

*Borne the Battle*

*Episode # 153*

(Perry Firoz)— (Analytical Scientist)

(<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/62791/borne-battle-153-perry-fiorz-ceo-epic-music-la-analytical-scientist/>)

(Text Transcript Follows)

[00:00:00] Music

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

(Tanner Iskra) (TI): Let's get it. Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Borne the Battle brought to you by the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am your host, Marine Corps Veteran, Tanner Iskra. I hope everyone out there had a good week outside of podcast land. I did. I saw the roof go on my house over the last week, so that's some good news. Uh, we're closer and closer to start, um, putting the loan into place and uh, best believe me, I'll be looking back through my last [unintelligible] breakdown to bring you last minute tips. So not, uh, any direct feedback, as per say, but I have noticed that there have been a couple more ratings that have come up through the system there, on iTunes, and I know we did get one review. This comes from ENHKG, I'm not even going to pretend to try to make that into a sound. Uh, this says, amazing podcast, very informational and it's great to learn about the lives of Veterans, will continue listening to it and I recommend this to anyone. Well thank you very much for ENHKG, um, again, not going to make that into a sound. We look forward to bringing you more Veterans. And if you, of course, have an idea for a Veteran on the show, you can always reach out at [podcast@va.gov](mailto:podcast@va.gov). [Paper crunching] Two news releases this week. The first one says, for immediate release: VA overhauls religious and spiritual symbols policies to protect religious liberty. The US Department of Veteran's Affairs recently revised its directives permitting religious literature, symbols, and displays at VA

facilities to protect religious liberty for Veterans and families while ensuring inclusivity and nondiscrimination. The move aims to simplify and clarify the Department's policies governing religious symbols, and spiritual and pastoral care, which have been interpreted inconsistently at various VA facilities in recent years, resulting in unfortunate incidents that interrupted certain displays. So, effective July 3, these changes will help ensure that patrons within VA have access to religious literature and symbols at chapels as requested and protect representations of faith in publicly accessible displays at facilities throughout the department.

Woo, wordy. Alright, we have a, uh, quote by the Secretary, uh but then it says the new policies will: allow the inclusion in appropriate circumstances of religious content in publicly accessible displays at VA facilities, allow patients and their guests to request and be provided religious literature, symbols and sacred texts during visits to VA chapels and during their treatment at VA, and allow VA to accept donations of religious literature, cards and symbols at its facilities to distribute them to VA patrons under appropriate circumstances or to a patron who requests them.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently reaffirmed the important role religion plays in the lives of many Americans and its consistency with Constitutional principles. This includes the following values: a display that follows in the longstanding tradition of monuments, symbols and practices; respect and tolerance of differing views; and endeavors to achieve inclusivity and nondiscrimination. Alright, and our second one, it's a big one. It says, for immediate release, VA extends Agent Orange presumption to Blue Water Navy Veterans. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is preparing to process Agent Orange exposure claims for "Blue Water Navy" Veterans who served offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975. These Veterans may be eligible for presumption of herbicide exposure through Public Law 116-23, Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, which was signed into law June 25,

2019, and goes into effect Jan. 1, 2020. They may also qualify for a presumption of service connection if they have a disease that is recognized as being associated with herbicide exposure. The bipartisan Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act gives VA until Jan. 1, 2020, to begin deciding Blue Water Navy related claims. By staying claims decisions until that date, VA is complying with the law that Congress wrote and passed. And we have a quote from Secretary Wilkie, he said: "VA is dedicated to ensuring that all Veterans receive the benefits they have earned. We are working to ensure that we have the proper resources in place to meet the needs of our Blue Water Veteran community and minimize the impact on all Veterans filing for disability compensation." Blue Water Navy Veterans are encouraged to submit disability compensation claims for conditions presumed to be related to Agent Orange exposure. Veterans over age 85 or with life-threatening illnesses will have priority in claims processing. Veterans who previously were denied for an Agent Orange related presumptive condition can file a new claim based on the change in law. Eligible survivors of deceased Blue Water Navy Veterans also may benefit from the new law and may file claims for benefits based on the Veterans' service. The new law affects Veterans who served on a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia, as defined in Public Law 116-23. An estimated 420,000 to 560,000 Vietnam-era Veterans may be considered Blue Water Navy Veterans. To qualify, under the new law, these Veterans must have a disease associated with herbicide exposure, as listed in 38 Code of Federal Regulations section 3.309. Agent Orange presumptive conditions are, um there's a bunch of them, but some are Parkinson's disease, Prostate cancer, some respiratory cancers, uh, a couple of different heart diseases, Hodgkin's disease, uh, Type 2 Diabetes, there's a bunch of them. So, what I'm going to do is I'm going to put the news release in the additional links for the blog and you can find that at

