

*Borne the Battle*

Episode # 219

Marine Corps Veteran Chad Robichaux, Strikeforce and Bellator MMA Fighter,  
Mighty Oaks Foundation

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/80910/borne-battle-219-marine-corps-veteran-chad-robichaux-strikeforce-bellator-mma-fighter-mighty-oaks-foundation/>

(Text Transcript Follows)

[00:00:00] Music

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

Tanner Iskra (TI):

Let's get it. Monday, November 9th, 2020. *Borne the Battle*. Brought to you by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The podcast that focuses on inspiring veteran stories and puts a highlight on important resources, offices, and benefits for our veterans. I am your host, Marine Corps veteran, Tanner Iskra. [ Trumpets sound effect] Wherever you are, Happy Veteran's Day, and I hope you looked up the blog on [blogs.va.gov](https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/) [Link: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>], where my colleague Adam Stump played all the discounts and deals that are available to you. And there's also a blog on there that has all the virtual events going on in the month of November. But you know what comes before Veteran's Day? You all know it. HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARINES! It's the Marine Corps birthday! I'm sorry, I love all you soldiers, sailors, airmen, coasties. I wish you well on November 11<sup>th</sup>, but you have a Marine as your host, and it will always be the Marine Corps Birthday episode. It just is. Can't help it.

Real quick, couple of ratings. One review this week. Looks like Ok-OkieMOSVeterans 4, who has written before, revised his review and for some reason, they only let you do one review on Apple Podcasts. If you leave another one, it just amends the old one. Anyway, it says, "Five stars, Halloween episode. The Halloween episode was the best one yet." Appreciate that OkieMOSVeteran and I'm gonna take your word for it, and I'm gonna listen to you because let's just say the comments were mixed on social media when the promo came out on the episode, on Facebook. Some Facebook commenters thought that the episode, I don't know, was wasted tax dollars, or something. Now, if you listen to the episode, you know that we brought back Navy veteran Jennifer Marshall, who is an actress, but she is also a credentialed private investigator, and she puts those skills to use and investigates the paranormal on the *CW* show she hosts, *Mysteries Decoded*. And I thought it would be fun to talk about Bigfoot and aliens with her, especially with the Navy's recent confirmed UAP (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena)/ UFO (unidentified flying object) footage and with it being Halloween and all. You know that if you listen to an episode, which you are right now, you also get the

veggies with your dessert. What do I mean by that? I mean, right in the beginning monologue, I'm gonna tell you what information has recently been released from the VA. You're gonna get your information and you're gonna to get some entertainment. So, at the end of the day, I'm going to weigh the feedback that I get in the reviews much more heavily than those in the social media comments because I can at least tell that you've listened to the podcast. So again, thank you for the review OkieMOSVeteran. As always, reviews are appreciated if you subscribe, leave a rating and or a view on Apple Podcasts. It helps push this podcast up in the algorithms. Giving more veterans a chance to catch the information provided not only in the interviews, but in the benefits breakdown episodes, and in the news releases. So, thank you for helping with that.

Talking news releases, we got three this week. First one says for immediate release: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced their partnership with *Veterans Matter*, has helped more than 4,000 veterans exit homelessness and move into permanent housing since 2012. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA's supportive housing program known as HUD-VASH (Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing) works with *Veterans Matter* to help veterans experiencing homelessness, and to qualify for rental subsidies to cover the cost of security deposits. *Veterans Matter* is a program of the non-profit organization Imatters.org [Link: <https://www.1matters.org>]. That's "one," the number. Established in 2012, the program removes financial obstacles to securing stable housing for veterans experiencing homelessness in 25 States and in the District of Columbia. The HUD-VASH program is a collaboration between HUD and VA, that combines HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services, such as employment assistance, healthcare, mental health treatment, and substance use counseling. The program enrolls more veterans who have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness than any other federal program. You can go to [www.va.gov/homeless/stakeholders.ASP](http://www.va.gov/homeless/stakeholders.ASP) to help prevent and end veteran homelessness. To overall learn more about VA homeless programs, go to [www.va.gov/homeless/](http://www.va.gov/homeless/). Kay, the next one says a for immediate release; "Walmart reopens five VA telehealth access points after COVID-19 shut down." "The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced recently that five Accessing Telehealth through local Area Stations," otherwise known as ATLAS, "sites in select Walmart stores have resumed at clinical services to veterans in rural areas. "VA suspended the operation of clinical services at all ATLAS sites on April 10 to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and implement additional safety and infection control measures-measures" Man. "The reopened ATLAST sites give veterans more options- allowing them to receive care without leaving their communities while offering the full privacy of a doctor's office. ATLAS sites offer services that do not require hands-on exams, such as primary care, nutrition, mental health, counseling and social work. Establishing these points of care closer to Veterans' homes, ATLAS reduces obstacles and increases access to care. The following Walmart sites have reopened," with CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) COVID guidelines for sanitation. Keokuk, Iowa, and I hope I said that right. Howell, Michigan, Asheboro, North Carolina- I do know that place. That place is rural. Boone, North Carolina. Again, very rural. And Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. “The secretary plans to expand this initiative to more sites nationwide by 2023. The Secretary Center for Strategic Partnerships has facilitated collaborations with Philips North America, the American Legion, VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars), and Walmart to provide convenient locations with private appointment space for veterans to receive care. Veterans meet with their VA providers at ATLAS sites through VA’s *Video Connect*. To learn more about ATLAS, you can visit [www.connectedcare.va.gov/partners/atlas](http://www.connectedcare.va.gov/partners/atlas). Okay, and the last one says for immediate release: “In recognition of breast Cancer Awareness Month, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced it has launched a new strategic partnership with Duke University and Baylor College of Medicine, towards Building VA’s National Women Veterans Oncology System of Excellence, integrating the best of the public and private sectors to serve patients. This partnership will recruit the nation's top breast cancer oncologist to advance and improve health outcomes for women Veterans as well as launch new collaborative research programs. The National Women Veterans Oncology System of Excellence will also partner with the National Cancer Institute, other federal agencies, academic organizations and pharmaceutical and healthcare technology companies to provide teleoncology, decentralized clinical trials, and personalized cancer care to women Veterans nationwide. For more information on how VA is partnering to drive innovation in cancer care or to partner with VA,” you can send an email to [cancer@va.gov](mailto:cancer@va.gov).

Alright, so I have a really great guest for the Marine Corps birthday this week. He is a Marine Court Force Recon (Reconnaissance) veteran who was assigned to Joint Special Operations Command Missions (JSOC). He is a former police officer, a Jiu Jitsu second degree black belt. He was at one point the number six world ranked flyweight. He fought in Strikeforce, Bellator and was the Legacy FC (Fighting Champion) flyweight champion, and for all of his professional success, I think he would agree that the number one biggest success is that of a PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) survivor who has found a way to be a loving father and husband. He also founded the Mighty Oaks Foundation and their Mighty Oaks Warrior programs host men, women, and marriage advanced programs at multiple locations nationwide. The warriors who attend are fully sponsored for training, meals and lodging needs to ensure that upon arrival through the ranch, each warrior is focused solely on his or her recovery and identifying purpose moving forward. He is a Marine Corp veteran, Chad Robichaux. Enjoy.

[00:09:15] Music

## [00:09:23] Interview

- (TI): Happy birthday man and thank you for taking the interview on such a quick notice.
- (CR): Absolutely. Thanks for it. Thanks for including me in it. In fact, for you know, this, the Marine Corp birthday, I'm gonna be, gonna be traveling out to Marine Corp Recruit Depot, which is for those who don't know is Marine Corp boot camp, and I'm gonna be speaking for their, uh, their birthday ball, which our birthday ball, and I could speak in MCRD all the time to the recruits there. And so, after the birthday ball, the following morning, I speak to all the recruits there, and in this time, it's gonna be special for me because my sons at recruit training. So, here after, he'll hear me speak and I say it's the first time in 20 years he's actually gonna have to listen to me.
- (TI): [Laughter] Where, what, do you know what platoon he is? What, what, what company?
- (TI): He's in, uh, his platoon's 1041. He's first, first battalion, Charlie company.
- (TI): Okay.
- (CR): Which is kind of first for our family cause my father was a marine and he was third battalion in San Diego. I was a third battalion, San Diego, and my oldest son, Hunter, was third battalion, San Diego. So, all of us were gonna have a family tradition going, and then I hated my youngest son. He missed it by, uh, by, by I think a week. He missed being third battalion and got picked up by first.
- (TI): I-I was also third battalion, San Diego, India.
- (CR): Right on.
- (TI): Very good. Well, that's, that's really cool. So, let's start the pod- I want to start the interview like I start every interview here on *Borne the Battle* is going back to the first time that you joined the Marine Corp, the first time that you thought about joining the military. What for you, when and where was that time?
- (CR): I think it was way before I joined because I grew up in a pretty dysfunctional home. Like I said, my, my father was a marine and he served as an infantry man in Vietnam, and he came home really suffer with a lot of same things, many of the warrior's stuff with today.
- (TI): Yeah.
- (CR): Never got the help he needed so you know, alcoholism, womanizing. He was a very violent man, so a lot of physical abuse in my own, mainly

with towards me and my brother, who is a year older than me, and I think we're about 13 and 14 years old where we decided we wanted to join the military as really a way to get away, like escape that lifestyle. You know anybody grows up a dysfunctional home like that, especially physical abuse, you know, the sibling's bond really closely.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): So, we really bonded through that and we decided to join the military we were in, we were growing up in southern Louisiana, so we're always in a water, playing in the woods and we, we watched this Navy SEAL (Sea, Air, and Land Forces) video. We've seen this guy come out of the, the water with scuba gear on and, and seaweed on his head, and I'm like, "I want to do that," but I don't want to be in the Navy. So, it was always, you know, when you, when you, when your dad is in the military, you have more familiar with that branch. I don't think it was that that, that was more familiar with the Marine Corp, I think it was that my dad was just such a dysfunctional person, but the one thing that always made him proud that he always kind of let him up, was the fact that he was a United States Marine. He just like, was always proud of that and I was like, there has- for this guy to have that kind of reaction to being a Marine, it has to be something good about the Marine Corp. So, it just lured me into the Marine-Marines, my brother, my brother and I, we learned about what, you know, we were kind of dead set on special operations thing, so.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): What does the Marine Corp have, we learned about being a Recon Marine. So, we started training at like 13 and 14 years old. We started running and swimming, and repelling out of trees, and like, we were gonna do this in about a year into that, really harsh it hit our family, my brother was, was actually, he was shot and killed.

