

*Borne the Battle*

Episode # 134

Tanner Iskra – Marine Veteran, new host of *Borne the Battle*

Hosted by Tim Lawson

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/57000/tanner-iskra-marine-borne-battle/>

(Text Transcript Follows)

[00:00:00] Music

### **[00:00:10] OPENING MONOLOGUE:**

**Timothy Lawson (TL):** Wednesday, February 27, 2019. This is *Borne the Battle* brought to you by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. I'm your host, Marine Corps Veteran Timothy Lawson. It's a humble day for me. This will be my final episode of *Borne the Battle*. Not the final episode of the podcast but the final episode that I lead you as your host. I have accepted a position outside of VA and will be departing later this week. I'm going on to- to amazing things and I am leaving the podcast in good hands. In fact, that is today's guest. Tanner Iskra, Marine Corps Veteran. He's been with us on- on the digital media engagement team for about four months. He is a video producer and was selected to take over the podcast after my departure. Tanner has all the intangibles that a- a creative and podcaster needs. I'm confident in his ability to take this podcast to the next level and deliver amazing content. But before I just hand over the reins, let's get to know this Marine. Let's get to know the next host of *Borne the Battle*, Tanner Iskra.

[00:01:29] Music

### **[00:01:34] PSA:**

**Man 1:** I served in Vietnam.

**Man 2:** I served in World War II.

**Woman:** I served in Afghanistan.

**Man 1:** And VA serves us all.

**Man 2:** No matter when you served.

Woman: No matter if you saw combat or not.

Man 1: There are benefits for Veterans of every generation.

Woman: See what VA can do for you.

Narrator: To learn what benefits you may be eligible for, visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) [Link to VA's website]. That's [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

[00:02:00] Music

### **[00:02:06] INTERVIEW:**

(TL): How do ya- is it Iskra?

Tanner Iskra (TI): It is Iskra. –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): It is Slavic for spark.

(TL): Is that right?

(TI): Yes. [Laughter]

(TL): Oh, that's a fun little tidbit. At what age did you learn that?

(TI): Uh, my wife told me. –

(TL): [Laughter] –

(TI): My wife told me so –

(TL): That's great. –

(TI): It had to be –

(TL): Is she Slavic?

(TI): No. –

(TL): Oh, okay. –

(TI): She's- she's Moroccan. She's half Moroccan, half Irish.

(TL): Well, Tanner Iskra. What's, I don't know, I mean, you work uh- about twenty feet away from me. I don't know your actual title. What's your title here at VA?

(TI): So, the- the government title is Audio/Visual Production Specialist.

(TL): Mmm –

(TI): It's a mouthful. –

(TL): It is. –

(TI): I just say Producer.

(TL): Okay. Very well. Uh, you've been on the team here, digital media engagement team, for four months now. Three months? –

(TI): October. So that would be November, December, January, February. –

(TL): Four months. –

(TI): Yeah. Four months. –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): Four months.

(TL): Tanner Iskra, you are a Marine Corps Veteran. –

(TI): I am.

(TL): Semper Fi.

(TI): Rah.

(TL): Rah.

(TI): Uh- Eleven and a half years. You always- you always gotta add that half a year. People think 'ah twelve years, what happened? You didn't get promoted to Sergeant, got kicked out.' No, it was a choice. I left. –

(TL): Right, right. I ah- it's funny that you say because my- my time in was five and a half years. –

(TI): Mmmhmm –

(TL): So I- I got, I found myself saying just over five years instead of five and a half. –

(TI): Smart. –

(TL): Cuz I always felt like a kid who was like waiting for his sixth birthday when I say 'I was in for five and a half years. Like this many.' I don't know what. There was something about including the half that made me feel that way. –

(TI): There's always that pause like how you wanna include something cuz it wasn't just that amount of years. There was- yeah, I like that. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): I think I'm gonna start using that. –

(TL): Yeah. So I say just over five years. To let people know I passed. I did get pass the five-year mark and I want that credit. But I don't wanna make it seem like, you know, however long it, five years, seven months, 26 days. To the hour. –

(TI): [Laughter] Okay –

(TL): Ah. Very well. You are going to go through an interview like any other uh- guest here would before I officially hand over the reins of the *Borne the Battle* podcast. So before we talk about that aspect of –

(TI): We're sad to see you go, by the way. We really are. –

(TL): Oh, I thank you. I appreciate that. –

(TI): Yeah. –

- (TL): Yeah. It's um, wasn't an easy decision, but I think it's- I think it's the right one.
- (TI): And thank you for allowing me to um, to take the pod- take over the podcast and- and make sure it still has life after you leave.
- (TL): Of course. Don't get ahead of yourself. This is your audition. Don't get too, too ahead of yourself. –
- (TI): [Laughter] Absolutely.
- (TL): [Laughing] Look if this sucks, I'm telling- I'm telling our boss right away if this sucks. –
- (TI): And this will never see the light of day. –
- (TL): Never. Yeah. –
- (TI): Yeah. Oh well. –
- (TL): Um, alright Tanner. You're gonna answer the- the same question that I've had just over a hundred other Veterans answer here on the show. Ah, one thing that all of us Veterans have in common is the- the decision to join or the- the moment when we learned, I guess not everybody were decided right. Some- some people were- were drafted. But there's a moment when you realize the military's next. Ah, when was that for you?
- (TI): So for me was when I, as a freshman or sophomore, I looked at my grades and I go well, obviously college is not in my [laughing] in my- in my future, ah, in my immediate future. –
- (TL): This is high school? –
- (TI): This is high school. –
- (TL): Yeah. –
- (TI): Yeah. And uh, you know, I- high school. So my ah- my brother, who's nine years older than me, joined the Army. And I saw him actually get out of the hometown in doing that. And when I was 17, he took me- At

that point, he had transitioned out of the Army and uh, transitioned into the Air Force. So he got out as an Army grunt, and he joined the Air Force as a- as a machinist, as a welder. So he took me to Travis Air Force base and uh, mind you, uh, it's the- it's the Air Force. So I'm looking around like wow. This is, this isn't a bad life. This is really not a bad life. So what did I do, I turned around and joined the Marine Corps.  
–

(TL): Sure. [Laughter] –

(TI): [Laughing] And I was trying to sell it to my brother when he told me I was an idiot. And I said 'No, really. They tell me Camp Lejeune was like a college dorm room. It's gonna be really great.' –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And uh, you know –

(TL): [Laughter] –

(TI): I still tell him that. He still laughs at me. But um, –

(TL): See you saw the- the comfortable lifestyle of the Air Force and that somehow motivated you to decide to join the United States Marine Corps?

(TI): So I was going –

(TL): It's motivating. –

(TI): Yes. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): So, I was gonna join the Air Force, right. Cuz, that's, you see, monkey see, monkey do. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And I walked into the Air Force recruiter in my Senior year in 2003. And he goes 'You have a no insurance ticket. Uh, \$600. I'm not even gonna

spend the time with you. I'm not even take you to MEPS. Let me know when that is paid off and we can talk.' –

(TL): Is that right?