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>, search for this episode of Borne the Battle. There'll be a whole blog and there'll be a link that will take you straight to that news release. For more information about Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam waters (Blue Water Navy Veterans), visit <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/navy-coast-guard-ships-vietnam/>. And I'll put that link in the blog at <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>. Veterans seeking more information should contact their Veterans Service Officer, call VA's toll-free number at 800-827-1000 or visit the VA Blue Water Navy Agent Orange website [link: <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/navy-coast-guard-ships-vietnam/>]. And I'll put the website again in the notes. Alright, so this week's Borne the Battle is a pretty smart cat. Check this out, he's an Air Force Veteran, his degrees include a master's degree in operations research and applied mathematical applications from George Mason, and two bachelors, one for applied science, mathematics, statistics, and computer science from Wichita State, and a bachelor's in music performance, theory, and composition from the University of Nebraska. In the Air Force, he was an analytical scientist, um, we talked about what that was cause I had no idea. After he got out, in addition to being a research programmer with Rand Corporation, he is also the CEO and founder of Epic Music LA, which is a music licensing company. So, with this interview, we sat down, we talked about all of that. He is Air Force Veteran, super smart cat, Perry Firoz. Enjoy.

### [00:07:35] INTERVIEW:

(TI): You have a very interesting background. The more and more I looked at what you've been doing, um, outside of what I already knew as a CEO of a music licensing company, so I

saw before the Air Force, you received two bachelors from two different universities, University of Nebraska and Wichita State.

(PF): Yeah actually, so, I, the first college that I went to was, uh, University, University of Nebraska at Lincoln, there, and um, then I ended up transferring to Wichita Kansas and I ended up getting a bachelor's of mathematics and then also, uh, music which, uh, would eventuate into many years later being part of this music company that I started.

(TI): Mathematics, that's got to be a hard degree. I can only imagine bachelor's in math and then but also, music theory. And so, they're obviously different but they got to be the same in some aspects.

(PF): Yeah, it's interesting because I've met a lot of other analytically minded people who had certain kinds of degrees bachelor's or master's or PhDs in math or science, and I was always surprised at how many of them also have an affinity for music and just talking with different people, it sounds like there's some kind of trend where, are, you know, math is based off of, I mean, music is based off of, of math, of course, there's the music theory and the breakdown and the structure. I tend to run into people who, who have that dual interest and talent, so I think there's a pretty strong connection, and it was for me as well, because I was very analytically minded growing up. You know I kind of, I did some accelerated math classes, but then I was also classically trained. I played the trombone and was in marching band, symphonic band, concert band, played the violin, play the piano, even played the harp for a while. This is all before high school and then in college I just stuck with the piano.

(TI): The harp, that's not when you hear very much of.

(PF): That's not, when you hear-

(TI): No.

(PF): Yeah, so, music and analytical math, kind of, science, those were the, those were the [unintelligible] in me, and it ended up playing well in my favor over the years.

(TI): Okay, and before you join the military, on your LinkedIn it says you were a sales manager at Exotica Imports. That sounds like a fun job, that sounds like it was very expensive cars.

(PF): [Laughter] Well, so, remember I said earlier I come from a very business-oriented family? So, my dad, he was from India, he actually moved here in his twenties-

(TI): Oh wow.

(PF): My mom was from here and, and, from the US and they got married but they my dad being from overseas was very business minded. He ended up opening up several retail stores, buying a lot of real estate really just out there making it happen as a business entrepreneur.

(TI): Oh wow.

(PF): And my mother was like that as well, and so me and my two brothers, when we grew up we were working in our family businesses, running them by the time we were 10-12. And so, the Exotica Imports that you were talking about was one of those retail stores I worked in and managed and it was a family business.

(TI): So that wasn't cars, that was, uh clothes.

(PF): No, no, so, how that worked, it started actually-

(TI): Oh man, I was excited. Man, [unintelligible] driving Lamborghinis and Ferraris-

(PF): That would have been great though. Working on exotic cars, being able to drive all those around, that would have been- no it wasn't quite that exciting. My dad actually, when he first started, he, he got a lot of import gifts from India-

(TI): Ah.

(PF): And overseas, and it started out like that, and we are molding the store to to what people were wanting and different kind of merchandise and so-

(TI): Okay.

(PF): It was a gift store; we had a lot of martial arts stuff knives swords-

(TI): Okay, still cool stuff.

(PF): Yeah, just a lot of cool stuff.

