

Chris Robieshaw - Episode 824

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SPEAKERS


Chris Robishaw, James Geering



James Geering 00:00

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We discussed this a long time ago, probably on a plane on the bus and the car and all the other vehicles that were on. But we are now sitting down to do the interview. So welcome to the behind the show podcast.

 Chris Robishaw 03:42

Thanks, James. It's so good to see you again. I've missed you, you know, since our adventure last spring. And it was it was I remember, I mean, obviously we connected several times whether we're in line for screening at airports, or get in the queue for the skydives or whatever. But most importantly, I don't know if you recall, but we had a really, really fun conversation. It was on the bus and it was in Egypt. And to be honest with you, man, you know, it had a profound effect on we were talking about adrenal fatigue, and stuff like that. So I mean, that's where I really got turned on your podcast. And you know, I think that really kind of catapulted our mutual respect, I guess, right, like, I got to know you there. Oh, and then we did that fire department thing in Dallas as well. Yes. been incredibly heartfelt testimony to the firefighters there, and to the folks that are participating. That was really well done. And I know, for you, it's secondhand, but that was also quite impactful. Anyways, thank you for the invitation. Thanks.

 James Geering 04:43

Yeah. Well, I mean, that was February. Is that right? When we were going around the woods, yeah. So so we'll get into that because I want to unpack that a little bit. And the Adrenal Fatigue is funny. That was a very profound realization for me as well. But again, we'll we'll cross that bridge in a minute. So very first question then where I'm Planet Earth. Are we finding you today?

 05:02

Yeah, so I'm back home in Northeast Ohio, not far from Lake area. I grew up here. And then I went away for 33 years in the Army, and now I'm back, eager to help take care of my dad. And I'm still tight with all my buddies from high school. I'm a little more rural now. I'm surrounded by farms and forests purposefully. It's really enjoyable. But yeah, I grew up just a few towns from here. So Northeast Ohio. Beautiful. I

 James Geering 05:29

was just in Ohio in North Canton. So my wife's from so I was just visiting with her and her family and friends a few days ago.

 05:35

Yeah, a couple hours north of that, I

 James Geering 05:37

 James Geering 05:37

think. So we're speaking of that. So let's start at the very beginning of your timeline. So you mentioned where you were born. Talk to me about your family dynamic. what your parents did, and how many siblings?

 05:49

Yeah, right. Okay. So two parents, two more siblings, a brother just a year younger and a sister maybe five or six years younger? Yeah, I cheese James just the absolute blessed childhood. I mean, it's just a very loving family. We were all from Buffalo or whatever. And then my dad settled here up on the lake. I keep looking over there because I'm looking towards the lake. But ya know, I, you know, I'm blessed. I couldn't have asked for a better you know, my wife teases me, you know that it was the cleavers, you know, from Leave It to Beaver, like everything was just Shangri La. And if it wasn't my parents did a good job protecting me, but I don't suspect there was any big issue. So I would say middle class, middle class family. I guess my biggest gripe or my drama was, you know, I was sent away to Catholic schools, meaning sent away from my hometown to the next town over for Catholic grade schools, which sucked nothing against Catholicism, but that school was just, you know, every everything we we make jokes about, you know, nuns with rulers and, you know, priests that are might be inappropriate, you know, like, it was just awful. I was fine. But the nuns, in fact, I think I used to, I used to say, so, I think I Simonis. I did accuse them of being communists all the time, you know that they were part of some type of sleeper cell. Anyways, then come High School, unfortunately, that I went to the other side of our town to a Catholic High School. And I think that's where I'm like, my rebellion really, really started my rebellion, meeting my angst. I was just so unhappy. I was away from my friends in my hometown, you know, playing sports with them and growing close with them and not being in high school with them. So I think it was my my first act of sabotage was really I let off fireworks, firecrackers during a mass and promptly got me kicked out, again, by design. And then I got to finish my last two years at the public high school with my friends, but my behavior didn't really get better after that, but my morale certainly skyrocketed. And yeah, I joined the, you know, was at Red Dawn, and, you know, first blood and maybe a prep for predator. Commando, I guess maybe it was a commando movie. But you know, those things really, really hit to me. And, you know, my dad was in the National Guard during the Vietnam era. So he doesn't have any really outstanding stories other than prison riots and, you know, things that they did in the National Guard. I had an uncle that served Vietnam, he's been quite influential. And then of course, my grandfather fought in the Battle of the Bulge. And I would always hang on his every word. So I guess those were the influences that, but really, it was a movie Red Dawn, the one with Patrick Swayze, not that crap Hold on one that came out a few years ago. And I was really interested, I started hounding the recruiters when I was 16. And then just a few like a week after my 17th birthday, my recruiter came over and I signed up for the reserves, because they had this cool program where you go to basic training your summer between your junior and senior year, and then you come back finish out your senior year with the awful haircut. And then right after you graduate, then you go back for your continued training in the army. It's called a it advanced individual training. And I was going to be a medic. So I did that. So I was, I was all in. You know, I was the crazy kid. Catholic grade school. I remember I somehow I got a hold of a camouflage coat. You know, and I thought I was just kidding shit. And to be honest, it just didn't light up until three years ago when I retired. I've just been all in I don't know, it's kind of a psychosis of some sort. I'm not really sure.


 James Geering 09:47

 James Geering 09:47

When the camo coats fashionable when when we were about that age, because I want to say the whole grunge era brought the especially the German jackets for some reason.

 09:56

Yeah, this is 80s Right? So I'm substantially older than you You are it's like, at least I assume I am. No, it was like a Army Navy store would have been camouflage. You know, just a BT Utak but man, I would have thought it was like, you know, the Golden Fleece. I couldn't I couldn't get enough of it. Yeah, that's my background before I shipped off to to become a medic. In my time in high school, I was a dismal, dismal student, dismal scholastics chip on my shoulder and all the sports teachers hated me. Parents rightfully were frustrated with me, but but I was having the time in my life wasn't heavy drugs. To this day. I've never done a drunk driving incident. But I was you know, I was introduced to alcohol real early. Never did pot. I was just really just loving. Being a relatively good looking kid and doing all right with the girls in and my best friends and just tooling around like maniacs. See 14 I did get busted with alcohol at 14. I had to do a little thing at juvie there for just a little bit. But um, yeah, other than that, I had a great time. But I think I really put my parents through hell, which, you know, being slightly more wise, looking back on that I kind of regret that. Especially now that my mom passed. It's like, I hate that I put him through that stuff. But it's coming. I got a 13 year old. So it's what comes around goes around.

 James Geering 11:26

Absolutely. Yeah, mine's turning 16 on Thursday. So yeah, taking this test. And God, you know, talking about nerves as a firefighter, allowing your child to go drive on their own is, you know, one of the most terrifying yet courageous things a first responder can do, I think, because we've seen the worst side so you just pray that your year of training has, you know, instilled enough common sense into them?

 11:48

Yeah, you just want to put them in an M ramp with surrounded by airbags, you know, in, in a governor's who doesn't go over 20 miles an hour, so doesn't hurt anybody.

 James Geering 11:56

Exactly. Exactly. Tom's on constantly. Alright, well, then going back to your family just for a second grandfather first. What did what did? What were the what was the perspective that you got from him from his service? And then now with this lens? Did you identify, you know, the, the mental health element that obviously that generation didn't really get to offload?

 12:21

Wow, you know, just as you were asking me that I had a flashback. I hadn't thought of the years. So back at that Catholic grade school. It was grand Grandparents Day, and they came in

years. So back at that Catholic grade school. It was grand grandparents Day, and they came in from Buffalo. And, you know, they're Catholic, like, like, off the boat, Sicilian, you know, Catholic, and he came up to tell a story. Oh, my God. And he he froze up and started crying in front of my seventh grade class. Like, he couldn't finish it. And he said, you know, excuse me, I'm sorry. He froze up for me, right? Oh, my God. I feel like I'm back there. Right. Like, like, I got like hot flash for probably for the first time, my life and goosebumps and my friends are like, he's still Casio camera. And he's like, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. He just kind of ran out of the room. Embarrassed his shit. And boy, I think Boy, that's a great question. And thanks for conjuring that up. That was that probably had a really big impact on me. Yeah, poor guy. And the story if I recall was kind of innocuous. I probably heard it a bunch of times. But I think it had to do like with just artillery barrage and just being stuck and surrounded and just and then the weather broke. And then when the first transport planes Yeah, it was a happy story, that that when the first resupply planes came in for for that, that division, I believe in the garden that they were pinned down. And then when the weather broke, all the resupply bundles started coming in. And that was one of the happiest moments of his life. Thanks, James. I haven't done that a long time. Oh, that's wild. Yeah, I'm gonna pull up some pictures after this. It's amazing

J James Geering 14:09

though, because I mean, sadly, we lost these voices. And I always point to when we talk about masculinity, this kind of facade. And you talked about, you know, Red Dawn, and Commando. That's what we were raised on that was, you know, masculine warriors on the screens. And some of them were portraying real people. Some of them obviously weren't, I don't think predator is actually a real soldier, for example. But um, but you look at the real man in the band of brothers story, and they were, you know, probably somewhere in that forest alongside your your grandfather. And you know, that there's some of the most fearsome warriors that we've ever seen in in the US military. But the vulnerability and the you know, the, the tears and the emotion these are we're talking almost, I think it was like 70 plus years later, these men are being interviewed for the show. That's my masculinity. And you know, you cannot go through, for example, the Battle of the Bulge, and not have it affect you when men are being blown to pieces left, right, and start in a freezing to death and all these other things. So I think it's so important when we're able to hear whether it's through the actual veteran, which I've had on here before, or more often than not, you know, the sons or the Graham grandchildren of these veterans to continue this story, because we call them the greatest generation in the world. But again, that's kind of like this facade, that they're all fine, they came home, and they just went to work. And the reality is, they struggled, some of them did better than others, but they all struggle.

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For sure. And I was talking with some other veterans through the years. And I think there was also a big difference, right. And I'm sure you captured this in one of your, like, over 800 interviews, which is congratulations on that, by the way that the guys returned back to the US, you know, in probably Canada for that matter, or, you know, even back to New Zealand and Australia, like the guys had had the long ship ride home with their mates. And, you know, certainly one thing I've gotten relatively good at talking about is grief, and the different stages of grief. And I have a bit of a couple philosophies, I always, you know, whenever I lost the guy, as a commander, I'd go visit the guys and, you know, obviously, as soon as possible, and help them having been through it personally, on the battlefield, just to visit them and kind of tell

him, what's worked for me in dealing with with grief or whatever. And, and that long ride home, regardless of how they were coping, or whatever, you know, that was weeks and weeks of eating Navy food stuck in the belly, you know, just kind of with your with your will who's left, I guess, you know, depending on how much contact they had. You know, whereas their Vietnam forefathers they didn't they didn't have that luxury. You know, they were on a plane, and they came back generally is individual Augmentee. Generally speaking, if the unit didn't redeploy, and what a stark difference that is to be thrown. Like, just going through a time portal, almost like a parallel universe.