(TI): Oh my gosh.

(CR): And it was just devastating. We911, I went to real deep isolation, my, we didn't have the same biological mom. His mom really just fell off the rails. She just could not handle losing a son.

(TI): Sure.

(CR): My father didn't want to deal with it and he, he bailed and took a job at overseas in Africa, and so it really left me and my older sister to really deal with life, and in, in like 15 years old, I was living alone and, and it was, uh, when I was 17, I was trying to work. I was roofing and going to high school and it just wasn't working out, and I went to Marine Corp recruiter name staff Sergeant Brown, and I won't forget his name 'cause I'm just so thankful for him. I just really pled my case to him. Told my story and told my situation I probably wasn't gonna graduate high school, and he, he offered me to get into the Marine Corp at 17, 19-1993

without a high school diploma, and I made a promise to him that I'd get my GED (General Educational Development). And in my first year in the Marine Corp, at 29 Palms, Copper Mountain College, there I, if there are any Marines listening, probably know Copper Mountain College, I got my GED there and kept my word and, and all the years I have an MBA (Master of Business Administration) so I always say when I'm speaking, I can't spell MBA, but I got one.

(TI): [Laughter]

(CR): The thing I, I just look back at that time in the, joining the Marine Corp, and the Marine Corp really give me that second chance. Not just a second chance of life, but a clean slate to kind of build my own story off of, not, not what my dad had done and my dad's story in my childhood. I had an opportunity to build my own story, and uh, in my own journey in, in, I don't know how that young age, 17 years older, I recognized that opportunity, I took full advantage of it, and the Marine Corp gave me that chance to do that.

(TI): It's, it's amazing how many of us have similar stories, but we don't really know about it when we're all coming together.

(CR): Sure, yeah, we're too, we all have the kind of depth of wisdom to put the pieces together in those, in those times, but we look back and it's, it's just really, I mean, my- different trajectories our lives could take in one small decision. I just, I just, where I'm at my life right now, I'm just very, very grateful looking back.

(TI): Yeah, looking back at that, a-at your childhood, I, I think you're absolutely right in the fact that your trajectory can go anywhere after those yellow footprints. Now, you had some broken time, right? And you were a police officer in between?

(CR): Yeah, I did my I did my first four years. You know, my childhood dream my brother and I had was being special operations, so that first year, I tried out to be a Recon Marine, and made it, which is uh, you know, something not only very proud of for becoming a Recon Marine, knowing what I know now, so proud of to have done it at that young age.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): 'Cause it's very difficult to make, getting a job and the first four years was all, all schools and, you know, 1993 is when I went in, so there wasn't any wartime going on. We did some kind of drug operations, JFK six operations, and stuff like that, but for most part of those peacetime training. I really wanted to, you know, like anyone else, probably wanna go do your job, you want to go to deploy and those opportunities weren't there, so I decided to- meanwhile, I kind of planned a way to get married, and I had a first son. So, like let's get out, go into the reserves 'cause I didn't want to leave the Marine Corp, 'cause I love the Marine Corp.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Go into reserves and, and go to college and when I, and get a commission, that was kind of the plan.

(TI): Gotcha.

(CR): And so, went to Third Force Recon Company in Mobile, Alabama, and I was in- while going to college, I have a job because I had a wife and kid, so the easiest job to get and was being a police officers, so, I was police officer in New Orleans. At that time, going to college, take care of my family, doing Marine Corp Reserve stuff and, uh, you know, it was, that was the plan.

(TI): Got you. When did you meet your wife? Did you meet your wife while you were in? Was it back home?

(CR): My first year in the Marine Corp, I was, I was in 29 Palms as my first duty station and some kid in the barracks was from about, uh, you know, two hours away from 29 Palms, from Paris Valley. And he's like, "I want to go home for the weekend. I don't have a car, you do. You doing anything? Give me a ride," and I gave him, I gave him a ride to his home, and, and she happened to, my wife, was friends with his girl-girlfriend and we just met.

(TI): I wanted to bring that up, 'cause I know you do, that a huge part of your story is your wife.

(CR): What's funny is we met there, you know, from Louisiana, and my wife's like this, you know blonde, California beach girl and I'm like, you know, everything that a kid, young guy coming to California would be looking for, and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, like I wanna, I wanna get to know this girl," and she was not interested at all. She said 'cause I was short, so. I am short.

(TI): [Laughter] Glad it worked out, glad it worked out.

(CR): Yeah, we-well, so my buddy, my buddy and his girlfriend felt bad for me, so they set me up on a blind date with another girl, and uh, like two weeks later, so I came back and I'm meeting this, there, the two girls my, my blind date and my friends girlfriend are getting ready in the back bedroom and, and while waiting for these girls to come out, my wife pulls up and she's like in her sweats, you know her up in a pigtail, an-and I, I seen her and I knew these other girls were getting ready to go out with us, and I, I invited her on my blind date with me.

(TI): Oh my God.

(CR): Typical Lance Corporal thing to do and it, but, but she was, she was kind of competitive now 'cause there was another girl in picture.

(TI): Competition.

(CR): So, she said yes and came. So, I end up spending the whole night with a wife and didn't even, I don't even think I acknowledged the other girl.

(TI): She's like, "I could beat you in sweats."

(CR): Yeah, exactly. Yeah, so yeah, we were together every day since, and the following year, every day that I was off the Marine Corp, we were together, you know, and that year late, we got married.

(TI): Very good, very good. Going back to when you were a police officer, I learned about that through, through my research. You know, I always do research before I do these interviews and I saw your *I Am Second* video on YouTube.

(CR): Yeah.

(TI): And about being a police officer, there's, there's a very, I mean the, the video structure is a very powerful opening that, that discuss an incident during that time. Do you mind discussing it here?

(CR): Yeah, absolutely, yeah. I mean when I when I got out of the police academy, I was like so still young, you know. When I got into the Marine Corp, I was still 17 and so, I had my first four years in, I was still not 21 years old. I looked really young and, but there's also a Recon Marine so, I, I did really well in the academy.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): So, they asked me to go work undercover narcotics, right out of the academy and so, I spent the first year as a police officer working as a, working undercover narcotics, and you know, which is pretty crazy in itself. And then after it was over, I went over to Patrol Division. You know, I was only in Patrol about, maybe about two months when this happened. I just finished my field FTO (Field Training Officer) training and I was working when I met the beat over next to me was one of the guys was my training officer, Steve Contelli, and he was a former Marine, in military police, really solid guy. Like, guy that you look up to, feel completely confident with anywhere you go, and he was like the kind of role model police, police officer there, and, and you know, I heard, I heard his voice come over the radio that, you know, he was a domestic violence call and he, he called for backup, and right when he called for backup, the radio system stopped working, and it wasn't bad because that radio, we just got a new system and it kinda just shut down, and this is a guy like you don't ever, I never heard like panic in this guy's voice and it wasn't just panic, you could tell he was just really distressed. When I got to the house where he was, it's kind of like modular elevated house. I seen like a crowd of like 30 people in front of it, and then he was like on their porch, and he's with this lady and arguing, and with this

lady, an-and I ran up there, ran through the crowd. Ran up there and get up to the top, and he-he's like, "Ge-ge-get this-" like, like, I forget what he said exactly, but basically get this lady away from here. Her husband's in the back and he's barricaded himself in with a, with a rifle. I, I stayed at the front doorway, come to watch the doorway, and my buddy ran to the window of the room that this man was barricaded in 'cause he didn't want, wanted to make sure he didn't shoot out the window towards this crowd, 'cause domestic violence.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): So, so, uh, his wife- and by the way, his children were in this crowd, and as I'm standing at front doorway, like I was looking into a living room, and then catacorner across the living room was, from the far side was a hallway, and in that hallway is this mirror, and you know, and I could see, had advantage of viewpoint through the mirror, and that guy came up. His back against the wall and I can see the in mirror, and what I could see was him kinda cut, kinda in a, kinda in a covered position, and he's got a rifle and he's, he's press checking it, like looking at the chamber, making sure it's loaded, and so I just begin yell at him, you know. "Put the gun down, don't come, don't come out with the gun. You know, put the gun down. Let's talk about this." I knew who the guy was. His name was Russell, and so, I'm calling him by name.

(TI): Ha-have you dealt with him in previous incidents?

(CR): I didn't, but other, other officers have. It was known that there's always domestic violence stuff and going on at this guy's house, and still, he turns the corner, and we turned the corner, he, he had the rifle. He didn't have a shoulder. He had over shoulder, and they had his hand, but over the receiver gets fingered by the trigger, I could see very, super clear. Like his finger- some-someone's 'bout to by the trigger, and, um, and he, he's just holding it pointed. He's pointing at me and I don't know why he did that way. I think it was just maybe to see how far we can push, push, but he had pointed right at me and I mean, you might know this about, you know, lead the force, you know, yeah, continue my force. At that point, you know, I, I mean, just the fact that pointing a load- you know, what I believe to be a loaded gun at me, which in fact later I knew it was, you know, like I can defend myself by a deadly force, and, and if you would have asked me that day if I would've, I would've been done did it, saying, "Oh yeah, if someone points a gun at me, I'm gonna shoot them."

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): But, you know, I'm sitting in this guys house and his wife and children are right behind me. His toys, kids' toys are still on the floor, there's food still on the table, it's like family pictures everywhere. That was not the first thing I wanted to do.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And so, I, I just started trying to talk to him like, I, I stop talking like a police officer. I stopped with the, "Drop your gun." I was like, "Put your gun down or I'm gonna kill you," and, uh, he's like "You put your gun down." And he started walking towards me, and, and he's, Russell was six foot three, 263 pounds. I know his weight, specifically 'cause of the reports later.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): He's a big guy. I'm, I'm, you know I'm five foot three, five foot four, maybe, on a good day.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And then I was like probably 130 pounds. I'm a, I'm a little guy, and I got giant guy coming towards me, under the rifle. However, you know, my whole life has been martial arts and training, and you know, I was already, I think I was already fighting MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) at that time, so. I, uh, I just went kind of closed the distance between him and I, I, I reached forward, and grabbed the barrel of the rifle, pushed it away from me and I kicked him right in the nuts, like a, like a push kick to- I want to, I want to kick him, and pull the rifle out of his hand. That was my, that was kind of what I was trying to do.

(TI): Gotchu.