(TI): That is.

(TL): Okay.

(TI): So, I kinda walked out, with my head, you know, hung and you know, what, how am I gonna be able to get out of this hometown. Um –

(TL): The Marine Corps came to the rescue. –

(TI): So –

(TL): [Laughter] –

(TI): I was either thinking Army or Air Force and I was always talking about the Marine. I was like 'No way am I ever gonna join the Marine Corps. Like those guys are just crazy, hard.' Uh, I don't want to be, you know, you hear all the bad stories and you watch Full Metal Jacket, and your like 'No way, no way.' So, he's sitting there, I mean in the mall, they're right next to each other. And he goes 'hey, come here.' Sergeant Bell. And we start talking about Pulp Fiction. –

(TL): Nice. –

(TI): And it was, what's your favorite movie, what's your favorite f'n movie? And every other word out of his mouth was f'n this, f'n that. –

(TL): Right. –

(TI): And I was like, this is an interesting guy. –

(TL): [Laughter] –

(TI): I'm gonna just talk to him just for the lolz. –

(TL): Yeah. –

- (TI): Right, I'm just gonna talk to him just for the. So we, I was like, yeah. She's like 'how bout you come by tomorrow?' I was like sure, I'll come by tomorrow. And he, we go in there and he sells me on the Marine Corps, the brotherhood, and the- the tags that you see when, you know, what you want out of- out of your- your life. I tell him about this no insurance ticket. I said, 'Hey about the no insurance ticket, I don't even know if I can go to MEPS yet.' And he goes 'I'll pay that.' He goes 'that's' he sold it, he sold it like 'that's the brotherhood of the Marine Corps. We take care of our own.' [Laughter]
- (TL): [Laughter] This is- this is also- also how the mob got people to be loyal to them cuz they paid off debts. –
- (TI): So I was like, –
- (TL): [Laughing] Oh man. –
- (TI): So I was like 'Yeah that's my brother.' So um, I paid him back after boot camp. But uh, I still talk to him to this day.
- (TL): Do you really?
- (TI): I do. Sergeant James Bell, my recruiter.
- (TL): I had a recruiter who um, he was fine. He- he helped me- he helped me, you know, he was nice the whole way in getting me set up and everything. But when I was recruited, like had no interest in me once I'd take off. –
- (TI): Really?
- (TL): Yeah. I think, I –
- (TI): Huh. –
- (TL): I think I dropped by. By no interest mean, I dropped by and I was like, you know, 'What's going on Staff Sergeant?' Like, you know, when I was done, right. Kinda –
- (TI): Yeah. Absolutely. You wanna show up and be like 'Yeah, I did it.' –

(TL): 'Yeah look I did it.' You know what I'm saying. And he was like 'Good, good for you.' And then was like, okay that was it. That was like really the last I ever heard from him.

(TI): Wow, I got the uh- I got the boot leave, but on the boot leave I got the recruiters –

(TL): Ah, the recruiter's assistants. –

(TI): The recruiter's assistants. He wasn't there for that. At that point, I was his last recruit before he, himself, transitioned out of the Marine Corps.

(TL): Oh, interesting.

(TI): So, they sent me from Olympia, Washington all the way to Aberdeen, my hometown, which had no recruiter, and just let me chill out in the mall for like a week. –

(TL): You're from Aberdeen?

(TI): I am.

(TL): Did I know that before?

(TI): Mmm- We might have talked about it.

(TL): Can I tell you- So, so, uh- I'm gonna digress real quickly, I have one memory from Aberdeen, uh, Washington. I was riding my motorcycle, just after I exited the Marine Corps, right. So I finished the Marine Corps, I went home. I spent some time at home and then I was gonna join my at time girl, the girl I was dating at the time was- was living in North Caro- er, uh- North California. –

(TI): Gotchyou. –

(TL): And so, uh- Sacramento. So, you know, I was like, 'I'm gonna ride my motorcycle from- from Woodbound, Washington all the way down to Sacramento. –

(TI): Woo. –

(TL): And I passed through Aberdeen. And –

(TI): Uh huh. –

(TL): And I stayed the night there and early in the morning, I get up, whatever. I- I think I went and like put some, some gas in the motorcycle, and I come pulling out of this, uh- I come pulling out of a parking lot. And there's two stoplights really close to each other. And I- I only recognized, in my- the further one. And so as I'm hitting the throttle, I look up and realize there's a stop light right there. –

(TI): Oh wow. –

(TL): And my knee jerk reaction was 'Oh snap!' And I hit the brakes, and I put my motorcycle down and went sliding into the intersection. And no one stopped to see if I was okay. –

(TI): [Laughter]

(TL): People just like, were like staring as they were going by. It's probably cuz I popped up pretty quickly. –

(TI): They were probably just like 'Foreigner.' –

(TL): Right. Well and- and like I wasn't laying on the ground in pain. Like I quickly hopped up and ran over to my motorcycle. –

(TI): Gotcha. –

(TL): But people were just staring [lauging] as they were riding by. No one like rolled their window down to ask if I was okay. And I was like 'Alright Aberdeen, I- I see you.'

(TI): Yeah. Aberdeen, I mean, it's a- it's a- it's a decent place to grow up in when I was growing up there. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Uh, it's a very small town. It's a very uh, um, close-knit community. So, um, but there's two people that are famous out of Aberdeen I don't know if you know.

(TL): I- I don't.

(TI): Kurt Cobain.

(TL): Oh, okay. –

(TI): He wrote the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah underneath the bridge in Aberdeen. –

(TL): Okay. I've heard of him. –

(TI): You can- you can still visit there. And WWE champion Daniel Bryan.

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): He's from Aberdeen. So, -

(TL): Very well.

(TI): Um, I say I'm from Aberdeen cuz nobody really knows my exact hometown which is Humptulips, Washington. That is an actual place.

(TL): Okay.

(TI): And I went to Hoquiam high school in Aberdeen. But uh –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): So, I claim Grays Harbor as my home. –

(TL): Sure. Um, only one person of note really came from my hometown, uh, Marti Malloy, who is a U.S. team Judo champion. –

(TI): Oh, wow. –

(TL): Yeah. She was on U.S.A. team. I think she got a silver, if not a gold, at one of the Olympics recently. Anyways, um, what- tell me about a close friend or a great leader you had while you were in the military.

(TI): So, uh, can I give you three? And then you can choose –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): which one you want out of that. –

(TL): Wow. Just tell us about them all.