(TI): You became an analytical scientist in the Air Force. One, what prompted you to serve? Two, what is an analytical scientist? [Laughter]

(PF): [Laughter] Good question. I didn't have really a strong military family. My uncle was in the Navy, so I knew, I was having conversations with him and being interested in the military in general, but I didn't know much about it. And as I said, my main focus in college, was focused more on math and science and so that ended up being my degree. I mean, I was pre-Med for a while but I ended up switching and so I think just starting out it was more just trying to finish school and do something that I was interested in.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): And then afterwards, it was just a series of a couple of events that fell in place as far as why I ended up in the military. Of course, I knew from my uncle, some, some information and had some interest in the military, but I was also trying to figure out what

I wanted to do. I wanted to do a masters. I had been invited into the computer science there in Wichita-

(TI): Gotcha.

(PF): And how the military happened, I mean it was pretty random actually. I went to get a haircut at some haircut place in some shopping center and there was a recruiting place right next door. And when I was leaving, you know, it's kind of a funny story. The recruiter standing out there, I think he was from the Army, smoking a cigarette and he saw I was around the right age and so-

(TI): [Laughter]

(PF): He started following me to my car and I saw him out of the corner of my eye, and I was like I don't really want to talk to this guy-

(TI): Creepy.

(PF): Yeah, a little creepy, very aggressive. So I sped up and he sped up and he basically just kind of cut me off when I was right about to get in my car and gave me the whole spiel on the military, wanted to come over to my apartment to kind of break it all down. But it caught me at the right time because, I was like, I had said just finished my degree and I was trying to discern next steps-

(TI): Sure.

(PF): Whether to continue on in school for a master's or get some job experience things like that. I went with it and learned more about the Army and that got me interested to look into the other branches and so I looked into the Navy and was interested in some of their nuclear propulsion kind of science programs-

(TI): So, where you say all that math stuff. [laughter]

(PF): I know I just finish a degree, so my mind was kind of full of all of that math stuff.

(TI): Sure, that's where you, that's where you could help, yeah.

(PF): Yeah, exactly, and so I checked out the Navy and the Air Force and decided once I looked into it that the Air Force looks like it was more fitting for me. And of course, I found out about the officer side, and there was the enlisted and the officer, and since I had a bachelor's degree, that just made the most sense. And so I contacted the Air Force and went through all of the testing and physical examinations and everything fell in order and I passed. The next thing I noticed, I was getting a letter saying that my camp would be at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama so that was it just kind of hit all at once.

(TI): Was that before, before Lachlan [unintelligible]? Is that officers at Maxwell?

(PF): Correct. Lackland is enlisted and then the officers go there to Maxwell.

(TI): Got you, so, what is an analytical scientist?

(PF): So, an analytical scientist is, is, again, it's based off of your degree and so since I was mathematics, they tried to match you up with certain job types within the military that match your skill set so analytical scientist is one of them.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): And there's different kinds of scientist. There's behavioral scientist, there is biological and there's chemistry. So, my one was analytical, and that basically means that the general bunch of the jobs that I would be supporting would be analytical in nature. So, you know I've worked on the space, and that space, and missile systems center, so a lot of conceptual assets and things that the Air Force might build in the future. And so, we did a lot of testing on futuristic concepts and a lot of that was analytical in nature. And later

when I was in Texas at the Air Force personnel center, we analyzed a lot of the personnel in the military, you know for-

(TI): Give me an example, how so?

(PF): Just all the different groups within the military. So, we have the developmental core, we have the scientists like my own career field, of course, we have the Nurse Corps, we have Pilots, we have Maps. So, all of these groups and just doing all sorts of analytical studies on them, and answering questions, making sure diversity issues are being addressed, gender issues, making sure the promotion rates are in order, looking at different kinds of experiences people have, making sure that those are translating into them getting opportunities, and looking at any issues with any kind of career fields. If people are falling behind for whatever reason or not finishing up their military education like they should-

(TI): You're trying to figure out why, and ways to build, to make that happen.

(PF): Yeah correct, basically optimize the force and address people's attitudes in the military.

You know, keep people interested in staying in the military, so retention is based on that, so there's just all kinds of issues that pop up.

(TI): Interesting is, is that, now did you analyze, are there services, does, do the other services have similar, did you run into any colleagues, within inner service or?

(PF): No not at the Air Force. Interesting enough, I do that at Rand. I'm still at the, very much Air Force focused. That was where my expertise was, but here at Rand, and now that I'm out of out of the military, Rand does have contracts with the other branches, so it's not just Air Force.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): They have with Army, Navy, and there's some inter service data analysis that we do at times and in those cases yes, we go into other branches and look at different things.