(CR): And I, when I pulled the first time, nothing. This guy's so strong and, and so the second time, I kicked him- I had my arm kind of retracted to, I'm not like flailing my gun out there, and I'm gonna retract it. The second time I kicked, my arm mussel came away from my body, or something, but he grabbed my wrist. And so now, we're fighting over two guns. This guys is like, you know, monster over me, we're fighting over these two guns, and, and I could tell in that moment that the situation definitely escalated, and he wasn't gonna give up, probably ever, and know that I had to escalate the situation. So, I, I kind of broke his grip. I kinda turned my, my wrist towards his body with my gun to break his grip, and as my battle point centered his chest, I fired the first round. BOOM, like right, like I seen it hit center mass of his t-shirt. And then I, and then I fired six rounds total. So really point blank, six rounds. My, my partner Steve came in at the same time, and he, he was right over my shoulder firing. He fired six rounds, as well. We hit him 11 times out of the 12 times fired, and he dropped. Like what, we're shooting him, he dropped to his knees, and he let me, just very kind of calm, very calm eye contract with me and he said, "You killed me." Just like conversationally, "You killed me," and turned around and fell down, and I tackled him and pulled the gun out from under him to get away from him. I was like covered in blood and I remember later trying to wash it off me. I feel like I couldn't get it off of me, and you know, as I'm handcuffing him, still like, I heard like two things. One was I heard all the police sirens coming, happen at that time, like right when we shot, all the police was showing up. And the second thing I heard, was probably

the most distinct thing and something I'll never forget, it was his, his wife just display grueling, like scream, like screaming. Trying to get, trying to get to him. I looked at the door and she, people were holding her back, you know, I wanted to go to her, but I knew I couldn't go to her, and uh, and then his kids, you know, look, had no reaction. They were just like trying to figure out what's going on, and so, that's when all the policemen came, and took over. Separated me and my partner.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Took our guns away. Went back to Detective Bureau for interviews. The next morning, you know I, next morning I remember the chief police calling me and, our chief calling me and saying, "Hey, don't read the newspaper," and of course, I did. And it said, uh, front page of the paper said, headlines say, "Cold-blooded Murder." That's what it said, and it was quoting the wife.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): In the small print underneath it said, "Please say justified," and started an ongoing, you know, District Attorney didn't take any position, which forced us to go to a grand jury for second degree murder indictments, which is pretty scary.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): So, went before a grand jury. It was clear, cleared by the grand jury, of course, or I probably wouldn't be on this call, but clear, clear by the grand jury, and then later on, we got from the state of Louisiana, both got, uh, State Medal of Valor and, but honestly, but the way the situation was gonna-

(TI): You had to have looked at that Valor medal going, "I, I went through all that BS, and now you're gonna give me a medal?"

(CR): Yeah, that was kind of my attitude towards even, even when we were receiving it.

(TI): So yeah.

(CR): I kinda felt like it was a joke

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Super proud of my partner in high performance. I believe not only save our own lives that day, saved each other lives, but I mean his ultimate goal is to, I, I believe his ultimate goal was to kill his wife and kids, and probably himself. There were a crowd of 30 people, and you know, he's telling us to leave to put down our, to put down our guns. Had we not did what we did, you know, people would've died, so. I-I'm proud of that.

You know, I think we definitely think we made the right choice, but I had just completely lost interest in being a police officer.

(TI): Well sure.

(CR): I was probably not in a good state of mind to be a police officer at the time. I had a very poor attitude towards, towards, towards the politics by being a police officer.

(TI): I, I can see, I can see what one losing the taste for something like that. I mean, you talked about coming home in, in that video and the feelings you felt there with your wife. The expectation of support versus the reality of support, of what people sometimes don't understand what it, when you come home to start from something like that.

(CR): Kathy, it's kind of funny. Kathy is, she is super supportive, but she is extremely naive.

(TI): Sure.

(CR): To the real world and, and you know, good and evil, and all the work, and, and, and I used to have like a real, starting with that moment, I had like a real bitterness towards her for many years, but now it's just like, like I'm just really blessed to have a wife like that, that sees the world that way, in spite of all the things that I've had to see and do.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): How else could do her eight deployments to Afghanistan and be like, you know, just running around the kids, being mom, being dad, taking care of everything like, just being not really phased by it. If she had seen the world the same way I do, she would have been a mess, and so I'm thankful she's that way, but the first glimpse I got of it was that night. I came home and I'm like, "she's asleep," and it's the middle of the night, and I wake her up, and I'm like, "Did anybody call you?" No one called her and told her what happened, so I had to tell her, and she layed over and went back to sleep. I was just like upset; I was really upset. I was pissed, I was like, like, I wanted to be supported.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And she just, that's what she thought policemen do every night. Like go and shoot bad guys. And at that time, like in my life, I was really bitter towards that, but all these years later, I kind of just am, am thankful that, you know, there's that innocence.

(TI): I mean, unless you go through a situation like that or you're, you're exposed to that kind of under, underdeveloped society every day, I don't think you understand what, what that life is like. I, I think it's I think it's great that, that you guys are survived as long as you guys have.

(CR): 25 years now.

(TI): That's awesome. Was that incident the reason that you kinda jumped started going back into the Marine Corp before, like you said, you were gonna commission?

(CR): So, I was working at, I was working there and, you know, I was splitting my time. I was also working part-time at the Department, and so, I was going back and forth just trying to use, you know, I was just, I didn't quit, resign from Department, but you know, not really being forthcoming, and just trying to work my way over back to the Marine Corp. I was waiting on a package to come through.

(TI): Gotcha.

(CR): And I was a detective bureau. I, I got promoted to detective at the detective Bureau. Super young age. Became a detective bureau because of the incident, and that award.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): I remember coming home from, I was doing a surveillance that night, coming home, and the morning is September 11, and I hadn't went to sleep yet. Turn on the television, and seeing those, watching those planes fly into the World Trade Center buildings. I remember my wife and I sitting there and watching it. Just being in the Reserves, being in a unit like Third Force.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): You know, being a special operations guy, like, man my life's about to be a lot different.

(TI): I've heard, I've heard things from, you know, "I went straight to the Armory and started cleaning my weapon," to all sorts of stuff around that time.

(CR): It was a very motivated military, at that time. It was kind of a mess 'cause I left, I resigned right away. Went to the third force, went on active duty there. We thought we were deploying to Afghanistan immediately, and then I remember CO (Commanding Officer) call me and say, "Hey." He knew my situation. He's like, "Hey, I know you're about to quit. It doesn't look like we're getting deployed, and we're being so deflated," and then he told me that the federal marshals had 40, like 45 air marshals at the time.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And now, they got stood up to, I don't want to say the number, but a lot.

(TI): A lot, yeah.

(CR): They had to spin up a lot of air marshals to, to meet this, you know, mandate just, just to you know, be able to protect our airline, airliners, so.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): If you hire someone in a federal job and you have to get a top-secret clearance, it takes a while to hire someone, and so they made a smart play. They went to all their reserves, Special Operations Units: the SEAL unit, the Third Force Recon unit, 'cause they knew those guys had experience, and already had a top-secret clearance. And so, that was their play. So, they came to Third Force Recon company, and kind of did like a job fair thing there, and, and I was in the- I mean, it took like a month to get on. I was in Air Marshall Academy in, in November, uh, of 2001, and so I went there. I still, I was still in Third Force Reserves. Went there to the Air Marshalls, flew for, flew as a federal Air Marshall for a few months and then I became the head training officer for the field office. I was a training officer, and also flew in special missions, and then, obviously it sounds really cool for people that weren't an Air Marshall, but for me I'm like, "I want to go to Afghanistan, like I don't wanna be sitting on an airplane, in first class. . ."

(TI): Just waiting for something.

(CR): Yeah, just waiting for something. I wanna, I wanna, I mean, obviously every now and then we get to follow a bad guy and, but you know, there was just nothing was happening. So, so I, I am my deployment, I was doing a workup, so I started doing a workup for Iraq, not Afghanistan.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And we're all meeting Second Force Recon, and it was during that time I had opportunity to try out for JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command) Task Force, and because of my police officer experience, because I had my business degree, and a couple of things they were required for specific JSOC Task Force, I was told, I had a former buddy, who is a really close buddy, who is a former CAG (Combat Applications Group) Delta Force guy.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): He had the insight on it. He's like, "Yeah, I think you should try out for this," and so, I went to do this assessment and selection. You know, prepared myself for all the things you have to do for, you know, for assessment selection, for that type of, where are you gonna go try out for blue or green, or one of these JSOC Task Force

(TI): Yeah.

- (CR): And I got picked up. So, and I got picked up, and it was for Afghanistan and it was a part of their JSOC Task Force. I did my deployment in Afghanistan.
- (TI): At that point, were, was it like, hey, you're activated and you, you were, you were active duty from that on?
- (CR): Yeah, I was- well I'll get into specifics. I did start off as active duty, midway through.
- (TI): Okay.
- (RC): Midway through I, I, I ended up not- basically my time was up, and I didn't want to leave, and they wanted me there, so I just did a direct contract to my command. In those, in those communities, a lot of people could do that. When you say like a contract, it wasn't a security contractor. I had to basically, to your left and right's an active-duty guy, and the next guys contractor. In those units, they do stuff like that.
- (TI): Very good, very good, very good. Eight deployments as a, as a Force Recon Marine, you've talked openly how those deployments changed you.
- (CR): Yeah.
- (TI): You mind you mind sharing those. You mind sharing that with those that are listening right now.
- (CR): Yeah, so today, like what I do today, I do a lot of speaking on resiliency, spoken for over 150,000 active-duty troops on resiliency, and you know, one of the things I teach on a lot is the four pillars of resiliency. Every branch talks about four pillars of resiliency: mind, body, spirit, social. You're mentally tough, physically tough. Have a spiritual foundation, being a strong social network, surrounding myself with the right people, and I think there's a lot to those four pillars when you really think about it. Those four pillars, if they're, if you have a balance and equipped yourself in all four areas, you're going to be combat ready, warfighter, and then when you experience the things you experience as a war fighter. You're gonna build a bounce back. It doesn't mean you're not gonna be, it doesn't mean you're gonna be a, you know, immune to problems. It means when you have the problem, you're going to know where to recalibrate to, and how to re calibrate. So, so I think it's a lot to it, but, but the problem in the military is again, we do these, these kinda points at a surface level, mind, body spirit, kind of motivational things. Nobody talks about what they actually mean and not only what they mean, but implement them into your life, and so that's kind of what I do today. And the reason I do that today is 'cause, 'cause I, I feel like I was deficient in some of those areas and not only was I deficient, but I was kinda naive to believing that I was really ready. You don't know if you're ready for combat unless you experience combat, but you know, but other people, the generation before you could take some of those lessons and prepare.