J James Geering 17:29

Yeah, I've heard that a lot with with veterans from your era, you know, it literally, whatever it was, you know, 24 hours prior, they were in Afghanistan, and now they're in a Walmart in Wisconsin, you know, and they were literally in combat 24 hours before, and now, someone's bitching about the line being too long, you know, and I can relate as a first responder, I mean, you were cutting someone out of a car at 3am. And then your neighbor's bitching about your trash cans at 9am. And you want to, you know, throw punch? It is it is we don't have that separation anymore, like we did. And even, you know, the soldiers in the UK, you know, the Northern Ireland conflicts, I mean, that's just a hop, skip, and a jump away from being back there. And they're in that war zone in the 80s and 90s. And then now they're back in civilian life. And sadly, the other thing is, a lot of people don't give a shit, what you just did three hours, five hours, 24 hours before?

o 18:22

It's yeah, I that has to be a unique variable, you know, to modern conflicts. It has to be, you know, I'm, I'm involved in some humanitarian work in Ukraine, and maybe we'll get to that, but and there we see, you know, it's your homeland, and then guys get banged up, you know, and they're walking around or on crutches or wheelchairs, you know, in their cities and towns in the back, I could imagine what that dynamic is, of course, there that goes into the whole community, like they're probably welcomed as heroes, I presume. I mean, it's such an incredibly patriotic country, a patriotic culture, in a very intense patriotic time. So I'll bet they're surrounded by love, you know, pretending I keep going back to the service to our Vietnam predecessors, and just the absolute dismal reception that they had writ large, you know, outside of their families. So, lots of different variables, you know, I don't know, like, what did over Legionnaire you know, in the Roman Empire, he comes, you know, he's got like, a three month journey coming back, you know, through the Alps and back down to Rome, like, I don't know, like, did they talk you know, they sit around the campfire, do they tease each other? Do they mourn? Did they pack up you know, one of their fallen, you know, pack up their kit and go through that, you know, kind of emotional exercise of packing up a fallen brother. You know, all of his stuff. It's a thing. It's definitely a thing.

J James Geering 19:55

Yeah. Well, Sebastian younger in his book tribe talks about that a lot. You know, a lot of the Older cultures they had that homecoming, you know, when it came to the Warriors, they had the storytelling, they had the rituals, you know, and there was an, you know, an audience for

this warrior to tell, this is what we did for you this, this is who we lost this is who was her. This is what we gained. But you know, especially with Vietnam, you know, you've got this anti war movement. And you know, a lot of people could justify the actual principle behind it, but especially the people that are being drafted, they didn't even have a choice. They were told, Go and fight this war. And then, you know, they're coming back and I had, you know, so many people from that era, major capers is one that really stands out. He was when the original f, excuse me Air Force marine recon, and had a very, very famous battle. And it's kind of one of those ones that a lot of people say should be awarded the Medal of Honor. But that aside, you know, he was wounded, came back and he said, I was laying there on the pavement after being evac back to the US. And someone urinated on me. He's been sent away, he's, you know, he's fought for this country. He's protecting the southern Vietnamese people. And then this is his reception. So and then we wonder why so many the Vietnam era veterans struggle so much because there was no homecoming, there was no storytelling, it was the opposite. They were, you know, treat a lot of them like baby killers. And, you know, betrayal was what they received. Not not, you know, praise and thanks.



21:34

I couldn't imagine. I am so fortunate. I, I had the absolute opposite, opposite reception. Parades key to the city. The reception at Fort Bragg when we landed, this is the Gulf War kind of going there. The original one, you know, the, the big one now the sequel? Yeah. My first one. Yeah, I can't really I can't get my head around that because I, I've been experience the, at the antithesis of that nothing but love and respect and, and even even through the 33 years. It's never led up here in the States. So I am eternally grateful for that. It's not it's not lost on me at least. But



James Geering 22:23

yeah, well, that's that's how it should be. That's good to hear. So let's walk through so you're this bright eyed, you know, recruit, walk me through your initial journey into the military. And then what took you into the Special Forces side?



22:36

Wow, I came a long way to be honest with you. I'm thinking of that scared shitless II won private who went to basic training, and I've never been, I mean, we travel as a family a little bit, right, everything south of the Mason Dixon Line, except for Disney, that doesn't count. You know. And then here I am getting yelled at, in South Carolina by you know, just different accents and ethnicities and the drill instructors, drill sergeants, and I couldn't understand and I'm like, I don't know. And I'm the youngest guy in tune. What and then, you know, and then I, you know, retired just couple years ago, with a career that I'm incredibly proud of. And I think I was all right, I think I was a veteran CEO than I was as an officer, but you know, I did okay, you know, and to think of how much growing and all the experiences that took place in those 30 some odd years it's, it's it's really hard to get my head around but I guess just the wave tops would be Yeah, so I was in the Reserves. I did okay, in the medic course just combat medic note that nothing or tech or nothing like that. Just the basic line medic. And then the only school college I got accepted to was in Maine. Now I'm in Ohio, a mains quite quite a ways away, but

my heat SATs and ACT's were so bad. And my GPA I just graduated by the skin of my teeth. But this college accepted me it was an environmental College and the big acceptance requirement was an essay. So I was like, Alright, well I can write because I'm kind of, I've always been able to creatively write I guess. And so I lied on the essay about what I want in life and stuff. And they bought it and I got accepted. So my parents dropped me off in Maine, probably happily and and I wasn't ready for college yet. I was in the Reserves at the time, still a medic with some infantry unit up there. But um, no, I dropped out. I actually you know what it was it was just cause operation just cause maybe some of your listeners aren't familiar. That was the invasion in Panama to oust the dictator down there, Manuel Noriega in 1989, and I kind of caught it during my winter break, and I'm like, What am I doing? I'm wasting my parents money. I'm just, you know, freezing my ass off and making, you know, there's nothing to do you up there? You know what, I'm just going to join the army. Like I'm not ready for college. Now maybe that was my first self aware moment, James, you know, as a as a strapping 19 and a half year old, 20 year old like this college, I'm not ready. I'm not, I'm not there yet. And so I did I quit college or as I told my dad, I postponed my studies and went active duty. But this time I reclassified for infantry. I thought I thought I wanted to I wanted as much out of that four years as I could, I thought the infantry be the best way to go. And lo and behold, the paratrooper the Airborne Infantry was available. So that's what I did four years sign up for four years. And then as I joke, every four years, I thought I was going to get out of the army. You don't mean like, I never thought I was going to be a careerist. Every three or four years when you come up for re enlistment? You know, kind of going into it. I'm like, Yeah, okay, great. I'm gonna get out, you know, that was great. I learned a lot, you know, I got some certifications, or, you know, some GI Bill, I'm gonna go back to college. But so what is that eight times over? Seven or eight times over, for some reason I kept staying in because the, the army for what it's worth, it really kept me challenged. And it kept, it kept provided me like the next, the next thing for my my ambition and my appetite. And my assignments that I was asking for, especially in Special Forces, because it's such a small community, and then even smaller as a Special Forces officer, that you do get a lot of tender loving care. You know, if I had stayed in infantry officer, you know, I'm just another number, there's a gazillion of them. But once you're in SF officer that community is is intimate. And you get to know your, your, your assignments guy up there at the headquarters, and they try to appease, you know, what do you want to do? Or where do you want to get assigned? How's your wife's, you know, job prospect looking? Do you have any other parents that need help? Can we sign you with them, and it's just, it's the way everybody should be treated. But just with the bureaucracy, something the size of the Army, there's, I don't know if there's any way to, to show that level of compassion. Because you get more out of us, right? If, if you're, if you're addressing the emotional needs of a soldier, and the family needs, then you're, I think you're gonna get a lot more out of that cat, whether it's conscious or subconscious. So maybe that's why they do it. But anyway, so I joined the paratroopers, and immediately went off to Desert Shield, I believe we were the second brigade, I was in the 82nd airborne division, and the first brigade took off. As soon as I got there, they took off and then we immediately immediately went to alert. And then we were the second of the brigades to go. So as they're pretty much in August, which was about when Desert Shield started. This kind of fight. I hope I don't have too many tangents. But so everybody in my company, let alone specifically my platoon had combat jumped and fought in Panama. So in the paratrooper world, you get a little distinction on your jump wings, it's a it's a gold star, a little gold thread, and the shape of a star and it's highly regarded because other than some Rangers in Grenada, we hadn't seen these jumps since World War Two, you know, some of the veterans will have like four stars on their jumping to like, Oh, my God, you know, like that guy. So here's a bunch of, you know, infantry dudes, knuckle draggers. Some of them, some of them were incredible people, but you know, but they're just king shit, because they got they fought in


Panama. So not only to have the Combat Infantry Badge, they had to jumpstart, except me, except me. So I roll in, and I've got nothing other than I was a medic, and I think they kind of appreciated that. I had to carry a real big aid bag. And I was treated like shit.

 James Geering 28:55

You didn't have a main insignia that you were in college.

 28:59

I didn't have any Flatliner Oh, I had my airborne links, I guess. Yeah, I could say I failed out of college. You know? No, that wasn't respected in the platoon of infantry guys. But that's I thought, Man, that was nine months or so. of just writing in the services. I'm sure the rookie gets fucking abused. Right. Like, you got to go through the rites of passage. Yeah, right. I mean, I assume you gotta

 James Geering 29:27

go in all professions. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. And if you're a humble rookie, you know, you get to the end of that year, and you're still the junior man, you know what I mean? So that if we, if we do that path, right, you know, it should be about learning. But yeah, there needs to be humility. And you see them you know, the best veterans that we have still act like they're rookies that they're still hungry for knowledge and full of humility.