(TI): That's really interesting, that that's an MOS in the Air Force. I'm, so, when you were in who was either a, your best friend or your best leader while you were in? Biggest mentor?

(PF): Yeah, I don't think, I had, I mean I had several mentors when I first joined, I was first stationed at LA Air Force Base, and I remember being a new fresh second Lieutenant, everything was just so new, and we did have some mentorship programs there at LA Air Force Base, and it was really it really had a positive impact. As a second Lieutenant just fresh in the military just learning the lines, the life, just figuring things out, and so I was assigned with to a Major-

(TI): Major what?

(PF): McNabb.

(TI): McNabb?

(PF): Yeah, and so the way that worked was, we basically [unintelligible] and they would just spend time with you you know take you out to lunch. You had somebody to bounce things off of, somebody more senior and experienced in the military, and just help you get acclimated. So, I remember that being a really positive impact at the time. So that was really good as far as friends. There was a couple really close relationships that I made when I first came in. There was a Mike Lawson I remember we spent a lot of time together-

(TI): Gotcha.

(PF): The thing about the military life is, you know, you meet people and you become close and spend a lot of time and then of course you get shipped off to other locations, other duties.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): And it's very easy to get caught up on, you know, with your current life and and other things going on, so it's been a little tough to stay in close contact with a lot of my old friends.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): Plus, a lot of them have gotten married and, you know, kids, and have moved off, moved overseas.

(TI): Life goes on. But you know it's funny, when you, to reconnect it's almost like, it's almost like a day hasn't passed.

(PF): You know, right, it's almost like no time has passed. You have that military experience in common and you're exactly right it's like no time has passed they're really great friendships.

(TI): So, exactly, so you were talking about time passing, what prompted you to exit the service?

(PF): I was in San Antonio at the time, stationed in Randolph Air Force Base there, at the AFPC, Air Force Personnel Center, and they had some, they had some programs, they were actually targeting certain year groups and grades to help downsize the force and so they had some different options and incentives, people wanted to to get out of the service.

(TI): Got you.

(PF): And so, I took advantage of that. So, I was interested in getting out, doing some different things and just doing some other stuff that I wouldn't be able to do if I stayed in the military. Plus, you know they say once you reach over 10-12 years, you know, you end up staying out, sorry-

(TI): Staying in.

(PF): Staying in.

(TI): Yeah 'cuz you're over the hump, yeah.

(PF): Because you're over the hump, and I wasn't quite there, and so I was like, do I do I get out or do I just try to jump into something else, you know? I've done this for a while so that's how that works.

(TI): Got you. So, you're talking to someone that had, had cleared the ten-year hump but not quite the 12-year hump, so I was, so I can sympathize with that a little bit. Did you get out near DC, because you got a masters from George Mason? And you know, hold on, before I let you answer that, I just want to let the listeners know that you got a masters in operations research and advanced mathematical applications. To me, to me, to me that sounds like torture. What is that and why would somebody want to torture themselves in that way?

(PF): I know right? Well so, being in the military, and you know, as an analytical scientist of course, I had my bachelor's in mathematics-

(TI): Sure.

(PF): But I started working around, you know, very smart, brilliant people, and a lot of them had master's in applied mathematics, which is basically operations research. It's basically just mathematical concepts but very applicable to real day situations that you would actually use. And so, I was around a lot of or people, operations research, and so was very fitting for the kind of work that I do.

(TI): Yeah.

(PF): And it was just logically the next step if I wanted Advanced education and that's one thing that I would say about the military as you know well, they very strongly affirm and encourage education.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): And just being around that - and wanting to develop myself and push the envelope and just move further with my skill-set [unintelligible] on what I've already done, that was just the logical step.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): So, that's what I did, and yeah, so, it's basically Applied Mathematics, it's just more math.

(TI): [Laughter] You know, it's almost like you're speaking another language to me in that. I, from video production, I mean, from art to science it seems like you're very strong on the science side, I'm nowhere near that I'm more art side you know so-

(PF): Yeah.

(TI): Speaking about what you do today, what do you do for Rand, and are there any current projects that you can share that you're excited about?

(PF): Yeah, so, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of the stuff that I did in the military ended up translating nicely to the civilian world, which was very fortunate for me because I've heard of stories ask people in the military trying to get out and it's been difficult for them because they didn't build any specific skill sets. Do you know, like, if you work in personnel or services or some of these more general career fields, it can be difficult to translate that into the civilian world.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): So, I was little bit more fortunate because the work that I actually did, you know, I learned different modeling and simulation tools, programming languages like SAS and Python STK and so on.