You know, that's why I try to do today. You know, I remember- so, when I flew to Afghanistan the first time, I landed Bagram Air Base in the middle of the night, it was 2003, and so I was waiting for my point of contact and, and I was just kind of walking around our area and I walked out to the edge of the, the perimeter of the base, and I remember there were like Hesco barriers and some concertina wires on top, and it's like dark. There's no lights there. The lights are kinda facing out. Being it, remember like having this feeling, it feels like 29 Palms and kinda night air. I started thinking like, wow, like I'm not a young guy, I'm not, I'm not. I'm 29 years old now, so I already have like life experience. Police officer, you know, Force Recon, tons of school. Jump, die, freefall, like you know.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): I had a lot of training so; it wasn't like a kid going there. I'm like thinking like, all this training all this time, like, this is actually real. Like, I'm here in a combat zone and on the other side of these Hesco barriers is, is the Taliban. I see the enemy and before I leave here, we're gonna, I'm gonna face these, damn it, I'm gonna do what I've been trained to do, and what I was sent here to do, and it's like kind of a really like-

(TI): Very altruistic.

(CR): Yeah, it's like, it's really gonna happen. This isn't like training anymore, this is for real.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And I think anytime somebody, like, put themselves in that position and thinks about it, you have to ask yourself, "Am I ready? Am I ready to do what I was trained to do?" And I sat there on the edge of that Hesco barriers in the middle of the night, and I asked myself that question and I don't know if it came out in these terms, but, you know, I did like a self-inventory: mind body, spirit, social. You know, am I mentally tough enough to do this, am I physically tough enough to do this. Like check, check. Spiritually, you have a strong spiritual foundation. I had the word "Christian" stamped on my dog tags. So, like I had a faith, like, it's very surface level, to be honest with you, at the time. Socially, am I tier one Special Operations unit. I'm like with the best of the best, of course. I felt like I had all those areas checked. I think I, I made this decision 'cause my wife was like a really strong person of faith and she'd be calling me like, "I'm praying for you," and I'm like, "Who are you praying for? God's not here, like this place is like evil, you could feel in air," like for those who are listening, who's been Afghanistan before, like this, like presence like, like this, just kind of just like, dark, just presence of evil in that place, and I would tell my wife there's no God here. Like inside, that's like real cynical attitude. And I believe that early on I made this decision to think like, I have to do this hard job, I have to be this warrior, make these hard decisions and these decisions that have these kind of moral conflicts, and I have to choose

between being a person of faith, or being a warrior. And I believe that I made intentional decision to say, "I can do that when I get older." There's no place, so I intentionally put faith out of my life at a time and, and honestly, looking back, I think it left a giant hole inside of me that over the years, I feel like hate, rage, anger and bitterness. My experience, you know, different than a lot of people. I didn't live on a base, I lived out because the nature of my job as AFO, Advanced Push Operator, I do all the clandestine logistics and stuff like that for my, my operation my, my unit. Kind of pre-pre-assault work.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): We go out ahead usually with myself and local nationals, or like one or two other team members, and you know, run around the mountains and just build our, build a target and set up all the infrastructure to put squadron guys on targets. That's what I did.

(TI): Gotcha.

(CR): And so, living like that, living in, in, with the Afghan community and eating dinner with their families, and playing soccer with their kids, and really understanding like why we were there. Not just to retaliate for 9/11, but like to, to eradicate Taliban and help these oppressed people, I mean, a lot of people don't have the same experience with Afghans and be like, some of the Afghans there were patriots, they love there country. They wanted it back from the Taliban. The reason they hated Taliban was the ideology and oppression these people were under. The way they treated women.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): It was just, grotesque. I don't mean like, I don't mean like male chauvinist stuff, I mean like the physical abuse and stuff like that, and then the children, sexual abuse, sexual molestation of little boys and little girls like, all that stuff disgusted me, and then not only was a hearing it, but I was starting to see it. And so, I began to really hate, like have this hatred towards the Taliban and, and the people that hated the Taliban the worst was the Afghans. Obviously, they worked with it and endured that, and so I like, my unit and kind of Menatallium, was like this Viking war culture mentality, and you know, and you know which is very driven, very passionate. Any operation we were on, it was like we were gonna win. I mean, zero, zero fail mentality. We're gonna win and honestly, that mentality works really well in combat. We crushed; our unit crushed every operation we had.

(TI): Yeah, but you talked about, but you, but you talk about almost from, from that first time that you got there to your eighth deployment almost from you, you started altruistic, but almost became what you hated.

(CR): Yeah, I mean, um, just overtime you, I mean, I think you, you go to do something like that with a sense of nobility and, and like I mean, any

warrior should that serving their country, should have like compassion for people, a heart for people, a heart of service and, you know, you can't have that. Sometimes, it seems like you can't have that compassionate heart, while you're in the moment of doing that, because that compassion would compromise your ability to do your job. You just want to build a function, so you know, I believe, I believe in God, and I believe God created us in a certain way, and, and there's something that turns off inside of us through a limbic system that allows us to be able to do that job, be in the presence of evil and function in a way that, that in, in a way that is sustainable, and so that compassion kind of has a "no switches flip," and when it switches flip, you just don't feel anymore. You don't- I remember like you know, just seeing things and doing things and I'm like, that didn't bother me. Like they should bother me. They didn't, like what's wrong with me? That mentality, that lack of emotion, and lack of empathy, that is very necessary to function in combat, that those things that allow you to, that intensity allows you to be violent with the enemy, which is necessary.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Even, even all those things that are necessary, they're not normal, they're not normal and they're not natural.

(TI): You gotta build a "switch it." It's gotta be a switch.

(CR): In there lies a problem because, for me, being in that environment and having those necessary, you know, physiological or emotional like responses, you can't just flip the switch when you're home 24 hours later, 'cause that's literally how fast I'd be home, and my wife's picking me up from the airport and got my kids in the car, and now I'm supposed to just flip the switch and be like, you know, husband, father and Mr. Rogers, and friendly neighbor. Like I'm still like this angry, intense guy and, and my home, you know, the way I behaved was not a happy or safe place for my wife and children. I was, I was like very intense. I was very, you know, short like the, you know, wife and kids were walking around on eggshells where they say the wrong thing and I'd like to have a temper tantrum, and act like a 15-year-old child that throw things, break things, punch holes in the wall, slam doors, yell at them like a Marine Corp instructor. And I'm like self-justified. I'm like, "Well, this is who I am right now. Like I have to be this way because I'm gonna be back over there in three months. So, I have to be this way. So, sorry, like is what you have to deal with right now." That was, that was kind of my, my mentality, like this just way I am. And I remember one time, my wife and daughter was like, talking about like my daughter's birthday and, and I was gonna miss it. 'cause I was in Afghanistan, so my daughter like moved her birthday party for me to be home, and she was so happy that dad was home for her birthday. I was at her birthday party and it was going good, and I remember she's very opinionated, and now she's 22, she's even more opinionated. She, she like said she didn't like the icing on a birthday cake. Like something, like super simple, right? And I like just lost my mind. Grabbed the hand from the little girl's birthday cake. I

picked up her cake and threw it against the wall and destroyed my little girls' birthday.

(TI): Oh my gosh, how old was she?

(CR): She might have been 10 years old? And I remember thinking like, "Like what kind of person, like what kind of dad, behaves that way?" You know, like that was one example. Like many moments I behaved that way, and in those moments, I, I'm the dumb guy. I knew I was out of control. Like I wasn't naive, I knew I was out of control, but if I stopped, like that ball from rolling, then I'd be admitting that there's a problem.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And so, it stopped. So, I started kind of recognizing how bad it was and so, instead of fixing the problem, you know, just really justified, I have to be this way right now, so I'm just gonna isolate myself from them and stay as busy as I can so. You got school you got to go to, I got deployment, training I can go to. I can go to. Another deployment I can go, somebody, somebody need a, somebody need to come home for 10 days, I'll go and fill in for 10 days. Like, that was, stay as busy as I could.

(TI): I think you're picking on like the reason a lot of guys talk about the need to go back.

(CR): Sure.

(TI): You watch *The Hurt Locker* and he's there getting milk and for him it's just like, you know, in the movie it's kinda, it kinda displayed that, that feeling of "I need to get back," because he couldn't turn it off. And you're very, you're very open with that. I gotta be honest.

(CR): It, it just feels easier to be honest with you.

(TI): What did, what did your PTSD physically feel like when it came?

(CR): Yeah, so originally you know all this was anger, frustration, those types of things. That was their original- by delaying those things and not dealing with them because that's what I did. I said, you know, "We'll sort this out later, like right now, I have a job to do. We'll sort this out later." So, you know, that's kinda look back in my story and I have this pattern of delaying things like, like, "I'm going to solve this later. Like, I don't have to do this right now," and by not, by not addressing it when it started with the, with anger and frustration 'cause that's where it started for me. By not addressing it, it began to manifest in these other, other symptoms that I know to be, you know, symptoms of PTSD. It started to happen, manifesting- my arms would go numb. That was kinda first experience, like, feel like my hands and arms would go numb when I get, when I get like really frustrated or anxious. And then it would kind of progress to my face. My cheeks, like, might go flesh and numb.

(TI): Did that concern you when you started experiencing that?

(CR): At first, I was like, "I'm just worked up," you know. Like a blood boiling worked up.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): But I think when it really started concerning me was when, I know it's progressed really quickly. I think when it really started concerning me was when my throat would feel like it was swelling shut, and I couldn't breathe, and I feel like I had like a thousand-pound weight on my chest. Like, I'm like, "Somethings wrong." Like, I feel like I'm about to have a heart attack, I'm gonna stroke out or have a heart attack. A 30-year-old guy.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): I'm super athletic and, so, somethings wrong, and you know, I start researching. Like, what's, what's wrong with me. These are all signs of- I'm having panic. I'm starting to have like early onset panic, not full-blown panic attacks at that time. Now I know what panic attacks really are, but these are like, you know, some, some, some of the symptoms of panic attacks and, and so, again, instead of like, just like the anger, frustration, instead of dealing with it then, let me, I could deal with this later. Like, if I say something right now, all my peers are going to think I'm weak. They're gonna push me out of my job. I have a TS/SCI (Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information) clearance. I'm gonna get read out, like, if I get mental health, any kind of mental health treatment, like, I'm not going to do my job anymore, so.

(TI): That was definitely a stigma back in the day. Absolutely.

(CR): It was. This is, this was, you know, at the time when this started is probably like 2006. You know, I had already had a couple of deployments in 2005. I started 2006 was when, when it really getting bad.