 29:50

Yeah, yeah, I think I think I did pretty good at that. Being humble and just taking it on the chin and volunteering for every literally burning shit. You know, ship burning details like that was that was my primary job. You know when first platoon duties came around, I mean, every everything that came down, and in fact, they called me robot cherry instead of Roboshot. Very meaning, you know, an effing fucking new guy to a unit is called the cherry talked about Vietnam terminology. But then what you know what happened was people started getting in fights just bored paratroopers doing shit and getting in trouble and francs. And then sooner or later, you know, they'd be like, first platoon give me one guy and I get up, you know, and I'm reporting and they'd be like, nah, nah, now sit down robic cherry fertilizer AMI Get over here. And I'm like, Oh, my God. Other people are doing some of these ship burning details or unloading things or whatever. So are KP you know. So that was kind of an elation and like the guys get in trouble. And then James, I guess from that, you know, I redeployed after Desert Storm. And shit just really started working out for me, I was so hungry and ambitious. I just started knocking out all these infantry qualifications, extra schools, all these little tests and proficiency things and I was really into I kind of found my, my needs, I think, and it was a good matchup of really fit, which, which again, is your private but you can outperform everybody else in the platoon and fitness. That's one thing they can hold over you. And that was my own little my secret victory over him. You know, I mean, nobody Well, one guy could not run up here and go to the national mission force. But aside from him, I mean, nobody, nobody can keep up with me. So that helped. Oh, and then I went to the Ranger course as a really young soldier as

a young paratrooper. The Ranger course in the US Army is a pretty big deal, particularly in the infantry. And I did exceptionally well at it. Despite being naive, I think it's because no one expected much from me. So I didn't get any hard, hard, hard patrols because I was just like an E three, a first class, promotable, I like to say, and after Ranger School, again, all this jumpmaster, all these schools just kept coming in common. And I made rank really quick. And at the end of the four years, I was already a staff sergeant. And I had a lot of options, I had a lot of options of where to go. Also, within that four years. As an e6, I tried out for special forces. So we have a selection. Just like most special operations, you know, whether you call it hell week, or have a long walk, or whatever, but we have our own selection. Green platoon is another thing that our aviation guys go through. And I did really good at that. Again, I was fit at the time. And I had a blast doing it. But I, right before I left, my wife, who I'm still together, we just had our 30th anniversary. She had a she had a moment. And she has a lot of moments of clarity. In fact, she's always clear. But she, she has some wisdom early in our marriage. And she said, Well, why why you go Special Forces, because we knew we were surrounded by friends who want special forces, and they're never around. They're always going off to places and she goes, Well, why would you want to be away from me? She goes, maybe, maybe maybe do Special Forces later, but I don't think you know, we just got married. I don't think it's a good time. And I was like, You know what, baby? That's an excellent point. But I still got to go to selection cuz that's what all the cool kids do at Bragg anyways. And I did and I got selected to be a special forces medic, which, right there, I knew they got the wrong guy. You know, I mentioned my lack of aptitude for scholastics and the 18 Delta courses, the designation for the Special Forces, the Greenbrae medic course. There's no way there's no, I couldn't pass it now. Not that. I mean, I have a low bar for myself, but it's just intense. It's got the biggest washout rate. It's the longest course of all the Greenbrae courses. And those guys were just absolutely brilliant. And so I knew I knew what that wasn't. So I turned it down. They couldn't believe it. And instead, I went to Officer Candidate School. And that was kind of a big, the big move, because now I'm not going to be an NCO when I left the 82nd I was a platoon sergeant as an e6 That's really really proud of that I was in the same platoon for six years. The same platoon I mean from shit burning, you know, robots very private robots area up to you know, platoon sergeant in the same platoon, I broke my heart to leave it but looking back on it I the I'm so proud of those days of going through the enlisted ranks, every position and infantry platoon and then to lead the guys as a as a mid grade NCO. But I I really, I that was my foundation years, man. I'm really proud that I, I served as an NCO and in a lot of ways I can I always imagine what would have been like if I would have stayed as an NCO if I didn't get in trouble, because there's a lot of room to get in trouble. But, you know, I would have been a certain major, you know, I think, and that would have been neat to continue to help develop, guys whereas Officer, you're developing junior leaders to a degree. Once you get more more rank boys and NCO i i Don't regret it, but I regret it. You know, like, I don't know if there was a chance to do it all over again. I don't know. I mean, I'm providing for my family well now and that's important. Before those years that NCO were just really something else. They were really something else. Okay, so fast forward, I guess whatever. OCS piece of cake infantry officer course piece of cake, and met amazing guy named Jay Hanson. We met no CES, and he got me turned into this. This is peacetime stuff. The best Ranger competition. It's pretty legit, pretty legit. And he had done it a few times. And he's gone through a few partners that didn't make it through or they got disqualified for different things. And he asked me to do it. And I was like, Man flattered his ship, but you got the wrong cat. Like, I'm just a runner, like, I don't know, and I know my infantry shit. But um, you know, I best Ranger, those guys are like best Ranger competitors. My whole career, those guys are just like special detail, like you never see them. And when you see them, they're just run around in the Ranger panties. And they're fit and they're going to the range all the time. But anyway, he convinced me to do it. And while we were in OCS, we took second place. Second place is insane. It was absolutely insane. But what

what helped was, I was a pretty decent light infantry man. And he was a fucking spectacular light infantryman in between our NCO experiences when it came to the tasks, plus, we were fit. We, we grabbed second place. And then after that, we got recruited by the different divisions would call it down to the infantry school to get Hanson and Roboshot at their unit to represent them at the next year's competition. And ensures shit, we landed on the 101st airborne, after literally offers that I didn't know the army did that, you know, like, well, if you come to this, we'll give you this and not not like for personal gain, but we'll give you all the resources to train or we'll get you a dedicated dietician, or we'll get you a medic, or we'll get you TD wide, you know, and all these other things. And we decided on her first and then the next year, Jane I want, man, yeah. Oh, I It's one of the highlights of my life outside of combat. And of course, you know, being a father, but up to that point, that was one of the biggest, the biggest accomplishment in my life. And I owe it a lot to my partner, JB. He showed me how to do it. And I just didn't quit on him. I think I think that's that was the recipe. So just jumping

J James Geering 37:49

in for a second because I'm familiar with that that event as well. Not I've done it but you know, with love the Green Berets and army army people have been on here. What was the common denominator between not just the who won it but you know, the competitors that you were alongside that were very successful? What was it that separated them from an already elite unit that they were able to enable them, excuse me to be able to perform that even higher level?

 38:14

Yeah, I think there's a lot of dudes out there that could compete. But a lot of it has to do with timing. You don't I mean, so everybody knows, it's in May, every year, and then six months prior to that each of the divisions or the regiment. And then even some of our allies, and even the Marines that are Ranger qualified, they'll hold their internal competitions to create the team. So you get like a couple of primary, two main teams, a couple of primary teams, a couple of alternate teams, and, and that all starts, you know, six to eight months prior to the event. But the only people that gets drowned people that are available, you know, like you're stuck in the Sinai Peninsula doing peacekeeping, or if you're on alert status of some kind, or boy post, or even during the global war on terror, I couldn't imagine all the talented and fit, competent guys that would be competitive or just deployed, you know, just, there's no way and that's why in a lot of ways, you know, I want to I want to be clear that i, j and I, our success was in a peacetime army. You know, because, you know, who knows who else out there are hidden champions that would never get a chance to kind of test themselves against, you know, similar guys. So I, I guess that's kind of how I reflect on that question. Yeah.

J James Geering 39:36

And then just go into Desert Storm for a second. I mean, you obviously had the G What coming up, but prior to that, you know, we only have the media to feed us the information about conflicts. And I'll get to my two part question when we get into the second part, but what were what was some of the things that maybe that you witnessed firsthand boots on the ground that

You know, maybe weren't reported, what was your experience of Desert Storm through a soldier's eyes as opposed to what the media was telling the average civilian? Good, bad or indifferent? It's not a loaded question. Just, um, ya know?



40:15

Well, you know, back then, you know, we didn't have Armed Forces Network. So we didn't know what was getting back during Desert Shield, Desert Storm, you know, like, there was no TV. In fact, there was no phones, like he had to wait in line, you know, an hour to a couple hours in middle of night to get a five minute phone call, you know, your parents, you know, it's just kind of put that into a lens. I think, I don't know if this was reported, you know, because we took a shit ton of prisoners, a shit ton and the 82nd We weren't spearhead, you know, we followed the mechanized units, and it was very much a mechanized battle. A 101st did a pretty cool aerosol. But again, I wasn't like 100 person, and the Marines were doing some really cool shit in Kuwait. But for the rest of us, we were kind of doing I guess, the antiquated term would be mop up, mop up operations, right? You know, we're we're just kind of going in behind a fire, we call it Desert Shield, or excuse me, Desert Storm was just an incredibly rapid invasion, like, just smoking through the Iraqi defenses and the logistics, you know, I guess it was a champion vignette of how logistics work with with a pace that that's exceeding expectations. And, again, as a private robot, Sherry, I wouldn't know shit about that. But what I I didn't anticipate was the amount of prisoners and the compassion that we as an industrialized nation with a professional army, and I've seen this throughout gy, too, I wish people would know, either back then, or even as recent as the conflicts now, even the current ones in Syria, that the US goes to incredible lengths to adhere by human rights, ethics, and values, the world will never know. They'll never know how much goes into collateral damage estimates, we'll call it CDE. But particularly special operations, when you're doing precision operations and stuff. It's an amazing thing. And you can't really, you can't broadcast too much, because a lot of it appropriately so is sensitive, because you don't want the bad guys to plan around it. And nor will I go into details, of course. But I think America knows it because we share the same values throughout not just America, but you know, our allies. Like they get it they get it like yeah, okay, we're not animals, you know, we're not executing we're not, you know, starving our prisoners, or we're not, you know, neglecting aid to civilians. But the world still thinks we're just these Berzerker you know, don't give a shit animals out there. And I fought those animals. And I know, I know what humans can do to each other. And it's fucking awful, you know, but the, when you unleash us, us, our allies of the professional military, US combatants, the enemies thought, you know, like there's they're done. Like, there's, there's no more passion, except maybe a suicide bomber. I can't compete with that, or a kamikaze pilot, I, you know, I want to go home and I want to do more damage to the enemy than just one. One trick pony, you know, but But outside of that we in the industrialized and professional armies. We know the difference between combat and non combat. And we know the difference between a target and not a target, and the amount of work that goes into assuring that I don't think we are allies in us, we get credit for that. And it's too bad. It's too bad because it costs us lives. It costs us efficiency. And it's the right thing to do. God forbid, you know, their Judeo Christian ethics, like, that's that you don't treat people poorly, unless they're the bad guys and then unleash hell, you know, but there's a distinction and we distinguish that, and I don't I don't think the world recognizes that. Let's do better.