(TI): You learned a lot of hard skill sets while you were in the military, not, not just the soft.

(PF): And a lot of stuff, so, when I got out and started working for Rand, they were very eager to grab me, plus I had all my clearances that I got within the military.

(TI): Yep.

(PF): And so, it was just a good fit. So, now what I do for Rand pretty similar to what I did in the military. There's a lot of analytical work that goes on with the personnel, the Air Force, mostly for the Air Force.

(TI): Still trying to wrap my head around what you do. So basically, you come up with the problem, you find a problem, and you're trying to solve it with a mathematical solution and trying to explain it with a mathematical solution.

(PF): Correct, like, so, for example, one recent things that I worked on is, as a captain, you need to complete your required grade developmental education, the military, in that Squadron Officer school, and so, one of the things that the Air Force was attempting was to streamline that program so that everybody as a captain can get their Squadron Officer school in before they meet their Majors for it.

(TI): Sure, sure.

(PF): So, there was some problems with certain career fields like the Nurse Corps in the medical science, and so we worked on basically timing, looking at how many people in each career fields, look at how many slots that Maxwell Air Force Base can funnel officers through, as captains, we had look at the time and grade, because you wanted Captains to

go that were about to meet their Majors Board as opposed to maybe new captains that just pinned on.

(TI): Yeah.

(PF): And so, there were all these different elements that we had to look at, and population and trends and, and the amount of Captain, so I could be, funneled through Squadron Officer School, and we ended up suggesting that maybe they increase class size, is shortening it, looking at different kind of mixes and matches and timing in order to optimize that so that's-

(TI): So, you're trying to streamline the funnels of some of the career fields, that's pretty cool. So, you're like, for an example, you're helping that Captain, you're trying to help that Captain that, it's promoted, that he doesn't just sit at Captain for the rest of his career before he's forced out, you're trying to make sure that he at least gets the opportunity to advance his career, that's, that's the point.

(PF): Yeah, correct.

(TI): That's pretty cool.

(PF): Completing your developmental education in the Air Force, and I'm sure it's the same in the other branches, is very important -

(TI): Yep.

(PF): So, if you come up to your Majors Board and they're reviewing you and they're going to, I see that you're not getting the experiences and the education that you're required to do, you're going to get passed over. It's even more important at Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel.

(TI): Yeah, it's like a- it's like going out for staff sergeant, like have you completed your Academy, well I never had a chance, I never had an opportunity, you're trying to mitigate that situation. That's a pretty cool pretty cool gig and that's really cool.

(PF): Exactly. Yeah. it is pretty cool. It's very analytical in nature, but the work actually does funnel up all the way to the top of the Air Force. In effect, you know, the Commanders on policy changes, that then, you know, funnel out through the whole service and have pretty wide impact, so it's good to see that the work is pretty impactful.

(TI): Yeah, it's got to be pretty rewarding, so, on top of that, you know, I didn't know you from this site at all. All I knew you was when you came to the office that one time, all I knew you as was CEO of your own company Epic Music LA, which is a music licensing company. Is this a way for you to go back to one of your first loves, music? How did this get started?

(PF): Yeah, exactly. You know, you've mentioned a little bit about how the tediousness of math and analytical kind of focused work, well, you know, I think I really started to feel that a little bit when I was working on the masters for operations research, you know, it was working, and it was also doing the Masters in very complex and advanced applied mathematics. And I did well, but, you know, it really started to get to a place where I was like, you know, I can do this well but it's becoming a little, very, just-

(TI): Burnout, yeah.

(PF): Burnout is the word. And so, I got to a point where I didn't really want to push any more to learn, you know, a whole lot of new analytical stuff and certain opportunities came along, were, just like you said, you know, my first love, music, became another option on the business side and, you know, so, that really sparked a probably dormant passion that had

just been sitting in me since I had entered the military. Because I was very musically inclined, I gave piano performances and recitals when I was going through college because I stuck with that, but once I was in the military, I just put it all I put it on the shelf just because, you know, what's, military life is very different you know there wasn't really an outlet, is, traveling all around just doing different kinds of temporary duties in all different kinds of places like Vegas and Nellis Air Force Base, out in Albuquerque New Mexico at Kirtland. I was just traveling over, that's, that's how it happened. I was giving all these opportunities that came across my path to launch this business in the music industry, and I was very surprised how strong those passions were still in me, and they came out because now it gave me an opportunity to not only build a business, because I come from a very business-oriented family-

(TI): Sure.