(TI): Was it a major factor of why you got out in 2007?

(CR): No, no, it was the factor. Yeah, it was, it was, it was, it was the reason. When I say I started to get worse, like, I started having these moments to where I was like waking up at like during very intense moments in Afghanistan. It was like I wake up in a dream.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): It was like I dreamt what just happened, and you had this thing called disassociation where you're, I didn't call until I looked, researched it forever to find out what is called. Disassociation: that's when you're in such intense environment, your body doesn't remember things in real

time. You almost like remember things like in delay and you see yourself in third person. So, I was having some very strong physiological effects to the intensity that was involved in, and then towards the end, latter part of my time, 12 guys that were, 10 of them that were killed were Afghans, and you know, maybe a lot of people listening without the same experience that I have might not think this is big of deal for Afghans, my team to be killed, these guys were, these guys were my brothers. You know, these were the guys, these were the guys I was in their homes, living in their homes, and had relationship swith their wives and kids. Man, these guys were patriots, they were my friends, and I was with them for like three years. So, these were long, very solidified relationships. Kind of of rela-relationships you forge in combat.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And they would have died for me, and I would've died for them. In fact, they died for me, and I was responsible for them. So, if I was hanging on by a thread in that moment, that thread was snapped, and I continued to operate- there was a last mission I went out on. I was with, uh, by myself with some local nationals, and it was two weeks long. When I came back from this two weeklong operation, like, I, it was like I woke up and could just recollect it. And I realized it was just some things that I did that didn't only put myself in danger, but put other people in danger, as well, and when I came to that conclusion, I said, "I have to say something." And so, I spoke up and I was, I was brought home, and I was put before a clinical psychologist and diagnosed with PTSD, and that's when, you know, everything changed for me.

(TI): What was it like getting out in 2007. That was right before the Great Recession, right?

(CR): Yeah, and you know, like I said, for me it wasn't a transition 'cause at that time in 2007, I wasn't on active duty anymore. I had a contract in my command. So, it was just like December. There wasn't like a slow process of going to win the Battalion or- I was just, I was just done.

(TI): So, so, those special op- so at that time, there was no taps for you. There was no, it was just like your contracts it. That's it?

(CR): Yeah, they will take care of me, though. Obviously, at the moment, I wasn't in the best state of mind, so I was like, didn't feel like they did things the right way, but they, looking back, they did. I mean, I had a major like, our process with like, when it comes to my clearance, like being read out, polygraph interviews. Like all kind of stuff like that to make sure. So, that was like, going, being in this situation at that time, it was, it was terrible to endure that, but it was the right thing to do and they made sure I had like the very best psychologist that I could have to take care of me. So, they, they did. They did the right think, took care of me, you know. And, but I mean when you're in a program like that, that has like a red end, have a clearance, like all my peers, the only friends I had in the world, at the time, was guys I worked with.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): You know, I was cut off from them, and so, that was really hard. And like, people talk about panic attacks all time. I always hear people say like, "I was in traffic the other day and it was so much traffic and I had a panic attack," and not to minimize anybody's experience, but like, the level of panic attacks I'm talking about when I was, like, if you're like lit on fire and you just burn and you never die. Like if you, like if you were drowning in a swimming pool, like you're handcuffed to the drain of a swimming pool, and you're drowning and you could see like air, like, how desperate would you be to fight of that breath of air?

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): But you never drown, you never die. Like 24/7, in that state of panic. That's the level of panic attacks I'm talking about. So, I was dealing with that, and on top of that, I was dealing with, I can't even explain the level of shame that I had, like I didn't belong- that task force that I was on, I, I never felt to deserve to be there. I worked my butt off to be. Marine, make it to Recon, make it to Force, and you know, but when I went to JSOC Task Force, I was a Force Recon Reservist. I was like, not only was I a Reservist, but I was the youngest guy. So, like, all my peers were like active-duty Dev group guys.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Delta force guys. I was like, "Why they pick me?" And I always say that, probably reason they picked me 'cause I'm willing to work the hardest, but they picked me, and I was like, and never felt like, always felt like just super privileged to be there. So, I really dealt with a lot of shame, like, I wasn't trusted with this, and I let people down.

(TI): Yeah, but you did eight deployments man. Like that's, that's not- eight deployments-

(CR): Yeah, I know that now.

(TI): Yeah, but in the moment, you, you feel the sham-shame and the guild, and I think anyone that gets out can relate to all of that, you know. At any level, I think if they got out of Med Board Separation, or if, if they got out for any reason, they can, they can, you know, I should've done 20- people have to understand you're one percent of the American population, less than one percent of the American population. You volunteered to do this stuff. Did you start Brazilian Jiu Jitsu while you were in, or did you really dive into it at this point to try to, to try to. . .

(CR): Yeah, it was, it was a diving into it. You know, I say when I'm always speaking. I did martial arts since I was little, but I'm still little.

(TI): [Laughter]

I started about five years old, so I, I didn't start Brazilian Jiu Jitsu when I was five years old, I started, I think I originally started Karate and Judo, and then traditional Japanese Jujutsu. So, these are all things that start when I was very young.

(TI): Gotcha.

(CR): So, in 1996 I started Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and so, while I was going to Afghanistan, I was already, I was already a brown belt. I was already professional fighter.

(TI): I see some of your profiles. You go all the way back to '99.

(CR): Yeah.

(TI): So, you're MMA career obviously had to crisscross your military career.

(CR): It did, yeah it did. It was something I just, I mean, like I know a lot of people dive in and fighting's all they do, but to me, it was, it was something I did my whole life and competed my whole life, so. It was kind of very natural transition for me like my wife and the counselors, like, "Hey, you need to do something. You can't just sit at home and let your mind spin. You gotta get out and do something. So, get on the mats and train." And, and I didn't want to 'cause I felt like anything physical that got my heart rate up would like kill me.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): That's what I believed at the time, but I got on the mats the first time, and started training Jiu Jitsu again. I felt like I found the cure.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): To this PTSD thing because you can't, you can't focus on, like, things that give you stress, anxiety and do Jiu Jitsu 'cause your buddy's gonna-

(TI): Choke you out.

(CR): You gotta pay attention. Your buddy's gonna choke you out, you gotta pay attention, gotta be focused and so, so it's like, it's like something that allows you to unplug from the world. You would be present.

(TI): Yeah

(CR): And, and I, I believe there's a lot to say for physical activities and people that are dealing with- the problem is that you can't do it 24/7.

(TI): Sure.

(CR): I tried to do it 24/7.

(TI): Yeah. Is that what you were doing? 24/7?

(CR): I mean, I mean, that's what people do like. "Oh wow, this is a cool activity. This feels really good," and so, it takes your mind off things. And there's a lot of things that take your mind off of things. Drugs, alcohol. . .

(TI): Career.

(CR): Physical activity, careers. Yeah, so, so that's exactly what I did. Some people would comment about of alcohol or drugs, or focus on- I just dove into that, and, and, you know, put a lot of time into it and start fighting again, opened a school. I end up putting 1,000 students in my school in that period, like three years, which is like. . .

(TI): Wow.

(CR): Made you make a lot of money.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): I had like professional success there, and then I started fighting again. I ended up 18 and two as a pro. I won the World Title belt. I was ranked number six in the world as a professional flyweight, MMA fighter. Fought on all the big shows: Pay Per View, Showtime. . .

(TI): You know, one problem at the time during the height of your career, is that UFC didn't have a Flyweight division until 2011.

(CR): Yeah.

(TI): Now it's, it's, it's towards the end of your career, but you were around for UFC at the time. Many others in the media were writing about, you know. *Yahoo News*, I think I saw a story. I think *Sherdog* did a story, and you look at, you look at Tim Kennedy, Brian Stann, who was maybe a little younger at the time. Randy Couture, you know, they all had pretty good runs in their later years. Why do you think it ultimately did not come to pass?

(RC): Yeah, I think things happen for reason. So, when I fought in Strikeforce, you know, I had, I was undefeated, I had a great record. I was a, I was 16 and zero, and you know, lot of people would have been like- I was number one Flyweight in the U.S., or number six in the world, and I should have, you know, if anything, if anybody should have a shot to go to UFC and, and initial Flyweight division, it should've been me.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And I was Strikeforce, and, and Sean Shelby, who is the matchmaker, and, um, and he was talking about, he was talking about you know, styles

and styles of fights. At that time, everybody was striking. There was a lot of striking and stuff like that, get in the middle of the rin- that's when everybody- if you watch fights now, there's a handful of guys get into the ground scrapple. You're probably looking at, you know, four-ounce glove boxing match. You kind of looking at UFC now.

(TI): It's funny, 'cause you're talking about, you talking 'bout striking back then, but now you look at the greatest fighter that's being celebrated that's retiring, is Khabib.

(RC): Is a grappler.

(TI): Is a grappler.

(RC): Yeah, grappler.

(TI): Is a grappler, you know?

(RC): That me, I mean, Khabib's my style. That's what love and, and uh, you know Sean Shelby was a matchmaker for the UFC. UFC owned Strikeforce when I, when I was on contract there. So, I had a Zuff contract.

(TI): Gotcha.

(CR): And, and so, I had one fight, and I'm like, "Hey, I should have a four-fight deal. Go over to UFC." And Sean Shelby was like, "Well, no one wants to see people drag each other to the ground." And I'm like, "Well do your job. My jobs to win fights. Your jobs to put in front of me I can't take down." He didn't like that.

(TI): Gotcha.

(CR): I said that in front of people, and people were like, "Yo, I thinks that's Tim." Whoo, Tim Kennedy. In front of Time Kennedy. He got embarrassed and turned red. He didn't like me after that point. Even Dana White, Dana White's like, "Why aren't you in UFC," to my manager. My managers like, "Yeah, that's why we're asking." He's like, "Oh, we'll send you over a contract, standby," and Sean Shelby intervened. Sean didn't like me, and so, after Strikeforce, I fought for the *Bellator*, the Bellator belt. I fought Zach Makovsky at the main even at *Bellator*. I mean, I was the very best I had to offer. I was, when you fight, you're always like, "Oh, I could have did better, or had this going on," but honestly, that was like, that was the best I had, and Zach was just better that day.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And he's one of the most incredible fighters in the world.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And I went up in weight, in 135, and he was just, he was just, he's a World Greco champion wrestler. He's just a terror of a wrestler. Got grappled and he beat me, and so no, no excuse. I actually won my favorites fights and my first loss. And I remember talking to, actually talk to Sean Shelby after, and he's like, "Yeah, Zach's tough. No strikes against you there." And then I, and then I had a rebound fight against a guy named Jonathan Mackles. He has a great record. I think he's 15 and two.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And I, but I, you know, I'm pretty confident. I beat him 99 times out of 100. I kind of slipped on a banana peel and lost a fight that night, and so, I lost two in a row and, and I think that shut the door. That was the time that UFC was doing the, the-

(TI): Tournament?

