I went, I done paint and bodywork and all. And so I would buy cars and fix them up and do that sort of thing, alongside of me going to school. And then-- I make a living-- we run a car business now, and I make a living that way.

[00:48:03.99] The last real job I had paid \$2 an hour, and I was working six days a week, no time-and-a-half, \$9 after taxes. And that was a part-time job. And then I got-- went downhill there. I got a job in the Army working for \$200 a month.

[00:48:16.32] JOE GALLOWAY: There you go.

[00:48:17.28] JAMES MORRISON: And so I haven't had a real job since then.

[00:48:19.11] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you have any difficulty readjusting to life after combat?

[00:48:24.02] JAMES MORRISON: Well, it was a little different. I lost my hearing over there. I'm pitch deaf. And it took me a while, I didn't know my hearing was bad, and so I had to adjust to that, which was no big deal, not a big deal. A little bit of irritation, but no problem.

[00:48:38.73] It was totally different. You didn't know what to expect. You felt really lost. When I come home and went to work, didn't pay any attention. My picture was laid up. Everything, all my letters, laid up. And here probably about three or four years ago they had The Wall-- at Frank Liske Park. And I went over there. And a lady-- I just walked around, didn't say anything. The lady said, you know any? I told her I was over there. And she said, you know anybody got killed? I said, yeah, several. And so I pulled up-- gave her a name. She pulled up the Indian Manuel Dick that got killed.

[00:49:13.05] The picture-- I just fell back. It was a picture that I had the same picture, but it was a different one because it had been wet. I either took the picture and gave him a copy, I don't know, what to his family. And it got me more interested in following it up. And I've contacted his family and that sort of thing, and it's really--

[00:49:31.08] But everything-- you just forgot about it and went to work. You didn't mention it, say anything about it and you went to work. And I had a good family supporting me and I was real fortunate. A lot of people weren't that fortunate. They had a lot of problems. My best friend had a lot of problems from being over there.

[00:49:45.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you been in touch with the guys you served with over there? You found any of them?

[00:49:53.54] JAMES MORRISON: Well, my best friend is from Clover, South Carolina. We went to see him quite a bit. And I talked to him a lot on the phone. He came to see me. He had a handicapped brother-- not handicapped. He had a brother, twin brother, that when he was in the military, he got in a real bad car wreck and needed full attention. So he was there. He stayed with him all those years. Now, after his brother died, he died about two years later. He died here a couple of years ago. But I stayed I in touch--

[00:50:18.70] JOE GALLOWAY: You stayed in touch with him.

[00:50:19.64] JAMES MORRISON: --in touch with him. And then I've talked to a few people over the years. But now lately since I've got a little more interested I've talked to people. It's kind of ironic. I've talked to a fellow a time or two from California. And I've talked to the Indian's family, Manuel's family from-- I finally got a hold of them, and they told me-- to Tom in 1988.

[00:50:40.57] Up until 1988 they didn't know that-- if his body was really in the casket. And I told them too, I said, yeah, he was shot three times in the chest, because the Army told them he had been shot in the face. And so they opened the casket. And his mother for years didn't think her boy was passed away.

[00:50:58.41] But anyway, Tom came. We talked a little bit back and forth, I talked quite a few times back and forth. But Tom came to see me 30 days ago, from California. He was going to spend a half day-- he was going to Washington, DC, and we spent about a day and a half. It was pretty interesting. The last time I saw him was--

[00:51:13.57] JOE GALLOWAY: Stopped here to see you?

[00:51:14.74] JAMES MORRISON: Stopped here to see me. Last time I saw him was August 5, 1970. He was leaning against a tree, shot in the side and shot in the arm. And I said, you was in a pretty good mood when I talked with you. He said, well, he said, when I talked to you, I knew I wasn't going to die. But I told him, I said, I never thought about it until now how lucky you were. He was one of five people got shot that day. He was the only one that survived.

[00:51:38.54] And I've talked to several more people, and got a lot of information about-- and I've tried to clear up a lot of things when people didn't know what happened to their family. I've talked to several family members, seen ads in books and all, and explained to them what happened to their--

[00:51:53.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Army doesn't tell them anything.

[00:51:54.84] JAMES MORRISON: Doesn't tell them anything. Like Donnie Shue from Kannapolis. His mother died-- he was missing in August of 1969. His mother died not knowing he was dead, and he was up in edge of Laos. They brought him back in 2011. She died not knowing what happened to him. They knew he was dead.

[00:52:17.09] JOE GALLOWAY: That's a crime.

[00:52:18.23] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah.

[00:52:23.83] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your time in Vietnam affect the way you think about Soldiers coming home from these wars today?

[00:52:30.80] JAMES MORRISON: Oh, I got so much respect for them. The deal with them, the ones that go to Afghanistan and places like that, they volunteer. We were drafted. That wasn't exactly where I wanted to be. You done your part, but you wasn't-- I mean, you done your part and you've done-- but that wasn't you. These guys, and girls, and ladies are-- that's what they want to be, and they take it seriously.

[00:52:55.68] And the thing about over there, too, the explosions sometimes are so big and so devastating. I know we took a 105-howitzer round, there was two of on top of the company. It was really, really bad, and the concussion was bad. What they get over there is just a whole lot worse. I got so much respect for those folks. And people really don't realize what great people they are. They really don't.

[00:53:18.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, they get a better reception than you got.

[00:53:21.41] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, we really didn't have no reception. I didn't have a bad reception, but I had a little bit--

[00:53:25.25] JOE GALLOWAY: You just didn't have any.