James Geering 44:23

Well, this is so the two poll question I get to is, you know, the, the horrors that you saw or not, like, give me an example, which is, you know, the justification of the bad guys you said, you know, the the violence that we send towards some people that are truly at that moment, evil, but the other side is the kindness and compassion. You've kind of, you know, already answered that, in a way. The number of stories that I've had because I asked this specifically two sided question of, you know, the kindness and compassion that was towards the the indigenous population that were injured. That was the kindness from the indigenous indigenous population towards them. Poetry, the kindness towards the indigenous populations, animals, you know, the US Army veterinarians, helping animals. I mean, it just it's this unending list of kindness and compassion, which is contrasted by the fact that you're in the middle of a war. But we don't get that we don't get the the horrors of war conversation, which we should because the recruiting videos make it look like an awesome summer camp that young men can go to, you know, but then you also have the you don't hear the this is what we're doing over there, the hearts and mind the real hearts and mind not some, you know, political phrase, but what our men and women are doing handing out water and fixing wells and building schools and repairing roads, we don't get that conversation. So this is it. For me, it's removing the politics out of it, and putting the humanitarian effort which might be building, or it might be eliminating tyrants that are, you know, murdering a population.



45:57

Yeah, only because I recently retired. And I was teaching this for a while, in my last assignment. The names probably changed by now, again, I'm antiquated by three years, but doctrine moves fast. And I'm going to sound like a total doctrine nerd right now. But the army approach, multi domain operations or multi domain warfare, and the different domains as you would land, sea, air, space, cyber, and then the one that in, particularly in the Green Beret community, not all US Special Operations, because not all US Special Operations deal in what we refer to as the human domain. And the human domain. I'm all in on that Kool Aid like you if you can dominate the human domain. And you can influence the populations. And the the center of gravity for that country is probably the well it could be the military could be the people it could be a dictator could be resources, but it's typically it's always the common denominators, the people, and if you can demonstrate, again, this is from a Greenbrae perspective, because we operate so much in the human domain, if you can, through civil affairs and Psyops and just by example, and working with, by within, through, you know, their indigenous people, and then if it's a, if it's unconventional warfare, then you know, you're working on the other side, where as you're trying to encourage people overthrow their government, and you're providing them the resources and the training and the inspiration to do that. But that that's that that's the key is the human domain, for sure. In you, you demonstrate that or you inspire that by having civility, in appealing to people's Maslow's hierarchy of needs, you know, and then you identify with them, and but you've got to be sincere. I mean, you can fake you can lie, especially through an interpreter, it's easy, because they lie to us, not the interpreters. But if you don't know that culture, then you know, people are lying to you, and you're probably necessarily lying to them. Because you're, you're, you're on the path of the righteous and you want what's best for them, whether it's overthrowing the government or defeating an insurgency, it comes down to the humans, it just comes down to the humans, because if a country doesn't have the human capital, some support, then that country fails, right? Whether they will rise up and change the regime, or they'll stop working, or they'll, you know, in other passive or, or active ways of, of resisting, you know, so there's a lot to it. But but the the human domain, I don't know if that became doctrine, but I know in our community, the Greenbrae community, we focus a lot on that, because that that is the common denominator, regardless of the military objective,

 James Geering 48:52

total tangent, my perspective, James Geering perspective of the last two administrations, is that there has been a very deliberate divisive element to it, you know, to me, a true leader unifies, especially under crisis and the last two, which are both sides of the aisle have divided and in my opinion, it's making our country weaker and weaker and weaker with the background that you have as a Greenbrae. And obviously, you guys were the force multipliers. You were the ones working with people, you're probably the most diplomatic of all the special forces, Special Operations groups. What is your perspective on community and unity in this country? And if you see any problem whatsoever, you're king for a day, what can we do that move the needle back to patriotism and unity?

 49:49

Yeah, these are particularly going into the next election season, two polar opposite approaches or ideals that idealism. So this is a tough one. It's a tough one. But you know, I'm, I'm comforted in, you know, I still travel the world. Well, we did it together as an example. But But even the different convoluted conflict zones that I still get a chance to pitch in wise and humanitarian sense. But we're still a young country, you know, and I find comfort in that, like, we're young, really young. And I think this is part of the growing pains. So I'm, I have faith, and I am optimistic, we're going to figure it out. But it's not to say it's going to be easy. I think in a lot of ways, socially, we are becoming more aware of each other. And that's cool. And that that needs to be there for for us all to kind of start rolling the adrenaline in the same direction instead of opposite direction. So yeah, this is where we got, you know, going into election season two personalities that couldn't be further apart. And then with them come their policies and stuff like that. And I'm, I mean, I've watched the news, but because I don't have time to research my own shit. But I'm not naive. Well, we'll get through it, we'll get through it, you know, but we'll get through it. This is growing pains, man, we're on our way to greatness, we haven't tapped out, it's, we're going to figure it out. I think we just need to take stock of how well we're doing, socially, how well we're doing, how well we're integrated with each other. And, and take stock. It's not all doom and gloom. And then when, as you mature, I assume in an organization or a community, or a firehouse or a team room. That by by gaining awareness, you know, whether it's through protests, or, you know, sometimes unfortunately, and unnecessarily violent protests. You'll learn more about all the all the pieces toward I'm looking for all the different perspectives, and then you learn from it. And then and then in time, things change to address them to where it's a medium. So, I don't think it's as bad. But I'm in a beautiful part of Ohio, surrounded by a bunch of hard working farmers and devout Amish people. So it's quite Shangri La, we're on that. But even traveling around the world, you know, with cultures and governments that are centuries old. You know, they they throw stones at the at us with criticism, and I'm like, man, just give us a chance. We're like toddlers, you know?

 James Geering 52:45

Sometimes, yeah,



 52:47

yeah. But we got this Declaration of Independence. And it seems like it was a good starting point. But let's let's continue to grow. I think we'll be right.

 James Geering 52:54

Yeah, no, I That's just the thing. I think the American people are wonderful people. And I think this is the sad thing is that we firstly allow really extremists to be the sound board of our whole nation. And then secondly, we have a selection process that out of 333 million people every four years, we end up having to choose the and I quote, lesser of two evils. So to me, there's a national awakening, where we actually demand a change in how we choose the people, so they don't have to be corrupt and millionaires to participate. I think that's how we're going to move forward away from this divisive, you know, pick aside and Flanders Field mentality that we have now and more like, okay, it wasn't my ideal choice, but there's still not bad, which is where we need to get to.

 53:44

Yeah, yeah, I agree with you. For sure. Yeah, we'll be alright.

 James Geering 53:49

Yeah, I think so. All right. Well, then moving on, obviously, you got into the military way before 911. So what was your 911 experience through your eyes? And and how did that shift your military trajectory?

 54:03

Yeah, it's actually quite a slow start, just because of the unit I got assigned to. So I was in so Green Berets, we you know, our, our selection course is really short, but intense. And then assuming you make it then you go to the qualification course. And then there's like four or five qualification courses based on your specific job. And of course, I got slated towards the officer one after being an infantry officer, you know, switched over to Special Forces officer. And that course is it's alright, you know, I mean, it's all right meaning I I did all right, it was fine. You know, I I finished out you know, with some awards, but I was in part of our training is language and cultural training. And then your language and cultural training is attached to or it influences what unit you'll be assigned to. So Green Berets are regionally assigned Around the world. And then in it, you're supposed to be culturally aware, you don't have to be an expert unless you were born into that culture. And, and I'll be honest with you, I can say this, now that I'm a retiree, I think a lot of our assignment also has to do with our own ethnicity, or at least how we look. So I got assigned to a European unit, a unit that focuses on euro, which later led to my opportunity to command a NATO Special Operations task force couple years ago, so I stayed in that unit, I stayed European centric, and as such, I was assigned Russian, a Russian language and Russian culture training. And that really helped me out because some of the stuff I did in Europe I blend, you know, I have Mediterranean ancestry. So I blended really, really well around Europe, I kind of stuck out Norway, but man, do I blend in Italy, or are other places so

that that really helps out? Particularly, I mean, if you get to the like the core of the Greenbrae thing, when it comes to clandestine missions, or places where you have to blend in. And if you don't open your mouth, you probably blend in real well, the minute you open your mouth, you know, they'll pegged you as being a non native or whatever, but you got to have a cultural and language training to, to be effective communicator, and not not to, you know, faux pas in that culture or whatever. And then you know, even language just so you can kind of make up the headlines in the newspaper or not sound like complete idiot at the bar. You know, if you're on mission, just do the best you can. So Europe was was definitely my thing. And now I was in language school when the buildings got hit. I was in language school, and we all ran to the common area. I say ran, you know, there was a big people like, hey, everybody get to the common area, that's where the TVs were. And we're just like, holy shit. And then the medics got pulled away. Because language, all the MOS is reconvene after your specific courses, you reconvene for language and culture training. And all the medics were pulled aside and they're like, everybody, oh, you metrics report cover brag, you know, and it's just right up by 95. And so there was a idea that they were going to assemble to rush up to DC with eight bags, you know, because they were all beyond the EMTP. Like, you know, they're all, you know, surgery and stuff like that. So there was talk of that. And I thought that was that was when the medics were pulled aside. I was like, wow, this is for real. It's not just on TV, like it's a concrete evidence that we're about to mobilize students, medical students. Well, I mean, they've already passed their course on a buses and just Beeline right up. 95 To hell, I'm like, Okay, well, this is this is this is no shit. But after that, of course, going through the queue course, everybody's ramped up. Everybody's ramped up, Afghanistan kicked off first, and then Iraq a year later or so. But unless you were in those groups, some of us didn't get involved in global war on terror for a long time. And when I say global war on terror, I mean, specifically Afghanistan, or Iraq, like Bhutan, or the Philippines, or the trans to hell in Africa, like that. That was the concrete World War on Terror. Now, under under g, what is we call a global war on terror under g why we would be doing non combat missions with allies. But we're tied to defeating terrorism globally. Right, generally through training or intelligence. Right. So globally, we were everywhere. Even if you weren't in the Philippines, the trans to hell of Africa, Afghanistan or Iraq. We weren't in Syria at the time. So and that was a lot of my involvement for at least 2003. So I'm going to we're gonna go first, Iraq, Baghdad, until 2006. So yeah, I was like three or four years before I was on the ground in a combat zone, despite having done a lot of compartmentalised things around the world. But the actual, you know, boots on the ground, as they say, it's kind of a conventional term, but um, yeah, it took it took a while before I got there. But once once I got there, you know, it was it was it was actually kind of old hat, meaning it was absolutely everything you trained for, you know, because in a lot of ways, in my opinion, direct combat is relatively simple. And I don't want to be misperceived as being Cavalier. It's Hold in that it's exactly what you trained for. I mean, you have to adapt and the enemy adapts, and if the counter adapt and all that I'm not dismissing the creativity required, and the flexibility and agility, mental agility or otherwise, I'm not dismissing that. I'm just saying a lot of when you're when you're in the world of special operations, a lot of stuff you do, there is no there is no doctrine. There is no battle drill for it. Like you got to think on your feet. The first mission I ever did as a Greenbrae. First thing as a solo. I didn't even have a command yet. I even had the team, boom, embassy evacuation in Africa. Once after getting to Stuttgart you know, cab Roboshot. You get assigned a weapon yet? Like no, sir. And he's like, Oh, go grab one. Get to the airfield, you're going to Africa? Like you bet. Yes, sir. And then you got to figure that shit out. Like just figure it out, just get down there. And resources come in and embassy comes in. And helicopters show up out of nowhere that we hired or, and now we're like flying people out of an embassy. And you blink, you're like, you know, 96 hours ago, I was in Stuttgart doing hand receipts, you know, now that there's no book on that there's nothing that you know, but But through our selection process, they they select, and I'm gonna toot my own horn because