(CR): Tournament.

(TI): Yeah, yeah.

(CR): This, this sucks because I should- that Makovskyw fight was cool, losing that fight. This one, I, I should've won, and it really ate at me, but I'm like, that doors being closed because if I would have went to UFC at that moment, I might not have been able to put the energy into *Mighty Oaks* like I did.

(TI): Good.

(CR): And it required my energy so, I'm thankful I didn't go that time. I ended up having two more fights in the early days of *Mighty Oaks*. Both, they gave me some attention.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Some public, you know, gave me some PR (public relations). Fought Joseph Sandoval and legacy. He was a UFC; he just came out of UFC.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Beat him in 58 seconds. It was his first fight out of the UFC, and then uh, and then I fought Andrew Yates at *World Series of Fighting* on *NBC Sports*. Andrew Yates was kind of up and coming. I think he's like, I think Andrew Yate's is like 10 and two now, or something like that.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): But he-

(TI): Still a good record.

(CR): Yeah, he was eight and oh, or seven and oh, or eight and oh, at the time. You know, upcoming, tough kid, and he was 24. I was 38, so. That was my last fight. It was a good, I had a good run.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Really, really happy with how, how it went. That door being closed for UFC, which probably left the right thing, at the right time.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): For me to do, you know. Being a fighter's great. I'm proud of it, I love it, but what I do at *Mighty Oaks* is way, way, way more important.

(TI): I can totally understand that and totally see that. I just think, I just think UFC missed the boat. You know? You look at Randy Couture's late run. You know, Brian Stann, he was in the WS- I'm talking about veterans that have been in the UFC. Brian Stann, he was in the WC (World Championship Fighting) and had a relatively short run in the UFC, but you look at afterwards, them two, plus Tim Kennedy, you look at the ambassadorship that they brought to the table between the military, and, and mixed martial arts. I think they missed the boat Chad. Think they did.

(CR): Yeah.

(TI): [Laughter]

(CR): Thank you.

(TI): Absolutely, I, okay. So, real quick about the career if there's one fighter in the Flyweight division that you wish you could've gotten it on with, who would have been?

(CR): Demetrius Johnson. He's the best in the world. I mean, if I'm gonna, I'm gonna take my time to compete against someone, I want to compete against the best. I've always wanted to compete against the best guys, and I think Demetrius Johnson is the best Flyweight fighter, in the world. Still think he is. Especially stylistically, I would love to compete against him.

(TI): Yeah, he's an exciting fighter, and of course being from Washington state, I'm a little bit thrilled by Demetrius.

(CR): He's just a good human being too.

(TI): Yeah.

- (CR): I like, I like competing with good people. I'm a martial artist and many of you watched Justin Gaethje, and it could be his time, it can be him on the ground crying and Gaethje just got choked out. Lost, you know, lost the chance to be world champion, and he goes over to him and says, he leans over to put his arms around him while he's crying and says, "Hey, sorry 'bout you dad, and he would be proud of you right now." How awesome was that?
- (TI): Yeah, that's just something you don't see in a lot of other sports. The honor in fighters. You know?
- (CR): Yeah.
- (TI): That's, that's one thing I think military members can identify with when, when talking about MMA. You know, I, I see a lot of guys go from a pro career, you know, good fighters that I know from back home, yet they never made that jump to, to, you think, you know, I think after they make, you maintain 10 fights or so from the regionals to the national ones. What is it? How do you make that jump? Is it, is it quality of opponents? Is it an agent? Social media, a combo?
- (CR): Sometimes it's just time. The right place at the right time. I mean, sometimes it's just what it is.
- (TI): Yeah.
- (CR): I mean, nowadays, it's your following. You know, with the world of social media and your ability to build your own social following.
- (TI): Yeah.
- (CR): I think, I think that's what it is more than anything, and how do you do your following, what you're following. It's not always a quality opponent, sometimes it's a quality opponent, but your following is based on your style. Like, are you gonna go out there and just win, or are you gonna go out there and, you know, knock people's walk off? Are you gonna submit everyone? I mean for me, it was you know, I'm 18 and two. That's professional. I have 17 submissions. So, being a Jiu Jitsu guy, I always joke like, I hate MMA. I say it every time. I hate MMA, I'm just a Jiu Jitsu guy trying to submit MMA players.
- (TI): Looking back, MMA, Jiu Jitsu, was it good for your PTSD or was it a band aid?
- (CR): Jiu Jitsu is a great thing for you. Jiu Jitsu and any, any physical outlet. It's a great thing for PTSD. I mean, working with veterans, like I do every day, right now is extremely stressful.
- (TI): Yeah.

(CR): And when I had a bad day at the office. I go to the gym and I find some 20-year-old stud and go choke him out.

(TI): [Laughter]

(CR): Makes me feel better. So, it's still a good part of my life, and you know. I'm a third-degree black belt. I'm about to get my fourth degree from Carlos Gracie Junior. I was with Carlos Gracie Junior an hour just yesterday, and I'm about to be a fourth-degree black belt, and it's a big part of my life. I love it. I still have hard days sometimes.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And I, and I, Jiu Jitsu is a big part of my, my plan to keep myself on track.

(TI): Very good.

(CR): But I understand now that, that we talk about those pillars; mind, body, spirit, social, we have to have all four of them. And so, I'm not just relying on Jiu Jitsu. I'm not just relying on medication. I'm not just relying on my friends and people around me; you know.

(TI): More of a holistic

(CR): The spiritual pillar is a big part, too. All those things together are so important and, and, and I'll self-inventory my life sometimes and say, "Hey, where am I strong? Where am I weak in this area? I need to be more intentional about strengthening it." It's like having a, a table with four legs. You could pull one of those legs out and it might balance, but as soon as you put weight on it, it's gonna fall over.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): On the surface, everything looked good, but I never dealt with those things. I was still having panic attacks; I was still having nightmares and sleepless nights. I was still, ty-tyrant to my wife and kids, an- so I never actually got better, and um. . .

(TI): You had a very successful record, like you said, 18 and two. I guess some top guys, our did all these things, but like you said, you, you talk about that time very differently than what many people would think.

(CR): I think it's, it's the same like so many people. Like that time, when I was winning those fights and when I won the Legacy- actually I was the first one to win Legacy, Legacy FC belt, you know when I fought Strikeforce. The highest point in my professional life was the lowest point of a personal life. I mean, I, I finished at Strikeforce Fight, and I, I, fought on *Showtime* in front of 10,000 people in the Toyota Center. I mean, I don't know how many people watched on television, in front of 10,000 people there, everyone would have thought, you know, "Wow, this is gonna be

an exciting night for this guy.” I drove home to my apartment and, and that was the night that I made a decision to take my life. I, I was separated from my wife and children. We decided we're getting divorced. We sold our home. We live in two separate apartments and you know, essentially, I abandon my family 'cause I don't want to deal with the situation we're in anymore, you know, just three year downward spiral, just hit. . . You know, I made a decision at night that, that my family would be sad without me, but they would be better off, and you know, for everybody listening, I think that thought, my family be sad without me. My friends would be sad, without me. My loved ones, the world would be sad without me, but they'd be better off. And unfortunately, that same hopeless thought finds a home in hearts of 20 plus veterans every single day.

(TI):

Yeah.

(CR):

And, and, and I don't think a lot of veterans take their lives because they think they want to end their pain. They want to spare the people around them, the pain. They think they're doing a service to others and that's what I believed. I wasn't gonna like to cry out for help or say anything. I didn't want anybody to, I didn't want anybody to intervene. It was a pretty firm decision. I would sit in my closet, in my apartment, by myself and my family pictures on the floor, around me, and just stare at those pictures and try to build up the courage. I had a Glock 22 pistol, 40 caliber pistol and I put that pistol to my head and try to build up the courage to pull the trigger, and you know, I, I don't know if I had the courage to pull the trigger. Obviously, I've seen what guns could do and I know what happens in the trigger breaks. Mostly, I don't know if I had the courage 'cause I didn't do it, but every time I put that pistol to my head, had a, I had this overwhelming thought that'd come over me and it would happen every time. The only person that had a key to my apartment at the time was my son Hunter. One that is a Marine now. And, um, and I remember thinking like, “I can't let my son find me this way, or be a part of finding me this way,” and I'd pump the breaks, but the next day I'd be back at it, again. One morning I was, I was in the closet and had that pistol and my wife, pretty much unwittingly saved my life. She knocked on my door and when she knocked on my door of the apartment, I wasn't going to answer 'cause I just heard a knock, and I kinda was ignoring it. And then she, like, kind of panicky announced herself. When she did, I, I had that pistol, and this is my closet, my apartment, but she would never went in there, but for some reason when I, when I heard her voice, I hid that, I hid my pistol under a blanket. Probably 'cause of shame. I don't know. That's what I did, and I got to the door. I mean, start talking, we got into this big argument. Anyway, this argument she asked me a question that radically changed my life. She asked me how I could do everything I did. We were 17, 18 when we met. “Like, how could you do everything you did in the Marine Corp, become a Recon Marine, like all these training and school.” She's like, she's kind of naming stuff and she's like cutting, fights with me. You got to think what she'd seen in the fight. The discipline it took to- I lose like 35 pounds making way for these fights, looking like a Holocaust victim.