(PF): But also, to have an outlet to be able to get into music again and start composing and writing and producing and actually be able to do stuff with the music, you know, take music and get it into a film or TV show or some kind of advertising agency. So, it was the best of both worlds coming together and offering a pretty strong alternate path other than what I had been doing for 10-15 years.

(TI): How did you, how are you able to start it? Was it grants, was it through the SPA, did a private financing, was it, what, what, what was it, something to the VA? How did all that start?

(PF): Well, I looked into some of those options, so let me just back off, so, I, with the spark, that happened, and it happened when I-

(TI): Sure.

(PF): Was in DC basically, I had a friend that I knew for many years, and he was in LA, actually, when we spent a lot of time together, and I moved on, he moved on to Dallas, Texas, and we were just talking one day, and he told me about some of the work that he did when he was in LA for a couple of years, working in a licensing company called medatrax. They're pretty large one, I'm sure you've heard of them.

(TI): Yep, yep.

(PF): But anyway, he was just a really outgoing likeable person and he knew a lot of the composers, really successful and well-known in the industry when he worked in LA for megatrax, yes, if he had really strong industry relationships, to actually reach out to them, and if we wanted to get them to start composing new music, writing new music, to add to our library, so he brought the initial spark, of course, I had the business understanding experience those it was the merging of his experience and my experience just where I was it life it all seemed to come together nicely it was the spark-

(TI): I was talking before, I know some of the composers that are in Epic Music LA, so that was kind of like a big surprise to me when I did look at the business-

(PF): Yeah, I mean, it was fortunate because, you know, if you're going to be successful in the industry, you have to have great music and you have to have the relationships to be able to start it. And it was a little difficult to start out with, the new company, because composers that are really good are not going to want to give their creative work, their music, to a new start-up, you know, they want somebody that's established, they can get their music into film and radio in TV and ad campaigns, etcetera, etcetera. So, I was fortunate that my friend had these great relationships and they decided to jump in and work with us and so, that got us going to, at least get a small catalog out there and start

getting some exposure. So, after, so, after the spark, and we started getting going and of course, as you know, starting a business, all the expensive start piling up. Was at that point where I looked into those options you mentioned, I looked at the SBA Loans, I looked at possible investors, and I decided to just buckle down and finance it myself. I had some assets, I bought a home, and so I started, I had that, and I just rented it out. I did something similar when I was in the DC area, I bought a townhouse and I ended up renting that out, so I had some assets to work with, plus some safe resources, and so I was able to take out some equity loans on some of the homes that I owned and also some saved resources-

(TI): Wow.

(PF): And I was able to finance it myself. It was tough, of course I was working full-time, still at Rand Corporation, and so, yeah. It's been a long haul, but one of the things that I really wanted to do was not have outside influencers, so, I was able to manage it and I, I think that's probably a little bit more of a rare story because I've talked to other music licensing companies out there, and a lot of them started with huge investors. You know that invested like a million dollars, you know, to get everything off the ground, it's probably taking me much longer to get to where the business is now, but it's it's it's falling together. In fact, one of the main reasons why I moved from the DC Rand location to the Santa Monica Rand location is because of the business being in LA really, really helped me.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): And it gives me an advantage to go out and meet people and meet the music supervisors, go and have meetings at CBS and Sony, Time Warner and all these other places that are

just all over LA. It's such a big hotspot for the entertainment and music industry so it's just really helped give me an advantage.

(TI): Sounds like you're doing an entrepreneur thing through and through, getting this company off the ground. What's a-, what's a funny story that you can share with maybe, some of our listeners, a story that's unique to what you do?

(PF): Nothing really funny comes to mind right now. I mean I think it's been very, it's been very difficult, so, I think part of what I've learned, though, it is just, you know, dedication and consistency and just really keeping the vision of what you want out in front of you.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): And just, staying focused, you have to sacrifice a lot of things that you want to do, your friends want to go out, and different events that you would love to spend your weekend on, but you know you just can't do it because if this is going to get done, then if this is going to get done, this is going to get, for it, then, just have to be there, want to do it, so, there's been a lot of, you know, very kind of gut-wrenching, self- pull yourself up by the bootstraps and stay focused. And make sure, but you do it needs to get done to move things forward.

(TI): What is one thing that you learned in service that you applied to what you do today?

(PF): Well I think, probably along those lines of just strong discipline and focusing on what you're doing. And also, teamwork, you know, you're one of the main focuses of being an officer is they trained you to be a leader and leading with the right style. You know, not as a dictator, you know, I remember one of the things that I learned, you know, one of the military educations, in order to be a great leader, you have to be able to be a great follower as well.

(TI): Sure.