I'm just, I'm just another douchebag. You know, but, but they select people that have that agility, that have that problem solving that have that creativity. But when you get to war, it's like, okay, I have to conduct this type of mission. Well, for this type mission, I know that ideally, I would like these type of assets. And I would like to do this. And I like to do that. And then you go into it with a plan, of course, depending what the enemy does, but you've already thought a concern, especially as hyper planners, as we are in special operations. You know, we have a called a peace plan, right? Primary alternate contingency and emergency plans for everything, you're already the enemy did this? Well, unfortunately, I kind of thought of that, you know, and then oh, the enemy did this, like, well, not surprised, I'm going to have to do something different, but I'm not out of my comfort zone. Whereas again, a lot of the, I don't want to sound like it's over sexy, but some of the other I mean, what, you know, I'm not gonna call it, what I want to call it, we'll just say, in the spirit of Special Operations missions. You, you got to be creative. You know, and it's great. It's great combat. And that's why I say it's simpler. Not easier, but it's simpler. It makes more sense. It's more if that. Whereas these other missions are just like, What the fuck, and you just, you just, you just come up with some really, really good solutions.

J

James Geering 1:02:41

So I'll get to the question I was talking about before then. So you're in Afghanistan, you're in Iraq at this point. Now, you know, over the next few years, the the way, as I mentioned before, that we are fed information, especially when it comes to war, you know, and again, it kind of based on our political conversation a second ago, you have the right wing, you have the left wing, you have you know, kill them all stacked bodies, rock music, and then you have baby killers, you know, the other side, and in the middle of the men and women or children that we send overseas with an American flag on their shoulder to serve. So regardless of the politics, was there a moment, you know, when you got to whichever country where you realize, okay, there are some horrific people committing atrocities to the people of that country that do need to be taken care of?

i

1:03:31

Yeah. Boy, I got a prime example. Prime example. I haven't brought this story up in a long time. So I was part of a small advisory team to an Iraqi unit in East Baghdad. Oh, six, and oh, seven. Incredibly Connecticut. It was insane. The height of the EFP explosively formed projectile IEDs. Right. The improved explosive devices. So it was brutal. It was absolutely brutal. Yeah, kinetic is the best way to say it. Like it was just, it was nonstop be it being in the city and being assigned to an Iraqi piece of shit Iraqi unit. You know, anything back there, they were awful. And here, here's a here's an example. So they took some prisoners. And they're back on our base. It's an Iraqi base. We're the only Americans on it. And one of my guys can run it with his hair on fire. They call me Chief at the time. They're like, Chief Chief, they're fucking beaten up the prisoners, like what prisoners they brought prisoners in. So he got to come and he's running for an aid bag or something. And I'm like, holy shitballs. So we go running over there. I think I had my pistol with me. Of course I would. Yeah, but I think it was like my Ranger panties or something. And we run over to the other building, and you're just fighting through the crowd. There's like just Iraqi soldiers all in this one building and there's a hallway almost like a Last classrooms and a hallway, if you will, right. And we're fighting through fighting through it, we finally break through, because I have a lot of respect. within that unit with the Iraqis, they

thought I was nuts, which may or may not be true. So they had a lot of respect. So, you know, when people would turn around and see me pulling him back, you know, they would kind of make a hold, because they knew who I was. And when I got into the room, there were these five prisoners beat the fuck up. Like, it looked like a butcher room. And they were all kind of lined up taking turns, everybody had bloody hands, all the AKs had bloody buttstock. And they were killing, they were killing these prisoners. And, you know, I immediately just started slipping on the floor, there's vomit everywhere from the head injuries and just blood everywhere and pushing them back. And I didn't draw my gun out, it wasn't anything like that. But again, because I had a pretty good reputation, whatever. It's kind of fighting them off of the prisoners and their different levels of consciousness or whatever, you know, they're all powered up or unconscious. And about, then some of the other officers, their officers started making making their way in. And we had to push everybody out of the room and start treating these guys. And it was awful. And then we, we, the US, arranged for our closest US base to take these prisoners in. And we did in fact, I jumped the back of a Humvee, Ranger panties and my Beretta on my flippy floppies, I think, and we drove, you know, a short distance, but we had a break gate to get to the American hospital unit. And, you know, I'm kind of giving him a rundown as a medic, you know, from from back in the day, and I was like, you know, hey, this guy's we're not looking good. And this guy's, you know, in and out of consciousness and Loc, and all that stuff. And then they didn't really it was kind of cool to be in the middle of a hospital, er, I haven't had to be because I was never a patient. But, you know, the surgeon just kind of stands in the middle of like these five bays. And he's just taken input from all five of the trauma nurses. And I just stand there, like watching this guy. And all it was it was really a sight to be seen. Then he got plugged in, where he needs to give directions, and he'd hear something from another nurse, he go over to that, and literally just a few steps away, we're just monitoring these five bays. And that was a that was That was awful. That was puking, barbaric Neanderthal shit, man. And that wasn't cool. And I was really taken aback that hair was this unit that I was integrated with. And I know they come from violent backgrounds, and it's a violent culture. And I've intervened in houses, during raids or whatever, where they would be kicking prisoners, and I come in and they'd like, stop. And I'd be like, fucking stop and the prisoners, man, like, that's not cool. You know, I turn my back and walk out and that hurt. You know, the kicks in the shower, you know, run back, I'm like, stop. And they're like, well, we're not doing anything like the fuck you're not like you believe the guy on and so you know, on objective, you do what you can, but there's a lot more going on on the objective. And but this was this was bad man. This was like, they were going to they were going to bludgeon these guys in debt. And I think a couple of them had stab wounds, if I recall. So I was like, no foul are we doing here? It's, it's snakes eating snakes. It was snakes eating snakes, and you know, the advisory team and you know, we reflected on it, and we're just like, what are we working with? Like, you can't you can't train that out of them, you know, maybe make an impact with the officers because they just have slightly more scholastic experience, maybe. And by the way, that's our rank. Don't even get me started about fucking Afghanistan. You know, there was a an embassy guy or whatever I had a coffee with in Baghdad, and I just gotten there. And I was kind of making my rounds introducing myself different parts of the embassy. And he said, he goes, Are You Experienced in Iraq? I'm like, Yeah, I do. And he goes, Well, if Iraq was the Jetsons, Afghanistan is the Flintstones. And I was like, fuck me. Like, you gotta shit me. Like, it's, it's that bad. He's like, You have no idea. He goes Iraq is lightyears ahead in civilization compared to Afghanistan. And I'll be honest with you, he was right. He was right. That's, it just blows me away. How was you know, they're in uniform. And they receive human rights training, because we always do human Alaihe act and human rights training is paramount day one classes. And then you think you're they can progress. You know, you think you think you're building rapport. And then they just go, they just trip back to just the brutality that either their culture or what they've been exposed to or how they were treated. I mean, I don't know. Does everybody get

beat by their dads? Thanks, everybody. So mean to the defenseless. Now don't get me wrong. They're scumbags. The prisoners, you know, they probably killed one of their buddies that day. I get it, but I, I would never kill a combatant, I would never. I've never beat up a combatant. They're not in the fight anymore. But that's, that's inherent to professional training, I reckon. So I guess that's an example that really threw me back that despite being in uniform, despite being on a base, despite having a ring structure, despite formal training, that they could still revert back to the this Neanderthal behavior. Yeah, that was should.

J James Geering 1:10:57

Yeah, well, it's amazing. Again, all these stories that I hear, you know, I had Wally Tasleem, who was a Iraqi commander, who now was with the black rifle guys, the he got over here, but, you know, you hear from, you know, for him, Fazli, who's Iraqi, excuse me, who's Afghani who ended up being in Hollywood, and then went back to be an interpreter with the Marines for a few years. Some of these countries were in such a better place before, you know, and, you know, we talked about that, you know, you look at Afghanistan, I think it was if I'm not wrong, the 70s You know, they they weren't, you know, being being forced to wear, you know, head to toe burgers, and all these kinds of things. And so, to, to kind of slip backwards so quickly. I think this is what's so heartbreaking, especially with the withdrawal, like people think, Oh, we just took, you know, the American soldiers out, it's like, no, we use these those poor Afghanis. Now even further from getting back to where they were before this, this tyranny began. And it's just heartbreaking because once you get through a generation or two, now, the new children don't even know what their country should be like, because they're so disconnected from you know, how it is now.

 1:12:08

Yeah, I, I think about that, from time to time, the dichotomy of progress in the world, and then how some countries get stuck, or they fall backwards in civilization. I, that's a study for scholars, man, and my hat's off to him. And I'll catch the History Channel specialist, you know, I do find it interesting. I it's, it's a it's on a massive scale. You know, Saddam was an absolute animal. But people well, I don't know if they were civil, based on my experiences, but it was it was functioning. I guess, I had colleges and I had research scientists and it had industrialization I mean, not worth it with a dictator, you know, that kills and rapes and genocide. So it's not worth it. But but there's there's something to be said for in general, after something said, Now, I sound like a dick. But but a heavy handedness in some cultures, maybe, maybe, maybe that keeps things going. Maybe it's a real tough judicial system, you know, or a really strict immigration system. I mean, there's other ways to I mean, I don't know I'm going way out of my league here. But there's other ways to control your population. Yeah, outside of brutality, I guess, in the interest of moving the country along.

J James Geering 1:13:44

Absolutely. Well, just revisiting the other side of that conversation, kindness and compassion. Now we're in, you know, Iraq, Afghanistan, where there are there moments where you can think despite this populace being, you know, amidst a war in their town, their city, that you witnessed kindness and compassion amidst that Battlefield.