- (TI): Yeah.
- (CR): Bones in my face. Like so much discipline getting ready for these fights.
- (TI): Dedication, commitment, she's called that, yeah.
- (CR): She's like, "How can you do all of that, and when it comes to your family, you'll quit," and you know, I don't know about the listeners on here, but there's no more soul cutting word to me than be called a quitter. And she'd been, she was absolutely right. The things I had been successful at, professional. I've been, uh, I had been successful at a lot of things, professionally, but it came to the most important things: being a husband, being a father, being a young 17-year-old kid that raised his hand, and said he wanted to do something important with his life. I quit on all those things. I quit on my own will to live. So, at that moment, made it pretty radical decision that I was going to turn things around. I didn't know how to do it, but I knew I couldn't do it alone, and I knew I couldn't do it with the people I surround myself by. And my wife, she was going to church and I said, "Hey, is there like some guy at this church you could introduce me to-" I didn't care about anybody of faith at that time. I just wanted somebody I could, you know, help hold me accountable. Somebody outside of my peer's circle that could help hold me accountable. Decision to pull things together, and so she introduced me to this guy named Steve Sterothin. I remember we met at a Starbucks coffee shop and, and when we met, I had written like a five-paragraph order, like operation order. How I was going to fix my life. It was really good; I was really proud of it. I like smugly slid it over to him, and he, he, he a, didn't even read it. He put his hand on it, slid back over to me, and told me I was gonna fail. I remember being really offended, you know, 'cause I was like, one, I was super proud of it 'cause of my arrogance.
- (TI): Spent some time on it too. Five paragraph word is no joke, you know.
- (CR): I wanted him to show it to my wife 'cause I'm trying to win her back now, you know.
- (TI): Yeah.
- (CR): And, I'm being manipulative there, and, but she, he slid it over to me. I will never forget what he did. He tapped on, he, he put his finger and tapped on it, and he said, "If this thing has nothing to do with your relationship with God, I'm not gonna waste your time. I'm not gonna let you waste mine." If you remember earlier when we were talking, talked about that spiritual pillar being a really weakness in my life.
- (TI): Yeah.
- (CR): I, I think deep down I knew that and, you know, I'm not coming on your show to preach or anything like that.

(TI): No.

(CR): But I can't really tell you my story without telling that piece of me.

(TI): I've had a lot of veterans, lately, talk pretty openly about their faith.

(CR): Yes.

(TI): No matter what faith it is, now, we do have a center of Faith and Opportunity Initiative.

(CR): Yeah,

(TI): And they're doin- here at the VA, and their, their directors a marine.

(CR): Oh yeah. Conrad Washington.

(TI): Oh, you know Conrad?

(CR): Yeah.

(TI): Yeah, he's in my office.

(CR): Yeah, Conrad's amazing, yeah.

(TI): Yeah. We even broke down that, his office, here in, on the podcast so, it's, it's in archive's, so take a look. If anybody is interested, but you know, the VA has Chaplin's, you know, the faith has been a running theme on the podcast late- and I think it's cool that the VA has recognized and is taking a more positive approach, and how they view faith and healing one's injuries.

(CR): Well, I've been a big advocate for that, and I could tell you some things in the back end, we can, we kind of been, one of the moving forces we're working with Conrad to do that.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Because, because of this. I'm in that situation, Steve's telling me I'm gonna fail and I tried everything. I had tried the, I had been on pills, medication and like- I have been to counseling programs and all these programs to, and even had, you know, professional success in life. I tried everything everything I tried didn't work. It was time for me to try something different. So, I trusted this guy Steve. I made it like a faith decision to surrender my life to Christ as a Christian, and beyond that decision, Steve mentored me for an entire year on Biblical manhood and, and what they mean, just like, just really teaching me how to make life choices in response to, to the, the hardships of life and the things that had happened to me. The kind of conclusion I came, too, and it may seem simple to a lot of people, but to me it was big kind of epiphany is that I

came to this realization that all these bad things that happen to me, you know, you heard some bad things happen in my life. Like, despite all those things that happen to me, those things did not lead me to be in that closet with the pistol in my hand.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): What led me there were the choices that I made in response to those things. And so, I had the ability to make a different choice moving forward and, and as cliché as it might sound, I realized I didn't have to let my past define my future. I could choose a different future, and I did. And in a decision to do that, it being intentional about calibrating my life to the life that I believe I was created to live, things begin to radically change for me. I found restoration in my marriage and my family, and home brokenness. I found hope for the first time in a long time, and ultimately found with a, you know, I think we see our whole life, and probably most of the military's purpose. We were created to have purpose. If you wonder why the military veterans take their lives at, rate of 20 something a day, it's not because of what they seen or did. It's because they had purpose, they had a mission. They had a reason to wake up every day and one day, they woke up and felt like that was gone. Purpose was gone.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Without purpose, we kind of wither up and die, and one of my favorite quotes is Mark Twain. He says, "The two most important days in a person's life. The day that they're born and the day they find out why they died."

(TI): People talk about purpose and a lot of MMA fighters think that purpose is, is fighting, but, you know, just like the Marine Corp, an athlete's career is going to come to an end. So, your last fight was in 2013 and you, and you came into your own personal journey between you and your faith, and it seems like it's tur- it's help you turn to the next chapter in life. I mean, you're busy, man. I, I see on social media. I'm just happy I was able to lock you down so I can make this birthday episode. You're writing books too, which came out in 2017. You're touring, speaking, you have your own podcast. You're running on profit like you mentioned, the *Mighty Oaks* Warrior programs. Real quick, what mission are you on with all of these things?

(CR): My mission is, I mean, my mission is Recon Marine, and was serve other people. And my mission today at *Might Oaks* Foundation is to still serve other people. I mean, it's a different mission, different way to serve, it way to serve, but the battle is, I don't think that there's been a greater battle that I've been a part of, I mean the care for veterans and out military wars, who served our country. The fact that they're killing themselves after 20 years after war and terror. And, you know, still some from the Vietnam era that are not finding the same hope and restoration I

found. I, I feel obligated that my service is to share, to pay forward and that's what I've committed my life to.

(TI): Gotcha. It's called *Mighty Oaks Warrior Programs*. "Program" with a plural.

(CR): Yes.

(TI): What are some of the programs and is this what you talk about on your podcast?

(CR): Yeah, well, we have two podcasts. One for *Mighty Oaks: the Mighty Oaks Show*, there's a situation report, but, you know, the, the foundation is, was set up to do two things. One is, one is the "Resiliency Effort" to where I go speak to active-duty troops around the world, and I've spoken to 150,000 bases around the world. Giveaway about 100,000 books. We speak on the topics, you know, pillars of resiliency, spiritual resiliency, PTSD suicide awareness, and we've been very blessed to, you know, speak at Marine Corp boot camp every quarter, and very blessed to have the opportunity to speak to active-duty troops. And, we have recovery programs. We have four ranches around the country: California, Ohio, Virginia and Texas, and we fly, we pay for everything. The program, the flights, everything. We pay for active-duty troops, veterans and spouses. We even take care of first responders. Bringing these programs, they're six day intensive. There's peer to peer mentorship program and they're all faith based. I mean, we have all kinds of folks. We have atheists and everybody come, but it is a Christian program.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): But we have a, we've had 4,000 graduates from this program. It's extremely successful. In fact, the VA is, the VA is, we're working on a MOU (Memorandum of understanding) at the VA right now, and the VA's actually working with us to do an evidence study.

(TI): I saw that I saw that and actually read the press release last- on a previous episode.

(CR): Yeah, so we've become evidence-based treatment and so we've had a lot of success. I mean, for military, all four branches of the military, some people in active duty do it and it says a lot by itself, and we pay for everything. We just working with the VA to try to make it available to people through the VA, but one of the third things I do a lot is the advocacy stuff. For the last years, I've been working with the current Presidential administration, I've testified before Congress, and I've been working directly with Pam Powers, who's Deputy Secretary, of the VA.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Conrad, and I've worked on a lot of legislation and work to the president to sign an executive order to bring opportunity initiative back in the VA, and so, we have the opportunity of faith initiative back with the Presidents prevents. Which is the President road map to empower veterans in a national tragedy and veteran suicide soon.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Pain includes faith-based programs and so, working with the implementation of that through the faith-based Veterans Service Alliance, which is a Whitehouse initiative, which I'm the chairman of.

(TI): Oh, wow.

(CR): Just get faith programs back on the table. I mean, it doesn't mean it needs to replace anything, I believe that there is a very real need for mental health programs. You know, the VA does a good job of healing the mind and body, but you know, truth is, it's PTSD. For the most part, is, is a black trauma to the soul and a spiritual wound requires a spiritual solution, and so, they may not be for everyone, but it has to be an option on the table.

(TI): It's a tool, it's a tool in the toolkit, you know?

(CR): Veterans deserve the choice to choose to do that if they wanted.

(TI): Yeah, and we've seen a lot of things changed within the VA recently. Last year, they re-permitted religious literature, civils and displays. VA facilities to protect that religious liberty for veterans and back in January, there was a proposal rule to remove regulatory barriers allowing religious and non-religious organizations. Equal treatment in VA social service programs, you know, funding and whatnot.

(CR): It's done a great job.

(TI): I think it was open for open comments back in February, and I think we're going to see if there's going to be a solid change coming on that soon, but I think that's, that's still in process, so there's some things with, with faith based to add that tool back to that, you know it, back into the VA's toolkit. I didn't know you were that involved in the VA with that, you know. I, I that was not part of my research before this interview.

(CR): Well, I mean, um, you know, because of the success that we've had with *Mighty Oaks*, it becomes a great illustration of, "Hey, this works." It works it's; you know, it helps a lot of people. We have so many people have been to so many different programs. Clinical programs that, even like size month inpatient programs, nothing changed their life and they come spend six days with us, and their lives are radically changed.

(TI): Is there a focus on the family in that? You know you talked about, you know you and your wife have gone through a journey.

- (CR): Yeah.
- (TI): Is there a focus on that with, for the, for the military, veterans and military communities and first responders? As far as that aspect of the healing.
- (CR): Yeah, we, we have a spouse's program and then we, we kind of treat our spouses with the same care and service that we do our veterans. And then when they, when one of the, either the veteran or active duty, or the spouse goes through program, then we even cover training. We have partnership with, with family life to, to cover marriage training. So, we, we do that as well.
- (TI): Very good.
- (CR): We haven't done a family camp yet. We want to, but man, we're so, we're so, so busy. Like, even though we did 4,000 veterans through our, through our core program, our legacy program at our ranches. We've done 4,000 in 10 years, we're in track this year to do a thousand per year.
- (TI): Wow.
- (CR): So, super committed to that. That's our primary focus. Secondary would be the resiliency, training and advocacy work.
- (TI): Very good. So, you're also a writer, writing. You know, we've had a lot of writers in our, in our archives here at *Borne the Battle*. Heck, even Dale Dye, our birthday guest from last year, you know. He's known as an actor, but he's written numerous books, both fiction and nonfiction. What do you write and why do you write it?
- (CR): So, I've written, I've written, couple of the giveaway books I do is the truth about PTSD. Kind of what PTSD is, what's it's not. A lot of people diagnosed with it, but never told what it is, and understand what actually goes on in your body. Not write from so much of a Christian perspective, but from a creation perspective. The human body functions through PTSD by design, so books, you know, one of the ones we give away a lot of, and then *Path to Resiliency* is kind of that spiritual resiliency pillar.
- (TI): So, you got, you almost got, you almost got like a science, science, you know, on the science of PTSD, and then it's almost on the, on the spiritual part of PTSD.
- (CR): Yes, *Path to Resiliency* is one that, it's one that we give away every recruit in the Marine Corp, recruit training.
- (TI): Very good.