(PF): And, so, I think a lot of those skills in, to the, on to the entrepreneur initiative that I did, so, I pull different people in, and I've been able to get things going and just working as a tight-knit team, so, yeah it's been a fun ride. We've met a lot of different people in the industry and we've gotten through a lot of doors that a lot of other people are attempting to get in, so, it's just been an exciting, hard but successful initiative, so, I think over the last year and a half we've really seen things taken off, so, that's been that's been very rewarding to see after all these years of-

(TI): Gotcha. So, what's been, when, what's been the thing that when you see, rewards you, you immediately see, you think, that's something I wish I did, could do, and then you finally do it, did it, was it like hearing your music on a commercial for the first time or a movie or a-

(PF): Yeah, so, we've been getting some good music placed over the last, probably, over the last two years, but I would say, over the last year, it's really picked up and that's been really rewarding to see because we put a lot of effort into getting into different places, different TV networks like CBS. We just recently did a deal, if you, weeks ago with CBS, and signed an agreement with them, and so, that was really exciting as well because you know we've been trying to get into certain places, and we've gotten-

(TI): Oh, I know. You're a hustler man, I've seen your work.

(PF): Well, thank you. Yeah, so, I've, I'm excited to see where we're going. Stuff is really started to increase exponentially, so, I think there was a really strong pushing through time and it's just really exciting to see that finally breaking through because now, it's, it's really starting to snowball.

(TI): Do you have any advice for any future Veteran entrepreneurs that are looking into getting into any sort of business or in the film business? You know, what advice would you give to people that are getting into either one of those?

(PF): I think if I rolled it down to think about what kept me really motivated was, number one, you do have to have, and I credit the military for a lot of this, but you do have to have somewhat of a militaristic discipline and drive to be able to do lot of work and be able to keep pressing forward. So that would be, one pillar. The other one would be, that really kept me going was, you have to have strong passion for what you're interested in, and a strong vision-

(TI): Absolutely.

(PF): That you stir and you have to keep, you have to make an effort to keep it alive in you because when things get hard and you don't see things moving as quickly as possible, if you don't watch yourself, it's easy to let that slip in you and you can start to lose steam and focus. And so it really does take a conscious effort to keep that vision alive and do the hard work and if you're passionate about it and you're willing to keep pushing, you can get to a place where stuff starts to finally fall in place. So that would be my advice and that's what, that's what's been successful for me.

(TI): Okay, Perry, this is the part where we talk, or we give you that cheap plug. Man, where can people find you, where can people find what you're doing, how can they follow Epic Music LA, how can they find out what that business is all about?

(PF): Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for that, we do have a website, [www.epicmusicla.com](http://www.epicmusicla.com), which would give all kinds of information on what we do, and two, we're working with, and about, our team, if initiatives that are going on, and of course we're out there on social

media, Facebook and Instagram. We are based here in LA and so, we're in the Westwood area if anybody's local, they can always email or hit us up if they want to meet, you know, we're always looking to meet new composers. And obviously, anybody that has something to do with needing music, we'll always talk to them about-

(TI): Absolutely. If you look in our archives, we have some veteran composers, we have some veteran artists, you never know what you find, you never know what you find there, so, what is this, what is this Legacy Project that you guys are doing?

(PF): Oh, so, yeah, so we launched a new initiative. This is aside from Epic, it's with a partner, a sister company of ours, it's called The Legacy Music Project, and basically, what it is, is we have some relationships with composers and writers that work, that either worked with or are the individuals that had a lot of success and so, what we're doing is we're curating a lot of authentic content from the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's, real authentic [unintelligible] music and there's a high demand for that but the people that we're trying to work with are those people that were successful in the past, back in the 60's, 70's, 80's, have a lot of content that they were involved in or maybe have a lot of music sitting on the shelf now, and now they've moved on they're older, maybe, they don't tour anymore. Maybe they're not out like they once were but they have a lot of great, great retro music sitting on the shelf-

(TI): That has never- oh wow.

(PF): That hasn't been listened to, or they don't have the time, or the bandwidth to really push it, and so we built this network with a lot of TV networks, music supervisors, ad agencies, that are really really interested in this library of music because it's not just people of today writing a 70's sounding tune, it's actually music that was written back in the past

and they are just very eager to get their hands on it and so, we're about to launch it. We have a lot of great content, but what you told me about these Veteran composers, could you, really good candidates for what we're working on. You know, could be a great opportunity. I don't know, if I have music just sitting there-

(TI): So let me let me stop you and let me tell you about Operation Song, So, Operation Song is out in Nashville, it's kind of similar to what you're talking about. These retired songwriters from, and they've written for, who is who in country music. You know, Garth Brooks, Trisha Yearwood, George Strait, and they've, they've now, set up a nonprofit where they're partnering with Veterans, partnering with the VA, partnering with Veterans, doing retreats, and they're bringing them into, like, Sony music recording studios, ASCAP, and these right rooms, writing a song for them in one day, the next day, they record a song at the Sony music recording studio, and the third day, they'll play it for them. It sounds like something that is almost similar to what you're doing.