(TI): So, my first enlistment, the guy I palled around with a lot was Michael Murphy. Murphy and I, we- we- we skated through, we made sure, we kept- we kept each other- we watched each other's back. Made sure we weren't, you know, in a lot of trouble. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Uh, I still talk to him this day. He's a good dude. Um. Second person is Gunnery Sergeant Richmond when I was a Corporal. And I'll tell you one story about Gunny Richmond. He was my, uh, at that time I was, my first four years I was an admin. I was an admin Marine, and he was my admin chief. Something happened and at that point, you know, admin Marines, you make sure people get promoted, make sure people get paid, make sure people get awards. –

(TL): Word. –

(TI): And uh, something at the IPAC didn't happen for one of the Marines in my unit. And I was a Corporal at the time, and, you know, that first four years, you're a young Corporal, you're full of hot air and you just wanna like, make sure that the problem is taken care of. And you wanna make sure that people never make that mistake again. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): So, I'm going in the IPAC and I'm ready. I'm ready for war, you know. I'm ready to, like, get this handled. And Gunny's with me. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And I thought, 'Oh God, I'm gonna show Gunny I can take care of stuff.' And uh, Gunny Richmond is very, uh, very sweet, er not sweet, in reality, he's not very sweet. Let me take that back. He can be very hard. But that point, I saw a change in him where he was actually, 'Hey Corporal, you know, so and so, do you mind if,' and this is how he approached the problem. And the- the Marine, you know, 'Hey I'm

sorry Gunny, we'll get that taken care of.' And I was like, 'well this, that's cuz it's your fault.' And I wanted to make sure that, I want to let her know that I knew, I was watching her. Big mistake, of course, right?

–

(TL): Right. –

(TI): Didn't know it at the time, young corporal. Gunny, like I said, he's still hard, takes me, takes me, and he's like, he snapped. He's like what are you doing? He goes, 'You get a lot more things done in a more diplomatic nature –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): than what you are doing right now.' –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And he taught me a very- a very, very valuable lesson that day. I have to say, I don't, I can't, I don't turn that on when I need to, but he- he taught me that there's a time and a place, right. Um and that there's different approaches for- for the same, for different problems. The last one I- I'd- I'd wanna say is uh- Mr. Robinson. Mr. Rick Robinson who, I'm hoping to interview for this podcast. We'll see if it happens. Um. At that time, I was a Sergeant, I was, 2011. And I was working at the Pentagon for Headquarters Marine Corps, combat camera. And he came from L.A. He came from Hollywood. Uh, he was a director of photography out there. He had made some movies. He went on tour with Michael Jackson. Uh. He really told me and showed me how to take my technical, uh, quality of what I do to the next level. And he's still out there and he was a great mentor and he showed me so many things, right. The dude is a- uh, he can paint with light if that makes any sense. –

(TL): Interesting. –

(TI): Um. So, I- I attribute a lot of my technical skills to him. And he was a really, really great teacher.

(TL): Yeah. Uh, you were a- you were- you're a combat camera? –

(TI): I was. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Yeah, I listened to one of your earlier episodes where you were talking about with, I think, Joel Chaverri? –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And you were saying, you know, didn't mean to offend combat cam- I was offended.

(TL): [Laughing]

(TI): I was totally offended. –

(TL): Cuz I- I –

(TI): I was like #combatcameraforlife. –

(TL): Yeah. Cuz I was- I- I implied that combat camera and um –

(TI): Public affairs. –

(TL): And public affairs were somehow synonymous.

(TI): Yes, and they're extremely not. –

(TL): Yeah. I know. –

(TI): Yeah, I mean a combat camera guy will say that cuz uh- public affairs will go out there for a couple of days and write the story, and then go back to their nice warm bunk. And I'm just saying this to get the public affairs guys. –

(TL): [Laughing] –

(TI): Cuz there's some exceptions to the rule. Uh, combat camera guy will do all the workups, deploy with a unit, in bed with the unit for the entire seven months, uh- and then come back.

(TL): So, is this something I think, not a lot of people know, and you can briefly describe, like what is your responsibility as combat camera? Like what is your mission?

(TI): So, combat camera's mission was, cuz they've now merged public affairs and combat camera, it was historical documentation and internal communication. So, whatever the command, you worked for the commanding officer of like the battalion commander on the ground. So, if he wanted route reconnaissance, you provided it. If he wanted external messaging, you provided it. Uh, you were the one that was also to provide historical documentation of what happened. Um so, you were to preserve your footage and make sure it was preserved uh- via DIVIDS or DIMOC at the time. Um, those were your primary missions is historical archival footage and you- you worked for the commanding officer on the ground. Whereas public affairs a lot of the times did not, they would be attached to from a higher command, come and do their story and then come back.

(TL): What did you like about it?

(TI): What did I like? I like storytelling. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): I think- I think uh- you have a very rich story with military right? So, I loved telling the active duty military story as it was happening. I loved being there, uh, or the possibility of being there, for events that could change history. Right? –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): So um, that's what I really, really, really liked about my service.

(TL): Interesting. So, what prompted your transition out then?

(TI): Um. One, a medical issue. Uh, uh- I- I have a medical issue that um, you know, eventually I wanna be able to hold my child like a lot like Lion King someday. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And I have a shoulder issue so um, that was- that was one factor. Two, I had felt like, when I first came in I had a certain set of goals and I felt like I had achieved every single goal that I had. Um and I was- I was going through, and I was past that ten-year mark so ye- you- you have that internal like, ooh should I cross the hump, should I do the other nine years um- and retire? Um but if- if you're not doing it for the Marine Corps, if you're not doing it for- for the mission, and you're doing it for yourself, you're doing it for the wrong reasons. Right? –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): So um, I made the- I was like I have other goals outside the military that I wanted to do and so I made that decision to- to leave.

(TL): Did I already asked you if you knew Reece Lodder?

(TI): I think so and I think my answer was yes, kind of.

(TL): Okay. He's a- he was a friend of mine who did um, public affairs or combat- I can't remember which one he was. He took that really famous uh- picture of the um- it musta been Marines cuz he's- Marine sleeping with a- the dog next to him with a Redskins blanket –

(TI): Yes. –

(TL): Over them. And like the Redskins ended up putting it in their front offices and stuff like that. Yeah.

(TI): Yeah, I- I knew of him. Um- I don't know if that was the same Marine that um, was a junior Marine when I left Quantico, he was attached to Quantico shortly afterwards or if he is a completely different Marine –

(TL): Mmhmm. –

(TI): But I do remember the name Lodder. –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): Very well. –

(TI): No, no personal interaction.

(TL): So, you went to Syracuse, right?

(TI): I did. So uh- I was one of uh- a select few of military personnel. It's a joint program at Syracuse University. Uh, they do military photojournalism program and they do a military motion media program. And they select four from each service every year to go up there within combat camera and public affairs. I think its four from combat camera, four from public affairs. In 2011, I was one of the four selected.

(TL): Interesting so that's- that's when you were still in?

(TI): Yeah.

(TL): Oh! Interesting. –

(TI): Yup. –

(TL): Okay. So, what, so um- you were at NASCAR before you were at VA? –

(TI): Yes. –

(TL): Is there anything between Marine Corps and NASCAR?