1:14:05

Afghanistan, not so much. I'd say there's something about Muslim culture that I absolutely took away with me and I try to use all the time, and that is hospitality. All right, the culture. I'm not getting Islam, I'm just talking the culture, right? They are absolutely. I want to use the term fanatical, but a good way. They're incredibly fanatical about welcoming people into their homes. Like the whole shirt off your back thing is absolutely a thing. And when someone comes to a Muslim families house or even a village, and they are falling over themselves, to make you comfortable, to keep you fed There was a thing in Iraq, I had been in so many raids. And I learned that there was a cultural thing in Iraq, and I'm sure it transcends into other Muslim countries. And that is a wife's competency, in large part was based on her ability to host guests. And, and one of the telltale signs, and I asked my interpreter who by the way, I brought home mazing guy, and now he's an E seven in the US Army Balsom. That's a whole story in of itself. But Balsom told me I asked him one day I go, Why is it every time I inspect a closet, it's chock full of blankets. Like, it's just blankets everywhere, always blankets, or the egg foam padding, like beyond the amount of people in the house. And he said it's because homes have to repair to take in travelers. They have to and if you're if you don't have enough blankets and linens for people to wrap their heads on, then you're you're you're not doing right by the culture. And then that household will be judged on its ability to host and be hospitable. And I I think that is incredibly generous. And I I mean, I I'm a nice guy. I love people that come to visit and I take care of them. But I take it to that level. I was like, Man, that's that's really admirable. Yeah, that's one of my big takeaways.



James Geering 1:16:37

Beautiful. Yeah. And I hear that a lot too. And I think even in Afghanistan, the markets neutral story, you know, Lone Survivor, the film, I think, yep, sold short, the absolute immense sacrifice that that one village made in protecting this American seal, when you know, they're being beaten and they get all obviously be smite off the face of the earth and their village burned to the ground. But that duty to protect someone when they come into your community. I wish it had been told better in the film, but I mean, the book it is I mean, they they risked everything. And I think it's that same whatever the term was in, in, in that country specifically was, you know, once you come into my home, then we have a duty to protect you, which I thought was was amazing. It's beautiful.



1:17:22

It's beautiful. And that's an excellent example. Yeah, that's a thing. That's absolutely a thing. Yeah.



James Geering 1:17:28

Brilliant. Yeah, well, I know this is a big topic that we want to get to. So I want to make sure that we do you serve for three plus decades. One of the resounding common denominators, the thing when it comes to struggle, especially in uniform professions, military, first responder is that transition out, it could be obviously being fired, it could be getting hurt. But obviously the

other the most natural one is retirement. But you have this purpose, you have this incredibly close knit tribe. You know, you have a reason to get up every morning. And then one day, you don't. So talk to me about your experience with the transition out.



1:18:13

Yeah, absolutely. Thanks. I do want to, I do want to share this. Because it brings me a lot of emotional health, I think in what I've charted over the past few years since I've separated from the military. First and foremost, being a father, right. So I was, for one reason or another. Lori and I, we didn't have Luke until we were in our, until we were 14. And fortunately, that was after a lot of my deployment time, I still travel a lot and military and I still travel a lot now. Volunteering, but but that was a big, big. I mean, Luke was just a baby when I was going off to wars, and to be home, or at least, to be involved in his life is a blessing that the majority of us don't have. The majority of us are trying to father over Skype from, you know, from Kandahar, or, you know, from Miami or wherever, like, like, I've been spared that and I get to dive into fatherhood. And that means that means the world to me. So I think that that is one pillar of emotional strength that I get, I get to really focus on being a dad. Then the other thing I did is I picked up a hobby that I was never exposed to before and once I started getting into it, I can't breathe without thinking about it. And it's I got into bow hunting, archery hunting and I There's so many similarities between patrolling and hunting, the list goes on. Like, it's insane. And what I really enjoy about hunting, and I never knew this about myself is the solitude like I'm an I'm a very extrovert. I mean, for beers in me and my shirts off, and I'm climbing on shit, you know, like, I'm still that 22 year old. Unfortunately, in a lot of ways dressing



James Geering 1:20:25

up as a polar bear on a plane.



1:20:28

I just did it this weekend. Same, I'll send you a picture. And so it's important to have a hobby, and I think it has to be a hobby. Where it doesn't have to be Excuse me, what I found work for me is a hobby that requires solitude. But it's, it's a learning curve to try and out think an animal in your in their environment. But I also get to apply like all the patrolling principles, you know, and moving around the woods at night and playing with my scent, and then archery, you have to get really close to these animals that don't want you close to them. And, you know, and then I do bring a bit of the ethics back to that compassion thing. When I hunt, like I don't, I don't shoot an animal unless I have a clear path to the heart. You know, and for me, a successful hunt is just being close to the animal. You know, if I get to bring home and we donate a lot of meat, because I will they call it tagout, I'll, I'll get a get my freezer filled. And then if I still have more permits, than we donate the meat to some of the kitchens here. But a good one to me is it's just it's just defeating the animals defenses and getting so close to the animal, whether I get a shot or not, because again, unless that shoulder moves for me, or unless it because I'm not that great of a shot, so they got to be really close, because I'm ethical as book. Like it's about the chase. And I really, really, really enjoy that. And my learning curve has been incredibly stimulating. And it really keeps me engaged. And I, I learned a lot about myself sitting in trees or climbing trees, about being alone and just reflecting on life. I've never done

that before. I've never, never wanted it and I find that I really crave it. I crave it, and the more and then the more miserable the conditions are, the more I enjoy it. You know, especially up here in Ohio, like the last season I had ski into the woods, you know, just because it's up to my waist or mid thigh you know, and I gotta move in stealthily, you know, and if it's miserable, man, I just love just welcome to suck Ville you mean all like Oh, Roby your bag, welcome to suck Ville like this sucks. Like now it's really stunk freezing my fingers, cold weather injuries or whatever like, but I absolutely love it. So I think and I would encourage people in transition, regardless from the lifestyle they came from, when you're switching out, you got to find something else to do. And James, yours is, I would assume these amazing podcasts. And what I would like to applaud as an example of what you what you what you've dove into is bettering the community through sharing and bringing in people much more interesting than myself to contribute to the community as we all try and figure out this, this next chapter in our lives that that isn't, isn't everything that we train for, unwanted for. And it's not everything that we were particularly good at. And now we're throwing this next chapter. And it's not as thrilling, it's not as high risk. And by thrilling, I mean good or bad, exhilarating, good or bad. And now we're in a steady state. You know, I get to sleep in a bed every night. That's nice, you know, and I get to see my son every day that I'm in the country and I could spend time my wife and my dogs in this beautiful house like it's, it's it's a lot different than everything that led up to this. It's completely different. And I think by diving into a passion, whether it's talking about this very thing for over 800 podcasts, or just being some guy who's freezing his ass off in the woods, you know, you got to dive into something. And I guess the the other one that I did is I really got into volunteering. Now this is a direct translation to my experiences in special operations and the multicultural thing that's inherent to the Green Berets. I'm not really I do know how it came about. So as with the Kabul evacuation, a friend reached out to me and then we built this quick organization and we got some crazy donors, and we chartered aircraft and we were part of the air bridge. incredibly proud, incredibly proud of our Are our collective contribution to that. And then I in it, I was finally up 18 hours a day mission planning. You know, I was deployed to the Middle East, like I was back in my comfort zone sleep deprivation and crisis management and life and death. And I was thrown back into it unexpectedly. And I realized how much I missed it. And then that led me to Okay, well, let's do more volunteering, again, I'm just incredibly fortunate with between the pension and you know, that I can afford to be retired was, and so let's, let's keep volunteering. And it feels so good to share what little I bring to the table, in crisis areas around the world. And especially on a volunteer basis, like I should probably make money doing it, in all fairness, in terms of my family, but I'm not compelled to, because there's, there's a there's another layer to humanitarian work when when you can afford to not take money for it. And I didn't know this is a again, another discovery for me personally. And I really enjoy so the My current project is deep humanitarian demining in Ukraine. And I've been with this organization, it's called tip of the spear landmine removal to the spear our founder, Ryan Hendrickson, is this amazing Greenbrae. And he was he was doing it by himself for over a year. And then he started asking for help, and you want to expand his effort into a no shit organization. And I mean, I could talk about Ryan all day. It's an amazing guy. And he asked me to come on as his chief of operations. So since then, we've made several trips over there. And we're, we're we're focusing on agricultural D mining, because, you know, as of a couple months ago, it's deemed the most land mined country in the world, which says a lot, because that just happened. You know, I mean, if you think about it, in these all this time, Russia had to layer the defenses. And then the hasty, hasty defenses that Ukraine put in during the invasion, and now you got reintegrated parts of land that Ukraine is getting back. And it's just mind, mind mind. And in the world of mine warfare, right? It makes sense that the agricultural land, you can mine it because you get to cover its defensive now, you don't have to dig in troops or commit limited resources. You just mined the shit out of it. And you're gonna get the same block, turn disrupt or delay, you know, aggressors, so, so tons of landmines and

we we focus on the humanitarian side, which is agricultural demining, because of the enormous responsibility Ukraine's breadbasket has on the world food supply, particularly to Africa. And they're not farming, you know, and it's not just agricultural farm. It's also includes, you know, livestock and, and the other parts agriculture besides just the swaths of land of sunflower and, you know, we know all the other grains. So, we're, we're growing and it's been incredibly rewarding. We're leaving in a few weeks to do another trip. train, advise assist sounds kind of Green Beret ask as uh, you know, they're not rushing, but I gotta say, my Russian language training came back, like out of nowhere as Bill so my hat's off to the schoolhouse, about however, they trained me to meet the minimum standard, to graduate by the skin of my teeth again, because I don't, you know, real smart. Man, that first checkpoint, I came up with Derka Derka Derka. Like it all came back out all of it. Not all of it, but it was God, God bless ESCO that whatever adult learning model, they had to put something away, and then it just comes out of nowhere. They did it, or at least they had me figured out. So that's really contributed, I think, to my, to my contributions on the team. Yeah, we'll be back over there in a few weeks. It's nonprofit. It's a registered NGO, non government organization. So it's a 501 C three here in the States and it's a registered NGO with Ukrainian government. And, yeah, we're always I encourage anyone to check it out. It's land mine. I wrote down Yeah, land land mine removal, one word.org, landmine removal.org. And we are always welcoming donations or prayers or encouraging words, if anyone wants to check that out. So I guess in summary, and I appreciate you let me run my suck here for a little bit. I think what's really helped me since separation is and change of life is really focusing on my family, which I've neglected for over 30 Here's my wife. That's great and, and I make a lot of decisions so that I can I can really embrace the opportunity I have in my family, picking up a new hobby, and then finding another passion or something that kind of relates to my experiences have been put to good use and humanitarian humanitarian sense. I think that's what's helped me out, James. Yeah.