(PF): That's awesome, that's so fascinating. I mean, the amount of talent that is being pulled to create that content, I would be very interested in hearing the final, the final production, even being able to link it to our site, just to give it some visibility.

(TI): Absolutely. After the show, I'll, I'll put both in the show notes if you have a link to what you're doing, I'll put a link to what Bob Regan is doing, and I'll put you in touch with Bob Regan. Maybe you guys can actually collaborate and do something.

(PF): That would be really cool, that's very nice. I mean, you know, I've actually had it in the back of my mind at some point, when I have some time, to maybe look along the lines of being able to really cater towards Veterans, Veteran composers, maybe trying to carve

out certain opportunities that we're getting more and more of. It would really help the Veterans and get them plugged in with opportunities, you know I'd love to do something.

(TI): A way to give back maybe, someday.

(PF): Yeah, absolutely.

[00:45:42] Music

**[00:45:48] PSA:**

(Woman #1): If they need a home, they can you get a home loan. If they need education, they can get education. If they were hurt in service, we pay compensation. If you weren't hurt in service, but you fell on hard times, we give you pension. There's just an array of benefits out there for Veterans, and we really want to make sure that all the Veterans know what's out there. Choose VA today for more information. Visit [va.gov](http://va.gov), or call 1-855-948-2311.

[00:46:20] Music

[00:46:23]

(TI): Perry is, again, one smart dude. So, in addition to CBS, they recently signed a huge deal with the NHL and MLB Networks, so, congratulations to Perry on his recent musical licensing signing, and you can find him and what he's doing with that business at [epicmusicla.com](http://epicmusicla.com). Alright, this week's Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week is New York National Guard Veteran Dr. Richard Pinsker. Following the events of 9/11, 36 year old Doctor Richard Pinsker left his position as the International Residency Director at Jamaica Hospital in Queens, New York to join the New York Army National Guard. Having extensive prior experience in medicine, Pinsker was tasked with supervising medical care for over 12 thousand soldiers, conducting period health assessments and fit

for duty physicals for the New York National Guard. In addition to standard duties, he often volunteered for additional assignments in disaster preparedness training programs at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. In 2006, Pinsker began working at Camp Smith at Staten Island, where he was responsible for ensuring the medical welfare of 12 thousand National Guard soldiers. He also began tenure as a Medical Review Officer for the Joint Substance Abuse Program. For his excellent work in this field over a sustained period of time, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal from the New York Army National Guard Medical Command. In June 2006, following extensive flooding in and around Binghamton, New York, Pinsker volunteered to serve with the New York Army National Guard 204th Engineer Battalion as a part of the disaster relief operations. There he treated civilians and soldiers suffering from Lyme disease, which became endemic to the region following the floods. In 2007, at the age of 61, at 61, Pinsker volunteered to deploy to Iraq in support of of operation Iraqi Freedom where he was assigned to the 204th Area Support Medical Company as the Senior Physician at Contingency Operating Base Adder Troop Medical Clinic. He provided routine emergency medical care to over 1,600 soldiers, local nationals, and civilian contractors. In addition, Pinsker was able to train other medics. In recognition for his service, he was awarded his first Army Commendation Medal. In 2010 at the age of 64, 64 people, Pinsker volunteered for a second deployment in support of operation Iraqi Freedom at Contingency Operating Base Bucca, I hope that's how you say it. He served as the Senior Medical Provider and physician for the 204th Area Support Medical Company conducting split base operations. In addition, he served as the Theater Consultant for endocrinology proving- providing medical care for over 2,000 coalition forces, civilian contractors, and third country

nationals in and around COB Bucca. In recognition for his service during the deployment, he was awarded with his second Army Commendation Medal. Dr. Richard Pinsker retired at the rank of Colonel. Thank you for your service, Richard. That's it for this week's episode. You can follow the VA on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Rally Point, pretty much any social media. [Web links for Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs>, Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/deptvetaffairs/>, Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs>, YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs>, Rally Point:

<https://www.rallypoint.com/>] You can always find us with a blue check mark. Thank you again for listening, and we will see you next week.

[00:49:31] Music

(Text Transcript Ends)