(TI): No. –

(TL): No? Okay. –

(TI): No, so I- I- I got out in January of 2015 and I started with NASCAR productions in March of 2015.

(TL): Okay. What- what led you down that path?

(TI): I applied on the website.

(Both): [Laughing]

(TI): And that's the same amount of laughter I get from NASCAR, anybody that worked at NASCAR when I when I said that's how exactly how I got the job. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Um so, when I got out, I knew I was getting out for probably about a year before I got out and –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): Or six months. I went on the Black Sea Rotational Force in 2014 and I thought that was a good way to end my service. It was a really cool deployment. Um saw probably seven or eight different countries in about seven months. Came back. Had about three months to prepare for my transition. Um I did by getting a headshot, started a LinkedIn. I- I started doing all those things and started applying everywhere, you know, um- that I thought I might have an interest in. ESPN, uh- Fox Sports, and NASCAR. I mean you name it –

(TL): Why- why sports?

(TI): I don't know. I think I just saw the openings. –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): I saw a lot of job openings within sports journalism and within, you know, videography, and video producer, and I just. Only on Glassdoor is what I started seeing, so I started applying. And I was like 'ah I will be', you know. Oh, one of the reasons I would say is uncontrolled actions. So, the Marine Corps teaches you how to- how to capture uncontrolled action. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Whether, you know. So, I was like what better way to transition that either with- either work for the Deadliest Catch or work for sports. –

(TL): [Laughing] Deadliest Catch. –

(TI): Yeah um- You know, my brother was always like 'I always saw you getting out, going home and working on Ax Men, or Deadliest Catch or

something.' I was like, that's like the same company and they're not hiring so. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): I started just doing uh- sports journalism and broadcast journalism and a lot of sports, so I did that cause I thought, well-uncontrolled action I can- I can shoot that, I can produce that. I've done that before. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): So, that was one of the reasons.

(TL): Was that- do you believe- do you think that was a selling point when you- when you interviewed?

(TI): I think so. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): I- I think that you know, that was- I- I don't know if it was a selling point, but I sold it.

(Both): [Laughter]

(TL): Nice. I like that.

(TI): But uh- I actually went back home to Seattle. I gotta- I gotta apartment. Like when I first got out. Okay, NASCAR is in Charlotte.

(TL): Yeah.

(TI): I was in Camp Lejeune. I got out and I drove to Seattle.

(TL): Oh wow.

(TI): Cause the original goal was well until I get a job, Imma go and go to the University of Washington or go to the Vancouver Film School and I'll find a job eventually. But until that time, I'm gonna use my G.I. Bill. Cause BH is nice and- and I'll be close to my family. Well, I get there, two weeks later NASCAR called and said hey we like your resume, we

liked your reel. Do you wanna come work for us in Charlotte? And I said I just moved to Seattle. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): I just got an apartment on Mercer Island. Uh –

(TL): On Mercer, huh?

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): Nice. Okay. –

(TI): Yeah. So, we found a really affordable place on Mercer Island –

(TL): Very good. –

(TI): A little one-bedroom place. But uh- started a new life. But um, they were like, I was like, if it- if my stuff still wasn't in storage in Camp Lejeune, I would have never been able to make the- that transition. If I, cause I- I- I optioned to have my stuff in storage for six months at Camp Lejeune while I figured out my life in Seattle. If I didn't do that, NASCAR wasn't gonna pay for my moving expenses. I was, I would not have been able to make that transition and I would not –

(TL): Oh. So, did they- they help you at all?

(TI): They- So, I asked for four grand in moving expenses in order for me to - in my negotiations. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): I said, 'Hey I can't come out there unless I have moving expenses.' And he said, 'How much do you need?' And I said, 'Four grand.' And he goes, 'How bout two and I roll the other two into your salary?' Psh You mean I get that extra two grand every year? Sure. Absolutely. Let's do it. –

(TL): Yeah. Absolutely –

(TI): So –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): So we made- We- we- After about- I was- I was in Seattle for three weeks. [Laughing] And I moved back to Charlotte. –

(TL): That's funny.

(TI): And I went ahead of my wife. So, my, when I first got out, my wife went ahead of me. Cause she got that job at University of Washington. Set up shop, set up, and she's not from Seattle. She's- she's kind of getting to know my uncle and –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): the rest of my family. Uh- She goes and moves and starts working for the University of Washington. I follow her upon my end of- end of service. I get the job in Charlotte three weeks later. I said. 'Sorry. Mom. I know you cause you thought you were getting to see your baby boy after 11 years.' I then moved from Seattle all the way to Charlotte by myself and set up shop and got things going. And then my wife was able to transition. She made the transition.

(TL): So, what- I mean, briefly what were you doing in NASCAR?

(TI): So, I was a senior post-production editor which is- uh- Basically, what I did was I- A producer would come in with their video, or feature, a show, what have you. I would color it, lay in gr- I would send it to audio. I would color it. I would lay in graphics. I was a finish editor. I'd do the transitions and make it look nice. And then I would, we would QC it in my room and then I would send it off to whoever it needed it. Fox Sports, or NBC, or uh- I think CBS. We were doing a sports car show for CBS. NASCAR owns a lot of things that you would never think that NASCAR owned. They own uh- the *American Flat Track* series which is a motorcycle dirt flat track series. –

(TL): Hmm. –

(TI): Um- Harleys going out about 120 miles per hour uh- On a half-mile oval.  
–

(TL): Wow. –

(TI): Um- You have IMSA which is the *International Motor Sports Sportscar*, whatever. It's sportscars. It's- it's uh- endurance racing with Maserati's and Audis. And that- that airs on Fox Sports. Or it did. I don't know if it still does. And then you had, of course, the three major series, the truck series, the Xfinity series, and, and the NASCAR *Sprint Cup Series* or it used to be *Sprint Cup*. Now it's the Monster Energy uh- sponsored series. And then you had a lower series which was the uh- K&N series which we would do an hour long cut down show for. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): So, there was a lot of content, not including the- the corporate sponsors that we would do commercials for or um- See you'd do corporate- uh- the corporate sponsors then you would also have digital. And they actually just got their first uh- e-sports series this year. –

(TL): Nice. –

(TI): So, I'm real excited to see how that goes.

(TL): Yeah. I remember when I was a kid. I don't. Um, yeah, I really didn't know what a sponsorship was. I didn't know what a brand was or anything like that. So, like when I heard, you know, the Sprint series I thought it was like the actual name of it right. Like it was, you know, or –

(TI): Yeah. And it's kind of confusing when there is a Sprint series. –

(TL): Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But like um- what- There's the- there's like the the- the Busch, like they- they had –

(TI): Which is now Xfinity but the Busch league? –

(TL): Right. Yeah. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): So, the Busch league, now it's Xfinity. Like as a kid I would, I- I just thought that what it was called. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): And then you grow up to realize, oh wait. Someone paid to have that called that? I don't, what? And then, you know, you- you start looking at what sponsorships are –

(TI): Mmhmm. –

(TL): And stuff. But it like, it sort of ruined the little bit of the tradition of the –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): Right, like –

(TI): Sure –

(TL): Sort of like how um –

(TI): *Winston Cup*. You know you would- you would see *Winston Cup* –

(TL): Yes. –

(TI): And you thought that's what it was. –

(TL): Yes. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): Exactly. Um- Whereas like, you know, like in football, like, you know, Lambeau is Lambeau for like out of tradition and st- and legacy. Whereas like CenturyLink [Laughing] formerly Qwest –

(TI): Ooh yeah. –

(TL): Like, you know, and all that stuff, like, you know, -

(TI): The Clink. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): What is it gonna be this year?