J

James Geering 1:30:29

Is there's a lot of common denominators that I hear over and over again, I think the first thing is, just because we wore a uniform, that's not the only way to serve. And we are servants. You know, we did join the military, the first responder professionals to make the world a little bit better. So when you trans out, transition out the other end, especially if you get sucked into that, focusing on pensions and benefits bullshit, in which really is, you know, so far from the burning desire to serve, people come out the other end, and they feel lost. But firstly, like you said, the just finding another way to help the world, you could be a sports coach, you could be you know, as you said, you could remove landmines in the Ukraine, whatever your thing is, you could write a book you there's so many other ways to serve. And when you wake up, and you still have purpose, and it's still kind of gas. Yeah, exactly. That's what I did. It is and write books. Yeah. very admirable. Yeah. So but the other thing is funny, you talked about finding solace now, you know, in time on your own. I had a guest on a while ago now who wrote a book called the introverts edge, and his definition of an introvert versus an extrovert is an IT Where do you get your power from? Where do you recharge, so you said, after four beers, I'm up on the bar my shirt off, I think a lot of us if we really actually look in the mirror are introverts, because for me, I have no problem being in large groups. But I'm also the guy that once I kind of hit my point, then I'm just gonna go go home, you know, and I recharge from time with my son time and my wife time with my dog. And then that allows me to go be around lots of groups of people again, but I think a lot of us, culturally think you know, that the life of the party is who we're supposed to be you aspire to be that, you know, that, you know, fire at edit the sense of the nucleus of whatever. And the reality is, I think that's a rarity that most of us, actually, I'm not supposed to be on our own all the time, because that that kind of goes against the tribal

element that is a human being. But we're not supposed to be the center of attention, either. We're part of a community. So I think that's a real aha moment. You may have been the firehouse Joker, or the team room, you know, comedian, but then you get out the other end. And then you're like, actually, I kind of like just being with my son just being in the woods with a bow in my hand, whatever it is. And I think that's hard for some people, because that goes against what you were told you need to be the popular guy, or do you, you know, or actually, is this when you're recharging? You just didn't realize it for decades and decades.

 1:33:08

And that's an excellent point. And I can't wait to link up with you again. I'd love to talk more about that. I was hanging on your every word. Yeah, I guess I can relate to that. Because I didn't know I would enjoy freezing my nuts off in a tree. You know, like, I didn't know, I didn't know, you know, sneaking into the woods and strategizing and reading the winds and weather reports. And you know, that that's all fine. But once you're up in the tree, and you got to start putting snorkel gear on, and you're just miserable. But there's a, like I said, there's a solace. There's a it's kind of nice. Being alone in a tree. Yeah, there you go. That's the name of

 James Geering 1:33:53

your book, alone in a tree ministry.

 1:33:56

I haven't read any books. I can't even like to read. So yeah, alone in a tree. It's nice. I'm gonna reflect on that man. Thank you. You always bring up this this great, you know, like, we talked about adrenal fatigue, you know, on that bus in Africa and Egypt. I've been given that a lot of thought, you know about what, what throws my hair back anymore. About an electric skateboard, I keep eating and shit on it. And my whole life signs off, looking scuffed up because I got a one wheel. And but I'm trying to find a thrill you know, and I, I don't I guess somebody visits to Ukraine. There's some thrilling things. But I'm still you know, we talked about that. And, of course, it's a podcast and no one would know about that conversation. But I remember like when we skydive over the pyramids, that was awesome. But the skydive wasn't it for me. It was you know, the amazing view and you know, an incredible jumpmaster in you know, just coming down through the pyramids and stuff was cool. then when we got to England that bass jump, I did a tandem bass jump with Sean chuma. And, and that was really low. You know, that was forgetting. I don't know what it

 James Geering 1:35:13

was 300 off a

 1:35:14

crane. Yeah, yeah. No room for error. But guess how high my heart rate got? Yeah, I was like, well, well, high, you know, and but I had a lot of confidence in Chuma and those other amazing

well, we're right, you know, and but I had a lot of confidence in Shawn and these other amazing guys. You know, I there, I was very, very comfortable with them. But I remember the bus right there. I'm like, Oh, this is gonna be awesome. I'm finally you're gonna get the shit scared out of me again. You know, I'm finally going to get that I'm going to feel alive. like Uber sensory overload. Like, this is going to be it. I've been looking for this since combat. You know, like, you never saw live as you are closer to death or something like that. Like it's gonna be it's gonna be good. And we jump. And I was like, that was cool. You know? And again, nothing on the beach jumping community. This is not I'm not ripping on anyone my personal threshold for losing my breath. I can't seem to find it. I can't seem to find it. Maybe I'm not supposed to. But I feel like I am.

J

James Geering 1:36:15

Did you were you? Can you remember of times where you were early in your career? Three years and years and years of high adrenaline, you know, combat and training?

o

1:36:28

Yeah, I mean, combat right. I mean, combat the whole time. That that right. And it goes back to that then I didn't make it up. Maybe I did. I don't know. But the closer you are to death, the more you feel alive. Absolutely. Absolutely. And then how do you find that? Because it's addictive. But that Oh, I'm sorry. Let me let me try. How do you find that in a healthy way? There's plenty of careless Cavalier ways to do it. But you owe your family better than that. I like I'm not gonna get into BASE jumping. I love it. I'm so turned on the guys that we traveled with her these like bigger than life souls, like they're just so infectious. But I just can't you know, my dad, like I can't just my personal values. And I could do skydiving, you know, where there's altitude and time to unfuck things. But I can see that being thrilling, but not. So there's there's a risk reward. Right? We all have our thresholds. I don't know I miss it. You know, I get some of that in Ukraine, but I'm not in combat in Ukraine. You know. I love the people I'm with at home. I love the people. I'm with tip of the spear. I love the 7x router. So, so much love going on in that tribe. But I I do want to find a healthy way to take my breath away. And I don't know where I'm going to find that.

J

James Geering 1:37:58

Yeah, I mean, my my contrast and told the story a couple times on here. When I first did my very first skydive, and the one in Egypt was my second one ever. It was a tandem. And before I was literally shitting myself like I went into a McDonald's bathroom right before he went it was in New Zealand. And I literally had the world's biggest poo. And then we went and did a skydive. So there was clearly you know, as much adrenaline as my glands could foster was searing through my veins. I don't know what my heart rate was. But, you know, when I landed, I was like, that was amazing. I want to do it again. So it was more of the fear of the unknown. Become a firefighter. It's been 14 years and some pretty, you know, pretty busy departments doing a lot of cool, sharp cool stuff. And then we go to, you know, on 7x We go to Cairo and I'm like, but here's the thing so the so the first one though, it didn't have quite the the rush in a good way. It didn't scare the shit on me because it was a plane. So you glide out of a plane, you don't drop like a stone. So now we're jumping out of a Russian helicopter over the pyramids. And I mean, this is a you this is going to be it. This is how I'm going to test you I have adrenal

fatigue or not, because for years, I'm like, Why do I not? Nothing gets my heart rate up, you know, some alarm bells hit me in the car, and I'll be angry, and I want to pull them out the car, but it's not like my heart rate is up. So we do it. I have my, my Polish skydiver that I'm strapped to who forgot my goggles. And I'm like, Okay, well, if you've got the goggles, just hope you at least pack the shoot. So anyway, it's some factors where you know, my heart rate should have been up, and we drop and nothing. I'm like, alright, well, there it is. Then it's not like wow, James Geering is so brave. No, it's physiological. And then yeah, well, going back to combat going back to the fire service and law enforcement. What is scary to me is, you hear a lot of the stories of heroism, you know, and these people that ran towards gunfire and you know, went into that building where no one else would have gone in. And if they survive and amazing now you get medals on you Chest and everything. But was that a calculated risk moment? And And coupled with courage and valor? Or was it a combination of adrenal fatigue and maybe even mental health elements where there's a discarding of the value of your life now, and these are the things is just just kind of introspective. Like where's that line between courage and valor and selflessness, and you've completely lost the communication with the fear that actually is there to keep you alive. And that's a gray area that I think, you know, we're in now it's like, we're not looking to do anything stupid, because luckily, our mind is intact, too. But you take the physiological response away through the adrenal glands. And then you add, you know, some mental health challenges where there's maybe thoughts of self harm starting to creep in, like so many of our brothers and sisters. That's a very, very dangerous cocktail, not only for self harm, but for seeming Vala that ends up being killed by the enemy or the criminal, you're chasing or going into a fire that ends up flashing on you and you get burned to death.



1:41:09

Again, some really enlightening stuff there, right? Yeah, I, I think I fall into a lot of what you were talking about. And again, you made a big impact on me on that bus ride about adrenal fatigue. Because I think I was telling you about the jump, maybe I was like, God, you know, I was like, you know, just tickled pink you know about the skydive. And I think you and I were sitting near the front of the bus, and I think he was great. You know, and maybe you picked up on, I don't remember how the conversation went, I just remember the impact that I had was like, Hey, man, it's a thing. You know, you don't, don't feel guilty about it or don't, don't feel like there's something wrong with you, you know, a lot of us are going through that that threshold is different now, because of our experiences. For better or for worse. And yeah, I I wish I had something to add to it. But I'm as confused about it, you know, as I am probably practicing it. So I don't I don't know what to add to that intelligently?



James Geering 1:42:20

Well, I think as long as we're aware of it, it's not a dangerous thing. You just have to be aware of it. If it is what it is. Because, you know, I saw someone was talking recently, I forget where I saw it. But oh, adrenal fatigue isn't a thing, you know, in science shows us that okay. No one's saying that they're turned off completely. But it's a much lower amount. And same as you know, so many people in our professions that are still testosterone is in the toilet, even though they're Uber athletes, because of sleep deprivation, and TBI, and these other things, doesn't mean you have zero test, but it's not where it should be. And I think this is it. With with the adrenaline side, you know, you've just lived in this hyper vigilant state for, you know, decades, it's gonna have a physiological impact. So being aware of it, and then working on nutrition and

everything else that maybe will help it repair a bit beautiful, but I think it's not so much, you know, does it need to be fixed? It's just more like, oh, yeah, this this can be this can be an asset in some areas, but just so I'm aware, it can also be detrimental and others,

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for sure. And then the trick is like, in pursuing it, you got to do it in a healthy way. Preferably, not drugs. I mean, that's an individual, right, I guess, whatever. But I mean, that that there's hazards come with finding your thrill in dangerous drugs. I soon. And like, you don't want to drive recklessly on a motorcycle? Right. That sounds thrilling. I've certainly done it as a douchebag paratrooper in Myrtle Beach, but that's not smart. You know, that's not fair to whoever I hit, or whatever deer I run into. So yeah. Or maybe I should have stopped looking for it. You know, like, you just accept it as a stage of life. But then it seemed, then it's like, Are you being true to yourself? You know, at what point do you stop looking at yourself in the lens of people that love you, which is important? Because they're probably right. But you can't deny your own demons. You can't deny your own thirst for thrill. Especially when we've been living it right now. I mean, I don't know. It's out there. I'll find it. I'll make it a healthy way of dealing with it. And not pissing away my fatherhood and my marriage in the process. Yeah. Yeah. In fact, I just saw what's what's that sport with the big canopy with the big fan on your back? Oh, is

 James Geering 1:44:50
it paragliding? I

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think paragliding I just saw that on marketplace and I was like, that looks awesome. Totally get in that? Maybe I will? I don't know.