[00:53:26.72] JAMES MORRISON: --a little bit of indifference. But that's just the times were.

[00:53:34.20] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you think your Vietnam experience changed you, affected your life?

[00:53:40.81] JAMES MORRISON: I'm sure it did. It makes-- like I say, like I said earlier at Christmastime I kind of got fresh with my kids because I felt like they had-- even though they didn't have much, I thought about the kids in Vietnam who had nothing, who had nothing to look forward to. You get a little depressed around Christmastime-- or did back in the early days.

[00:54:09.24] When I would do something in business that was major, buy something, or something like that-- that expression don't mean nothing? I didn't pay too much attention. I think it helped me there. I didn't get excited over the little stuff too much, or things that happened. I think that was a plus.

[00:54:28.83] The negative thing about it probably is you don't have as much tolerance for things that don't matter. Like it went-- I wore my DD-214 I think it was, I don't know what happened to it, it was military records. I went one time, I happened to be at the building at the VA. I walked there and there wasn't nobody there. I didn't go back. I went back some years later. You get a little flustered with the government, things of authority, because of things you've got to do that don't matter.

[00:55:03.26] And so I think it's been a little bit of a negative thing for me. Right now, as far as-- like, I've got a piece of property that the state took a lot of my property away for no reason at all. I didn't handle it very well. I took them at face value. I didn't realize how serious it was. I think sometimes you don't take something that can be serious as serious. It seems pretty trivial, but it turns out to be more serious than you think because of your Vietnam experience. Because we survive from day to day.

[00:55:38.01] And I'm going back a little bit, talking about the nurses and doctors at the hospital. We'd load them up on the helicopters, and really we'd go on to surviving. They wasn't that fortunate. They had to deal with the problem. My buddy from Clover, South Carolina, I got him out of the field last time, for his nerves and his ulcers the last time we went out. I thought, really, I'd really helped him. But I'm not sure if I did or not because he identified all the bodies that was sent back. And he probably never got over the-- pulling the faces-- seeing their faces and all. And so it does affect your life. It affects different people different ways.

[00:56:17.86] JOE GALLOWAY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today?

[00:56:23.66] JAMES MORRISON: Well, I think most people remember it as a disaster, a mistake. And it could very well be. And I think at the time they really thought it was something you need to do. But it's like I told the family of Manuel Dick in California who lost their son, I said, South Vietnam is most likely a better place because of American influence. But I said, your family paid the big price.

[00:56:53.42] JOE GALLOWAY: Big price.

[00:57:00.48] JAMES MORRISON: Maybe a year ago a group from church, and I believe they organized it because they wanted me to go. We got a real brief trip to Washington, DC. We got up early one Saturday morning, and come back that night.

[00:57:11.93] JOE GALLOWAY: Went to the Wall.

[00:57:13.17] JAMES MORRISON: Went to the Wall, and a lot of other things. And it was pretty amazing really.

[00:57:15.87] JOE GALLOWAY: What are your thoughts when you went there?

[00:57:18.81] JAMES MORRISON: Well, you see the people's names, it's something-- they will always be remembered, that you knew-- that passed away.

[00:57:33.19] JAMES MORRISON: I think it's something that people need to remember the sacrifice people made. I know I have in the last year or so, I've gone to my-- the last couple of years, I've gone to my grandson's school and talked to them. I went to my granddaughter's school, talked to them, to remember the people who paid that price-- and the families, really the families that was affected.

[00:58:04.16] I know a family now in Kannapolis that they knew nothing about how-- he knows nothing about how his brother died. And his family had not spoken to him since then. He said he died in 1969 or '70 in Vietnam. He was his younger brother. This older boy volunteered for the Marine Corps, his brother went to-- he volunteered too. He went to Vietnam and got killed. And they knew nothing about what happened, how he died. The family don't speak to him anymore because they blame him for the death. So it disrupted the whole family. Enough--

[00:58:39.74] JOE GALLOWAY: How can they blame that boy for his brother getting killed?

[00:58:43.34] JAMES MORRISON: Well, they say that his brother never would have joined the Marine Corps if he hadn't. He looked up to his older brother. And so the family's blamed him since late '60s, early '70s.

[00:58:53.36] Another family in Concord, from what I was told, their-- and I got this-- I was told that the family didn't know what happened to their son. So I pulled up on the COFC database that told what happened to their son. And the Army didn't tell them. He was on tanks a little bit north of where I was, a little bit more inland, hadn't been there very long. He another boy was hooking a tank to get out of a river, it was stuck. And they got washed away. The Army did not tell them. They just said he's missing. He's dead, he's missing. And so that family's gone all those years up till--

[00:59:34.67] JOE GALLOWAY: Not knowing.

[00:59:35.57] JAMES MORRISON: Not knowing.

[00:59:36.47] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you received your Vietnam veteran's pin?

[00:59:41.08] JAMES MORRISON: I believe that's the one I-- Yeah, i received it. I went up to-- when I was doing the presentation of the new movie they was doing up at-- is it Felix? Not Felix the bottle store. The race shop in Welcome, North Carolina. Yeah, I went up there and I--

[01:00:03.37] JOE GALLOWAY: It's a little, round-- gold-colored pin with an eagle head.

[01:00:07.68] JAMES MORRISON: Yeah, I believe so.

[01:00:08.43] JOE GALLOWAY: You got that one?

[01:00:08.65] JAMES MORRISON: I got one.

[01:00:09.58] JOE GALLOWAY: All right, very good. Thank you for coming in, Jim.