(TL): I have no idea.

(TI): Ah and then Safeco Field is no longer Safeco Field. That one is the- is the one that saddens me the most. Cause that's been Safeco Field since its inception. –

(TL): Yep. –

(TI): For years. –

(TL): Yep. Uh, Oh well. Um- When you- when you applied, was- was your resume reel every- all the things from the military, or did you have other stuff in there?

(TI): Uh, for NASCAR?

(TL): Yeah.

(TI): So I had made- I had mainly my military reel. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): But I organized it on Vimeo. Uh- You know, I didn't- Everyone was like go have a reel ready, have a reel ready. Well, I had a disk but how was somebody in Charlotte gonna get a disk, right? So, I created a reel on Vimeo and I organized it for albums. Like I did docs, shorts, uh- um- I think audio. I did- Actually, I take that back. I had- I had mainly, mostly military stuff, but my Syracuse stuff was some of the stuff that was out of the military. I did a music video. I did uh- a documentary that uh- followed uh- the Karen People out of Burma. I think that from the time that they landed until about six months in- in America and I documented that. So um, I had some things that were um- not military related. But most, probably about eighty to ninety percent of it was military related. But- but I had organized on Vimeo.

(TL): Interesting. I know most of the story before. For our listeners who are getting to know their future host for *Borne the Battle*, what brought you to the Department of Veterans' Affairs?

(TI): [Laughing] My wife.

(Both): [Laughter]

(TI): So, for the- uh- Tim already knows the story, but my wife applied to the job. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(Both): [Laughter]

(TL): As in, so, to be clear, she didn't apply for the job, she applied on your behalf. Like she appli- she applied you to the job. –

(TI): Yes –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): She did. So, she saw that I had reached a point in NASCAR after about three years. Three- three and a half? A little over three years. Right.

(TL): Yup. Exactly.

(TI): Um- Starting out strong. Um- That I had kind of plateaued at NASCAR. Um- It was pretty much, look at chief warrant officer five positions. Highly skilled, pays- pays pretty good but, but there's no career advancing. You're- you're at a glass ceiling. So, my wife saw that I was, every Memorial Day race, I was taking Marines to the track. Combat camera Marines. And I was kinda running- I was kinda doing a small program of my own. And I said, 'Hey.' I was trying to do things that you and I never got. Like how do your skills translate when you get out. And I would take Marines to the NASCAR productions, the tower in Charlotte, and I would show them, 'Hey this is an editor position. Do you think it's A?' Cause I thought it was storytelling. I thought I would be cutting stories as an editor. Not true. I'd be coloring and doing transitions and graphics. Not a bad job just be aware of what the skillset is when you- when you apply. Um- Producers are the ones that are cutting the stories. So, the- so, basically, I was kind of laying out different skill sets for each positions and what they are called within NASCAR. Um- To really set them up for success for when they saw it on that glass door or something. And I take them to the track on Saturday uh- or on Sunday and show them the live production trucks and take them around to where how they film cameras in the- in the truck- in the trucks with the remote cameras and let them play around with that.

And the at track production of the actual track, not just the TV, of the- of the actual track. And my wife saw me doing this and saw that I was having a compassion of helping Veterans and she goes, 'Hey I applied to this job for you.' [Laughing] 'It's in Washington, D.C. and it's telling Veterans stories and your interview is on Monday.'

(Both): [Laughing]

(TL): Very good.

(TI): So, I interviewed with our- our director and during lunchtime in my truck and three months later got the phone call said I was selected for the position, so. –

(TL): So, when your- when your wife told you she had applied to this how seriously did you take it? I mean, obviously you took it serious enough to actually do the interview but like, did you go into it with any sort of excitement or anticipation?

(TI): Absolutely. So, when she said, 'Hey you have this interview, and this is what it entails.' I said, 'That actually sound interesting.' –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And I was like, 'Let's, let's play this out.' Because it's a big move going from Charlotte to D.C. –

(TL): Sure. –

(TI): I'm still in my in-law's basement. Still making that transition. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): But uh- that's how much I felt about the position. To actually go through this and do it.

(TL): Yeah. Well, we're glad you're here.

(TI): Thank you.

(TL): You've a- you've done a- For anybody who follows us on social media, they may've seen your *Operation Song* videos that have been going out on, I think, at least once a week. Once or twice a week for- for a while now.

(TI): We started that campaign almost as soon as I started working here. And we did the *Operation Song* stuff and we went out to Nashville to shoot a longer form uh- piece of content that is still in post-production.  
–

(TL): Mmhmm. –

(TI): And maybe we will make an announcement here soon about that on the show. –

(TL): Very good. –

(TI): In the- in the future months. But uh- or future weeks. But uh- yeah, so, I saw this, felt passionate about it. And I said, 'Hey, maybe we could do a quick awareness campaign via social media,' And yeah, we do *Operation Song* a week, once a week. On Wednesdays. And we highlight. So, what *Operation Song* is for those that don't know, is, it's a nonprofit 501c out of Nashville. And these are who's who of Nashville songwriters. I mean, these guys have written for Trisha Yearwood, Reba McEntire, Tim McGraw, Garth Brooks, you name it. And they will take Veterans on a retreat. And one day, they'll do a guitar, let them know what they, you know, who they are. The next day they'll pair them up, take them on Music Row in Nashville and they'll actually write a song with a Veteran. And whatever that Veteran wants to get out. And you hear Veterans come away from the program saying, 'These past three days did more for me than the past three months of- or the past three years of therapy.' So –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): It was- it was a really, really powerful so I decided to take it and actually start an awareness campaign on our social media.

(TL): Yeah. And it's been great. I've really- I've appreciated it all the- all the stories and all the sound bites that you've been- you've been selecting. I think you definitely have an ear for what's interesting.

(TI): Thanks, brother.

(TL): Uh- And I think that uh- being a podcaster, that is probably the most important uh- part of the intangible stuff is understanding what's interesting, right? Because the podcast –

(TI): Exactly. –

(TL): uh- industry is saturated now, right, from top to bottom. I mean, we could probably make a list of ten goofy subjects for podcasts and like five of 'em may exist already. –

(TI): [Laughing] Right.