 James Geering 1:45:04

Yeah, they're always there. I just watched the free diving video. And that was on Netflix, I forget what it was called Breath something, I highly recommend it. I don't even want to kind of talk about it too much because it's it leads you on an amazing journey. But that freediving thing and you got to find your thing. But yeah, I mean, there's so many ways, but also, I think you can go the other way, the discomfort of being on your, on your own in the woods, like forcing yourself to be quiet and not be running around, you know, full of adrenaline, is that actually the new discomfort that you seek? You know what I mean? So

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maybe, yeah, yeah, maybe. Maybe. In terms of kind of being self aware, I am going through a kind of an interesting thing as of recent. So I think I mentioned to you so I had about with cancer. Right? It was, it was pretty intense. It was six weeks of chemo and radiation was during

COVID absolutely knocked shit on me. And then, I mean, just just kind of put it in a picture. I'm not bragging or looking for sympathy, but I also got pneumonia during it. And I got hospitalized during during the COVID. You know, so that was like, just craziness. And, you know, my wife pulled me through it. It was it was a lot. I mean, everyone's warning you, okay, you're gonna get this, you know, your teeth kicked, and this is gonna be miserable. And I was like, Yeah, I mean, it will be but it's temporary, you know, like, odds are in my favor and all that stuff. And holy shit was that brutal. I mean, that was really, really, really something else. But what I'm what I've discovered from it is, you know, it's kind of like I told my oncologist, I was like, Hey, Doc, you know, you don't have to be so concerning. Like, this isn't the first time someone's trying to kill me, you know, trying to be funny about it. But in a lot of ways, I find myself still addressing me, despite my pledge to myself, to focus on family. And despite the comfort I find in the woods, which is time consuming. And despite the time away from my family, which is countered to my first pledge to volunteer, you know, in different places. I still have things that I, I enjoyed, on top of see now it's not like a selfish prick, right? But so like what I did the other day, I got reconnected with an amazing friend, I haven't talked to you in 20 years. And he of course, and I was like, Laurie, I'm, I'm going out to San Antonio for the week. I gotta go see, I gotta go see spicy neck. Or he's go, and I went so long. And you know, just like, I'm sure you've had with friends you haven't talked to in a decade, you pick up right where you left off, as they say, like I've said it like, there was no time. And then we had a great time. It was absolutely wonderful. And I came home. And it had nothing to do with honey had to do with volunteerism, and it. And it took me oh, you know, five days away from my family. But holy shit did I really felt that I wanted to do it turns out, I really needed it. I mean, I would have been just fine if I didn't make the trip. But it really elated me to see an old friend, and to have such an amazing time with him. So I think there's still this element that despite what your new chapter is, or your new definition of life or entertainment is that you still get to answer you if you don't have to be the martyr. And not that I have a martyrdom lifestyle on, everything's fine with with it. But there's still this, there's still this adolescent Roby that needs to be addressed from time to time. And I don't think it's healthy to dismiss. Right? Because you don't want to bottle it up just like anything else. You know, I used to say, if you don't, if you don't find a healthy way to relieve pressure, then your body will find an unhealthy way to do it. Like you got to, you know, little little release valves, but you got to do it in a healthy way. And if it means going to visit an old friend and not bringing your family along, or it meaning five days out of an amazing summer, you know, to be reconnected with an old friend. You know, I would encourage it. I didn't realize I would get as much from that. I mean, nevermind my love for Nick and the time we had, but the idea of just going out not volunteering, not freezing my ass off in the woods, and not spending time, you know, playing Call of Duty or whatever we lose. Just me and an old friend. And I got a lot more out of it than I thought it would. So I guess I would just encourage that to like you got to scratch your itch from time to time. Does that make sense? No,

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James Geering 1:49:48

it does completely I think this is this is something I've talked about when the totally the conversation about marriage comes up is there's this one kind of idea that two becomes one And I disagree, you know, like, you kind of lose your identity, because now you're the gearing, you know, you're this, you're the rubbish shores. And so you know, you got to take a step back and go, Well, I was attracted to my wife, because who she was as an individual. And so if you lose that too much, then you start to almost like fall out of love with the person because you know, the same way, as you know, a ring goes on your finger, and all of a sudden you put 100 pounds and don't care anymore, you know, you change the rules a little bit. So I think, you know, my wife goes off on her own thing, sometimes I do as well, I think it's important to have

your own hobbies, your own loves your own time, you know, with with your friends sometimes, because that's the individual that you are, and you don't have to do everything with your child and with your wife. Sometimes, as you said, it's important that you do it as an individual. And that's actually what's attractive to the wife, the husband, whoever it is, because you're retaining that individualism, even though you're, you know, all in on your marriage or your relationship.



1:51:03

Yeah. Yeah. Okay, good. So I'm not just a selfish prick. If you say it, I'll make sure Laurie listens to this. I agree with you wholeheartedly. Yeah. Yeah. All right.



James Geering 1:51:17

Well, just one quick thing. Before I let you go, you and I are returning on the seventh X team to Antarctica. So just kind of talk to me about that experience with, you know, through your eyes. I mean, we we met for the first time in, I guess it was Africa, you know, on the plane to Africa. So Whoa, South America, South Africa. Yeah. Yeah. So walk me through kind of, you know, your overview of that. And then and then what you're excited about in November?



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Well, I don't know if you recall, our mutual friend Bryce, who I served together with a unit in Stuttgart. And we deployed together, we hit it off, you know, incredibly well, lovingly. And he asked me, you know, he was one of the lead planners, you know, helping Ryan out. Yeah. And he actually, he was in Ukraine with me, I asked him to help me on something in Ukraine. And he were driving way, way too long road trip back to Poland. And he's, he's told me about this thing coming up, you know, and how it's a fundraiser for, you know, veterans, you know, mental health and, you know, all the benevolence that this was going to raise funds for, and then the idea of the book, and then, you know, the documentary, and I said, jokingly, I said, Well, if you need a guide to go, we call it pdss predeployment site survey, basically, an advance team, I go, if you need help with that, you know, I could probably find time to help out. And he's like, Yeah, you know, let's table that. And then a few months later, he goes, Hey, you remember Ricky, I got a rookie from your team. And he's like, yeah, now luckily, Ricky and I spent a miserable night in the back of em wrapped with a prisoner while it was raining and cold. So, Ricky, and I, like totally bonded under a body bag to try and keep the rain off the three of us when anyways, he goes, Yeah, so if you're available, I can really use you and Ricky to go. Go check out seven continents, you know, and just do a site survey, start interviewing vendors start identifying marathon routes, jump locations, hotels, activities, for you know, the the distinguished guests and teammates and you have five weeks you can cut away. Fuck yes, I have five weeks to travel the world and go find stuff for this amazing, amazing mission, you know, of everything that's that's involved in it. Particularly the benevolence, you know, and how it was helping out these different charity organizations. So we didn't go to all seven we didn't do Antarctica. But we went everywhere else. And I can't say without the shooting and grim because it was such an experience and Ricky such remember Ricky right? Oh, yeah.



J James Geering 1:54:07

When when Ricky transition out he'll be come on as well. But he is he's the ultimate Grey Man. Like, he'll be in the back of the room and you didn't even realize is there and then you learn about who he is and what he's done. And you're like, Oh, my God. Yeah.

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Yeah. Yeah, he's incredibly Yeah, he's, uh, he was quiet on the trip, but his background and his, his experience and his qualifications, you're like, Oh, my God, you know, that guy should read a book. Absolutely. So I got to travel five weeks with him around the world kind of setting every mass setting everything up, but exploring everything and then we give feedback to Ryan and Bryce in the team and, or just some amazing guys. Those video calls and be like, Alright, hey, we just wrapped up in Perth, you know, and here's what we found out, Hey, we just wrapped up in London. Hey, kurta hanja, you know, and so that's where the adventure started for me. And then Ryan and Bryce asked Ricky night to come back and kind of join the team to take the VIPs around the different locations. And, and again, plus Ryan's generosity, he just contacted me today and asked me to chip in again for the final chapter. Hello. Boy, these dogs do not like this podcast.

J James Geering 1:55:24

We're about to wrap it mines mines just outside my door given me the evil eyes. See? So but we exactly. So we're gonna be going on the plane to finish that, like you said the one thing and it was just red tape. But we weren't able to get to Antarctica. So the team is going to be there, they're going to be running. I don't know if they're skydiving or not. I haven't heard the final on that yet. But it's going to be the final chapter for the book and the entry. So all right, well, I'm gonna let you go then. Because your dog is obviously wanting to do something other than listen to the two of us. Yep. So before we do

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this all day, James, I can't wait to see you again, man. Despite a better podcast, you know, I really enjoyed talking with you. And like always, you bring up some really insightful stuff that I'm going to have to give a little more deliberate thought on. And I appreciate I appreciate you bringing that to light. And yeah, hopefully this podcast is, you know, in line with your long 800 Plus list of distinguished participants. I'm humbled for the invitation, man. Thank

J James Geering 1:56:24

you. Yeah, well, I feel like two hours is was you know, scraping the surface of your of your life. I just want to go over so tip of the spear people can find landmine-removal.org. And then yeah, yeah. And what about you personally? What about social media or anything if people want to reach out to you or follow you?

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On LinkedIn? Instagram, I am Ruby, I underscore M underscore Roby, our OBE, so I underscore, M, underscore, our OBE is my instagram handle. Yeah, and then I guess, just LinkedIn. But that said, I don't have too much of a presence. For no particular reason, other than I guess I should improve on that these days.



James Geering 1:57:12

I think real life is more, more enjoyable anyway. I mean, you know, it's great if you have that, you know, that connection with other people. And I am glad that I have the community that I have. But ultimately, I know a lot of people that live their best life without social media. So it's a happy medium, maybe.



1:57:29

But in the interest of, you know, the whole idea behind excuse me, just not to oversimplify it. But the idea of this podcast bringing in, you know, the heroes from the first responder community, and then, you know, veterans and all the similarities if anyone listening to this episode, you know, wants to hit me up with anything at all in terms of what I talked about, or, I mean, I don't know what I could possibly offer but I'm here for the community. And, and for you inviting me in like this means the world so if there's anything I can do to give back, James, I'd be happy to do that.