(TL): Right. Like they may already exist. –

(TI): Finger pants, there's two podcasts just for finger pants. –

(TL): Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. At least two podcasts on finger pants. One of 'em uh- you know, probably hasn't been done since 2012 when there really wasn't a market for that. But the person who started launched it last year, they're doing pretty good. –

(TI): They hit right on time- right- right- right- right up on the time for finger pants. Finger pants are hot. –

(TL): That's right. And I think the, you know, the- And as- as many players, I have seen come in and out of the Veteran space, -

(TI): Mhmm. –

(TL): It's still. I think that there's so many more good ways that we can podcast in the Veteran space. So, in- in the stories we tell, the Veterans we feature, the- the uh- information we uh- we- we spread to the- to the masses. Um- You know, it's a- *Command Your Business*, you know, was on *Veteran Entrepreneurs*. –

(TI): Mhmm. –

(TL): Um- There's another one for business. Oh, *VetBiz*, duh. –

(TI): [Laughing]

(TL): [Laughing] That was probably a no brain. Um- That one's great. There's *Pop Smoke*. Um- Team RWB's *Eagle Nation* is a really great conversation about the Veteran space in general. –

(TI): Yup. –

(TL): Um, you know, uh, um, uh- *Duffel Blog* guy Paul Szoldra –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): And- and um- Max Uriarte from *Terminal Lance*. –

(TI): Yup. –

(TL): They do- they do *After Action*, right? That podcast. I think they're still doing that. But, um- you know, there's so many great podcasts in the Veterans' space. Yet, for as many that have been out there, I don't think there's been as many powerhouse, mainstream podcasts as I thought there would have been for this long of podcasting of the Veteran space. –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): Um- *Veteran Empire*. One of my former podcasts being one of them. –

(TI): [Laughter]

(TL): Um- And so, I think that, even though I would- even though I would- I challenge every person who wants to enter this space. I always think that if you're gonna do it right, there's room for you. –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): And that's where I think, I think *Borne the Battle* is still doing it right. I know that when you take over the show and produce the Tanner Iskra version of *Borne the Battle*, that you're gonna do it right and continuing. You know, this podcast, like, it was inspired by getting VA involved in the conversation in the Veteran community. –

- (TI): Good. –
- (TL): And- and not just communicating what we do for Veterans but just learning about the Veterans that we serve, right. –
- (TI): Sure, absolutely. –
- (TL): And um- bringing a human element to all of that. And almost bragging really about here are the amazing things that our Veterans are doing. –
- (TI): Absolutely. –
- (TL): Um- And I- I know that that aspect of it is what's gonna be fun for you.
- (TI): I've been wanting to do podcasting in this space since probably 2015 or 2016. Whenever *Drinking Bros* came –
- (TL): *Drinking Bros*. –
- (TI): *Drinking Bros*. So, I listened to my first episode of *Drinking Bros* on a- on a drive from Charlotte to D.C. And I enjoyed it. Um- But what I really was thirsting for, I guess, was for a Veteran podcast that uh- talked about transition. Talked about the struggles of that transition. Talked about uh- new information from Veteran Affairs or from- from, you know, what some of the new resources that are coming out for Veterans. Um- What are some inspiring stories that can inspire? It could be someone famous. It could be someone who figured out how to be a firefighter. You know. And that was their passion out of the military and how did they do that. Um- Really breaking down benefits. And its funny cause I've been wanting to do that since 2015. I think I've shared that with you. 2016. And then I walk into here and I hear about *Borne the Battle* and I said that's it. That's- that's exactly where, you know. So uh- that's it, that was it. That was kind of like, wow, it's- it's already here and it's- I'm so happy to be a part of it.
- (TL): Yeah. Very good. What do you think about- How- how- how much- how much exposure have you had yet to the D.C. area Veteran community? Cause this is a very unique one in the how many Veterans service organizations there are around. –
- (TI): Sure. –

(TL): How many people are lobbyists and advocates and part of the community non-profits, stuff like that. Have you gotten much exposure to that yet?

(TI): I- I have exposure to the Veteran community within my community. –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): I'm in- I'm in the sub- subcommunity of uh- visual information storytellers. –

(TL): Okay. Yeah. –

(TI): You know. And there's a lot of them here. –

(TL): Sure. –

(TI): Uh- Cause Fort Meade. The Defense Information School is right down the road. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And a lot of them come here to the Beltway and they get out and they stay in the Beltway. So, I have a lot of contacts there. Um, I haven't had much exposure to the rest of the community. And I'm looking forward to it. Cause the podcast, to me, in the future, is also a journey for myself as well. –

(TL): Mmhmm. –

(TI): Cause I'm a new Veteran. You know. I'm still within the- the first enlistment. Right. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Of being a Veteran. So –

(TL): [Laughing] First enlistment of being a Veteran. –

(TI): So [Laughter] So- so uh- I'm looking forward to exploring the VA and exploring these communities that I have- I don't have exposure to.

(TL): Yeah. Um- It's amazing how much you learn too as you do. And you'll get this, you know. I was doing podcasts with um, you know, with the people that run the- the Vet smoke, smoke quitline. I don't know if you knew this, but VA actually has a hotline for tobacco users.

(TI): I did not know that.

(TL): Yes. And –

(TI): Wow. –

(TL): Yeah. Uh- You can call it and they will talk to you about your habit and then they will help you devise a quit plan. –

(TI): Huh. –

(TL): And they can schedule follow-ups with you or they can- they can help you schedule follow-ups with them. However you wanna do it. But, yeah. That's- that's something the VA offers um- that I didn't know until I started doing research on topics to talk about on the podcast. Um-

(TI): That's great.

(TL): Yeah. You start realizing how vast this organization is with the- with as many people in it. I mean, 380,000 is the- is the employment number. But –

(TI): That's amazing. –

(TL): You don't realize how big that number really is until you start talking to all of the people inside the organization and learning who they are. Um- And what's great about this, and one of the reasons why I think it's important to be a curious Veteran yourself in doing this is, you know what you need to know. –

(TI): Yup. –

(TL): As a Veteran. And that applies to your- to your listeners. –

(TI): Yup. –

- (TL): And the- the listeners. All, all of our now –
- (TI): [Inaudible] –
- (TL): Mine, our, and soon to be your listeners out there. –
- (TI): Yup. –
- (TL): A lot of them are Veterans. And a lot of them are VA employees. –
- (TI): Gotchu. –
- (TL): Who listen to hear what Veterans have to say about their- about their time in the military. And I've had VA employees say- say that they find it easier now to talk with Veterans after listening to the podcast and sort of hearing how Veterans talk about their own service and their own transition.
- (TI): See, I didn't even think about that and that's actually a really great use of this. And- and that's another reason, all the more reason to keep doing this. –
- (TL): Yeah. –
- (TI): All the- all the more reason to keep this podcast going. Cause I think if- if it's a useful resource- In the end, at the end state is to help that Veteran, then hopefully this is doing its job.
- (TL): Absolutely. Shout out to all the VA employees out there. You don't need to- You don't have to pitch this to every- to- to people. Don't- don't sell them, I guess, unnecessarily. But I'm sure there's plenty of people like, 'Oh, okay. Alright, this guy is going to be taking over the podcast soon.' Um- Take how much, one minute, ten minutes, however long you want, sort of uh- let people know what sort of things you're hoping to incorporate in, in um- either in the- in the near future or eventually. What's uh- um- what might a Tanner Iskra, *Borne the Battle* sound like for those that are gonna con- continue to be subscribed. –
- (TI): Sure. –
- (TL): And listen to the next show featuring the new host?

(TI): What your gonna hear with a- a Tanner Iskra, *Borne the Battle* is you're gonna hear a Veteran on a journey, himself, to learn more about the VA. So, new topics are gonna come about the VA. For example, appeals monitorization just came out. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): I'm reading the press release myself. And I'm gonna find a subject matter expert and we're gonna talk about appeals monitorization. Uh- things like that. That's- that's gonna be one benefit to listen to *Borne the Battle*. Another benefit is you're gonna hear guests uh- like you- like yourself, have- have already been- has already been doing. Uh- that are going to 'Hmm. I'm making the transition how did he become who he was.' Uh- and you're gonna- you're gonna hear stories uh- about- You're gonna hear uh- guests that you're gonna know and some guests you're not gonna know. –

(TL): Right. –

(TI): But you're gonna- you're gonna hear, like I said, from someone famous, might be an actor, might be a- might be someone in the WWE. –

(TL): Hmm. –

(TI): Hopefully. –

(TL): Hopefully. –

(TI): That's uh- that's in the works. To a –

(TL): Hint, hint. Wink, wink. –

(TI): Hint, hint. Wink, wink. To um- to a firefighter. –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): You know. To a police officer. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Uh- I do- There's- there's plenty of stories out there, right. That's the great part about Veterans, we're everywhere. So, I'm gonna find those stories and I'm gonna bring them to you. Uh- and- and at the same time, I'm gonna be bringing you news within the- within the VA that you're gonna wanna know. And we're gonna talk to subject matter experts. And we're gonna ask them why does it matter to me, the Veteran.

(TL): I love talking to Veterans that are doing interesting things out in the world. One of my most interested- one of the most interesting interviews I've ever had um- was with Roman Baca, who was a Marine Veteran, who after he got out, started a dance company that primary- primarily did ballet. –

(TI): Wow. –

(TL): And actually, like actually helped develop a ballet that was telling the story of serving in the Iraq War. –

(TI): Wow. –

(TL): Its- it was pretty- the idea- you know, something that you would definitely never associate with Marine- with- with military or Veterans, right. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): You know, dancing in general, let alone ballet. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): and here's this- uh this- this military-inspired ballet that's telling the story of serving in Iraq. And you know it's done appropriately because it's being developed and produced –

(TI): By someone that was there. –

(TL): by someone who was there.

(TI): That's so cool.

(TL): Yeah. Um yeah we've- we've had some um- Uh that- that was on a different show but yeah. These interviews are uh- are pretty amazing. The- So, here's the bar that you've had to set. I've talked to a lot of people. –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): Um, I've talked to a lot of people. Everybody agrees that Coach K, Mike Krzyzewski is probably my biggest quote/unquote get, right. –

(TI): Noted. –

(TL): Probably- probably my biggest interview. So that's the bar. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): Um, I've already told you, that if you get uh- if you get James Mattis before I ever get to interview him –

(TI): That is the goal. –

(TL): I'll buy you dinner.

(TI): The same, and the same goes back. If you get Mattis before I do. I might have an inside track on you. I'm just letting you know now. –

(TL): I know you do. –

(TI): I might have –

(TL): I know. –

(TI): an inside track.

(TL): So, here's- so here's what I uh- where I am moving on to. There's no- There's- there's no plan on doing a podcast over there. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): But if the opportunity to do an interview with James Mattis –

(TI): You'll start a podcast. [Laughter] –

(TL): Yeah, I will. [Laughing] 'Hey welcome to the new podcast brought to you by- Episode 1 featuring James Mattis. Oh, you know what, that'll, that wraps up this inter- this podcast.' –

(TI): Can we say where you're going? –

(TL): Yeah. Yeah. So, I'm headed to Arlington National Cemetery.

(TI): Yeah. Where can people- and where can people follow you?

(TL): So, if people want to follow me in what I'm doing, you can find a lot of it at Arlington National Cemetery's um- social media. Uh- Arlington Natl is their Twitter [Link to Arlington National Cemetery's Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/ArlingtonNatl>] and Instagram handle [Link to Arlington National Cemetery's Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/arlingtonnatl/?ref=badge>]. Short obviously for Arlington National. Arlington Natl. That's where uh- that's where I'll be rocking and rolling.

(TI): And we will get you back, eventually. I'm- I'mma put it out there now. –

(TL): Okay. –

(TI): We're actually gonna try and get you back. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): uh- cause we're already gonna be- We already know that we are gonna be missing you. –

(TL): Yeah. Well, I appreciate that. –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): I'm- I'm confident that I've not- This will not be my last time served at the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Um both- co- both- You know, I came here inspired. I came here excited, you know, about um- joining an organization that was being trashed all over media. –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): And then that, with evidence, was underserving Veterans and had a history of that. –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): And I could- I saw the progress being made. Uh- Bob McDonald was the Secretary at the time. I saw his motivation in his uh- inherent belief that he- that he was, you know, um- that he was truly serving Veterans and that it was- that it was his- his sense of service. Um- and you know, we're here. Robert Wilkie. I feel the same way with- with how he um, you know, how he leads this uh- department. And I've been in the Veteran community for so long that –

(TI): Sure. –

(TL): um- even though Arlington, obviously, is still associated with Veterans, it's a half a step away. And I'm just, I want a little bit different of an experience just to keep myself sharp. –

(TI): Absolutely. You have to do that sometimes. –

(TL): Um- Yeah. And it's- it's a noble mission over there. –

(TI): Absolutely. –

(TL): You know, it's um –

(TI): If you haven't been to Arlington National Cemetery, um- it's a very inspiring, unique, humbling –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): time in your life. And I highly suggest you make the trip.

(TL): No matter where you sit on any political belief, value, spectrum, when you see Arlington National Cemetery's green lawn, rolling over the hills in Arlington National Cemetery with these white headstones line- perfectly lined up across it um –

(TI): They don't care. –

(TL): They don't care and any, every, any and every American should believe that whatever their beliefs are, that they're fortified in the sacrifice of the men and women that are buried in Arlington National Cemetery. –

(TI): Absolutely. –

(TL): And I think that's one of the most inspiring parts about Arlington is, it's representative of how diverse uh- the sacrifice for this country really has been. –

(TI): Sure. Absolutely. –

(TL): And it's a- I'm- I'm excited to be a part of that of telling- telling that story.

(TI): I'm waiting for the podcast.

(Both): [Laughter]

(TL): Um- Well, it- so it's- So, the people are like, 'oh you would start a podcast just to have, you know, James Mattis on it over at Arlington National Cemetery.' Actually, he'd be one of the- he'd- he'd still be a key interview because there's really great stories about how he, even as Secretary of Defense, he would wander –

(TI): Yeah. –

(TL): Section 60 and interact and engage with the friends and family members that were visiting loved ones in Section 60. And I would love to get his perspective on what it's like having been a General in multiple wars, right. Being a- being a Marine Corp officer through –

(TI): Yes. –

(TL): multiple wars and what's it's like knowing that decisions he made somehow, you know, not led to but was a part of the uh- scenarios and situations that lead to deaths. Right. –

(TI): Absolutely. –

(TL): And um- and so, you know, I'm- I- oh I'd be super curious uh- to hear about him talk about what it's like to be in- in Section 60. And to interact with the friends and family of those of current conflict Veterans.

(TI): You could make the subject. And I think Mattis has a unique perspective on it. –

(TL): That's true. –

(TI): You know. –

(TL): Yeah. [Laughing] –

(TI): I think he's lived such a life that you could just go 'Hey what do you think about oranges?' –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): Well, let me tell you a story –

(TL): Yeah. CVS receipts are pretty long these days aren't they sir? What do you think about them? –

(TI): [Laughing] –

(TL): He'd give me a knife and 'Let me tell you what I think about them, sir, Mr. Lawson.' Tanner tell me about a- a- a skillset or experience that you had in the military that you feel like is contributing to your success today.

(TI): Well obviously it's- it's- there's a technical skill set that I did not have [Laughing] –

(TL): Yeah. Yeah, you actually have a pretty- pretty uh- specific uh- you know. A lot of people are like, 'Oh, it's my leadership.' You're like, 'No they actually taught me how to do the job I do right now.' [Laughing] –

(TI): [Laughing] Yeah, it's pretty relatable. They are like- they are like, how did- People are always asking me while I was a Veteran like, 'How did

you learn how to be a video producer? How did you learn?' I was like, 'They taught me.' You know. Uh- uh- So [Laughter] –

(TL): [Laughing] The United States government invested in me learning how to do this. –

(TI): Yeah. And I just, you know. How well you do, I think, is in- in- in yourself, you know. How- how well you apply it to what you're gonna do. But yeah, as far as, I don't think defen- I, you know. The Defense Information School, as far as from the technical aspect of how to create a video, I don't know if there's a better school in the country. –

(TL): [Inaudible] –

(TI): Honestly, honestly. From the very tech- now, this is three-point lighting. This is how you conduct an interview. Uh- This is how you uh- grab uncontrolled action. This is the editing timeline. This is a basic sequence. I mean, they taught you nuts and bolts on how to be a video- a one-man video producer. And I don't think. Now I'mma throw it out there, I don't think there's a better place to learn that. Syracuse and Arizona State University, where I eventually went to school when I was night school, online when I was at NASCAR, I- they taught you the how, and the why, and the theory behind making the video. –

(TL): Yeah. –

(TI): And they allowed you to be creative. Um- But I don't, from a technical perspective, I don't think there's a better place than the Defense Information School.

(TL): Interesting. Um- Tell me about a Veteran or a Veteran organization that you're familiar with that has you excited about what they are doing right now.

(TI): This may sound cheap because we already talked about it but uh- *Operation Song*. –

(TL): Yeah. Sure. –

(TI): Honestly as a- as a what they're doing right now I'm so interested in it because I'm doing content for it. Um- And I saw the uh- immediate reaction from the Veterans that did the program. –

(TL): Sure. –

(TI): And it was inspiring enough to do a series so um- or do weekly content on it. So, I would say right now, it's *Operation Song* I'm really excited about what they're doing, what they're doing for Veterans and how they are partnering with VA to keep doing these retreats for Veterans.

(TL): Very good. Well, Tannet- Tanner Iskra. –

(TI): Yes sir. –

(TL): Uh- It is- it is my honor uh- to- to finish my last interview here on *Borne the Battle* with a person that will be uh- taking the reins and taking, honestly, I know, taking the podcast to the next level. And- and giving it the attention it deserves when I'm gone.

(TI): Thank you. I've got a lot of good things on the horizon. Just stayed tuned.

(TL): Very well.

[00:51:07] Music

### **[00:51:10] PSA**

**Man:** My grandfather served in World War II. Spending time with him were the best memories of my life. I became a physician at VA because of my grandfather so I can help others like him. I can't imagine working with better doctors or a more dedicated staff. I'm fulfilling my life's mission with the help of my team and thanks to these Veterans. I'm proud to be a doctor at VA and proud to honor my grandfather every day. Search VA careers [Link to VA Careers website: <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/>] to find out more.

[00:51:39] Music

### **[00:51:44] CLOSING MONOLOGUE**

(TL): Thank you to Tanner for sitting down with me, for allowing us to get to know him a little bit more as a Veteran and as a creative. I hope everybody continues to stay tuned in to *Borne the Battle*. You don't

have to do anything different. The podcast will be coming into the same feed. Tanner hopes to get something rolling in the month of March as soon as March 13<sup>th</sup>. So uh- keep- keep your eyes open. Uh- Sometime in March, epi- first episode coming out of Tanner's editing suite will be coming down the pipeline and into your earbuds. I wanna thank everybody who has listened to *Borne the Battle*, who listened to *This Week at VA*. That's what the podcast was originally titled when we began. Podcast was originally called *This Week at VA* simply as a working title. That's just the working title and it never got changed as I began to produce episodes and I just held it. Then I was talking to a friend uh- Paul Szoldra, uh- at a conference and I told him about the podcast and I told him the name. And he quickly pointed out how boring of a name that was. So, that day I took a walk and I uh- thought of *Borne the Battle* and that uh- became the name of the podcast as we know it. I've had amazing guests on this show from Veterans, Veteran spouses, military spouses, uh- a couple secretaries have been on the show, and I am humbled by how many people have taken the time to not only contribute as a guest but that those of you who have listened, who taken the time out of your week to listen to these Veterans and their amazing stories. I'm looking forward to the next thing in my life and that is something you're curious about as well, I will be at Arlington National Cemetery. You can follow them on Facebook at ArlingtonNationalCemetery [Link to Arlington National Cemetery's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ArlingtonNatI>], and on Twitter [Link to Arlington National Cemetery's Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/arlingtonnatI>]. and on Instagram at Arlington N-A-T-L [Link to Arlington National Cemetery's Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/arlingtonnatI/>]. Uh- Those are the handles uh- you can get a peep at some of my work um- over there. A hundred and thirty-four episodes in the bag. I'm pretty proud of that. And now I hand it over to Mr. Tanner Iskra. So on behalf of Tanner, the rest of the digital media engagement team, the Department of Veterans Affairs, I am Timothy Lawson, signing off.

[00:54:14] Music out

(Text Transcript Ends)