(CR): At least on the west coast right now. So, *Path to Resiliency*, and then we have a third part of that series coming out called, *Suicide, Not the Solution*. Those three books are mainly our giveaways, and then I've written several others, but, but the main one is *An Unfair Advantage*, and *An Unfair Advantage* is my story. So, I tell stories from Afghanistan, MMA, and kinda life stories in every chapter that have a story, and the parallel story of a biblical, some kind of biblical history that really inspired and encouraged me. So, like it brings a life lesson, too, and *An Unfair Advantage* is like the advantage we find in a life of faith. Very strong faith base, very raw, real stories in my life in Afghanistan, MMA, and life, and how I, how- I said I don't have my life figured out yet, so I'm still journeying. Some of the lessons I've, some of the lessons I've learned. And the cool thing about *An Unfair Advantage*, the new, there was an old version when it first came out, and then we just got published and it just released in October 6. Hit number one bestseller on *Amazon*, by the way.

(TI): Oh, that sounds great. Congratulations. You know, I ask every writer this, any, any veteran, that, that's looking to get into the writing game?

(CR): Yeah.

(TI): What's one piece of advice you'd tell them?

(TI): You just have to start. I mean, um, sounds, that sounds so simply, but I know so many people that are, that are known for like, years like, 10 years like, "I'm gonna write a book, I'm gonna write a book, I'm gonna write a book." You start writing a book, you know, you just start. You start, you know, right where you are, writing and you know, publishing- if you're going to try publishing book, you can write the most brilliant content in the world, and not get published.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): So, if you want to publish a book, you gotta build a platform or else the publisher won't look at you right now 'cause everyone writes books.

(TI): Is, is, is self-publishing, you think, could also be a way to also build a platform?

(CR): It is. I mean, it's. . . So, *An Unfair Advantage* just got a publishing deal, and with Bradstreet Publishing. I just got a second deal with Thomas Nelson and Harper Collins, which is the biggest one, biggest publishers in the world.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): But, before I got those deals with those publishers, I sold probably 100,000 at my speaking tables.

(TI): Wow.

(CR): *An Unfair Advantage*, I sold 25,000 copies at my speaking tables. Just at tables, and, and so, I was able to show the publisher a look. Just an audience is still 25,000 copies. Today said they were like wow, that's really got their change. Yeah, I know a lot of my platforms build off of it's a function.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): A lot of my platform in built off of, you know, books and, and selling books at speaking events.

(TI): That's a, that's a great way to cross platform. Good tip.

(CR): Yeah.

(TI): Chad, what's one thing that you learn in service that you carry with you today?

(CR): I think one of the most important lessons learned in life and my life has been kind of a life of service, it's just, it's not about you. It's about others, and you know, for the first part of my life, I said the first 35 years of my life, I would have said it was serving others, but really, most decisions were self-focused. Most of the decisions I made, even you know, even though, a side of me. You want to serve my country and serving, you know, deploying, but there was always something in it for me. You know, there was always an angle for me and and it's very unfulfilling. You just never feel like contentment satisfaction when you're pursuing it. Never nothing is ever good enough. It's like, going to the next goal. I accomplished that. Okay, on the next goal. Now, I'm not fulfilled, so what's the next goal? Like it's chasing fulfillment and as soon as I change, turned my life and perspective, it's not about me, it's about others. I stopped looking at the world in terms of myself and I started looking at the world in my life as it related to other people, and how I could put other people before myself.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Ironically, that's when I found a contentment and joy, and satisfaction in my life.

(TI): Very good, very good. Chad, I know you run *Mighty Oaks*, you know, it's a, it's pretty successful nonprofit, but is there another veteran nonprofit or individual who, or an individual whom you've worked with in the veteran community, or had experience with whom you'd like to mention?

(CR): Yeah, I mean, I think if I could point to anybody instead of point to one specific organization, it be the maybe the FBVSA, the Faith Based Veteran Service Alliance. It started off as a Whitehouse initiative, they ask me to, they ask me the same question. "Is there other organizations

that are doing what you're doing that could come together and bring a multitude of services to a lettering community?"

And so, that began the Veteran Service Alliance fbvsa.org [Link: <https://fbvsa.org>] in that organization is just tons of incredible people. Damon Freeman, Kevin Weaver, Emma Nolan, all run their own organizations and, you know, certain veterans and, and, and with the same heart *Mighty Oaks* has, and we have all come together under one umbrella, and, and, and you know, kind of like, non, non-territorial.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): We're not trying to stake our claim on veteran's care. We realize that the problem is big enough that we all need to work together.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): So as a non-territorial entity to bring everyone, come together with one common mission, and that's to serve our brothers and sisters.

(TI): Outstanding, that's outstanding. Is there anything else that I've missed, or I didn't bring up, or didn't mention that you think it's important, important to share?

(CR): So, if I have one final message for, any, any might be listening right now is that there is hope. No matter how hopeless you may feel, no matter how dark a moment you may be in, one verse is, "Don't ever make a permanent decision to a temporary problem." Like, there, you may feel like this moment never gonna end, you may feel like it's never gonna get better, but the truth is, it will. And there is a hope and there's a purpose for your life. Weather this storm, get passed it. Align yourself with the right people and die in the vary purpose you were created to live.

[01:30:24] Music

### [01:33:32] PSA:

Man #1: Getting out of the military. I was missing this camaraderie.

Man #2: It's frustrating when you try and talk to people who don't understand.

Man #3: I still had the anger. I still had the addictions, but we didn't talk about that.

Woman: Came to a point where it's like okay, I really need to talk to somebody about this.

Man #4: Family more or less encouraged me; you know. Go, go to the VA.

Man #2: It's okay to go get help. It's okay to talk to people 'cause it takes true strength to ask for help.

Narrator: Hear veterans' real stories of strength and recovery at maketheconnection.net [Link: <http://maketheconnection.net>]

[01:31:01] Music

## [01:31:05] Closing Monologue:

(TI): I want to thank Chad for coming on *Borne the Battle and* sharing his intense story on a really short notice. For more information on Chad, you can go to [mightyoaksprograms.org/about](https://www.mightyoaksprograms.org/about) [Link: <https://www.mightyoaksprograms.org/about/>]. Our *Borne the Battle* Veteran of the Week is a Marine that Chad had mentioned to me, in his interview. His friend, Marine Corp Veteran, Foster Harrington, and the following is, by the way, is of the Mobile register. Marine Corp Veteran Foster Harrington who grew up in Fort Worth, Texas by way of New York, had moved to Mobile, gotten engaged to his fiancé, Fran Poston, and joined the Seven Hills Fire Department, as a medic and fire fighter, for about 18 months in West Mobile County. Before going on active duty and deploying with Third Force Recon in June of 2004. They were deployed to Al Anbar province in Iraq, where sadly Harrington was killed a couple months later due to enemy insertion action on September 20, 2004. With his parents deceased, he is survived by a brother, his grandfather, and his brothers in Arms. He is buried in the Dallas Fort Worth National Cemetery in Marine Corp League, detachment 1449, in Mobile, Alabama, was named in his honor. Marine Corp Veteran, Foster L. Harrington, we honor his service.

[Customary firing of rifle gun at Marine Corp Veteran Honors ceremony noise]

That's it for this week's episode. If you yourself would like to nominate a *Borne the Battle* Veteran of the Week, you can. Just send an email to [podcast@va.gov](mailto:podcast@va.gov). Include a short write up and let us know why you'd like to see him or her as the *Borne the Battle* Veteran of the Week. And if you like this podcast episode, hit the subscribe button. We're on iTunes, Spotify, Google podcast, iHeartRadio, pretty much any podcasting app on a phone, computer, tablet or man. For more stories on veterans and veterans' benefits, check out our website [blogs.va.gov](https://www.blogs.va.gov) [Link: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>], and follow the VA on social media: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Rally Point. DPT vet affairs, US Department of Veterans Affairs. No matter the social media, you know it's us with that blue check mark. And as always, I'm reminded by people smarter than me to remind you that the Department of Veterans Affairs does not endorse or officially sanctioned any entities that may be discussed in this podcast, nor any media products or services they may provide unless it's the VA. Thank you for listening. Have a

happy and safe Marine Corp birthday, and Veteran's Day. We'll see you right here, next week. Take care.

[01:34:08] Music

**[01:34:37] End of Episode Interview:**

(TI): One thing we do at the end of ever- or some episodes is, I kind of give a, almost a "thank you" to a, to sticking with me. We do what's called "Saved Rounds." That's a new name now. It used to be called "After the Show-Show" because for over a year, I didn't know what I was gonna call this thing.

(CR): I like "Saved Rounds."

(TI): Is there any random, or goo- is there any story that, that is almost unrelated. Could be the military, could be from your fight career that is maybe funny?

(CR): Funny to me and funny to everybody else is always different.

(TI): Sure. Sure, but I think Veterans will share in your, in your humor here.

(CR): If you read my book *An Unfair Advantage*, I share a story, it's called, it's called, I titled it "Captain of the Titanic," and the reason I, I think, one of the second reasons I think it's funny, my daughter wanted a story one time. She was like, "Dad, it's Veteran's Day. I have to write a story of a Veteran," and so I shared a story with her and none of her teachers thought it was funny.

(TI): [Laughter]

(CR): So, yeah, I think I mentioned on the episode, Dan Stenson, who is one of my mentors. We were, we had, we had some team members were gonna go, they were gonna go either kill or capture a high-level bad guy and, and they were going in a certain area, so they needed, they needed like a vehicle that blends in the area with all permits, and pat- everything you need to be able to get in the area, so.

(TI): True.

(CR): I was, that was my, you know, what I did. I went and got a vehicle for them, set it up, got all the permits and everything. Got one of those high-g vans, you know, kind of flat front end.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): And then, you know, decked it out. Made it look like born a local. Got all the permits to go into this area. They were gonna go after this bad guy and, and they were, they were, you know they were doing their

rehearsals, and so, we're like gonna drop the vehicle off to them. And so, we're going through the area to go to where their FOB (Forward Operating Base) was, and, to drop this vehicle off to them, so they could do their hit. And as we're driving there, I had Hilux, kind of jacked up Hilux pick-up truck, and some good suspension. My buddy, Bink, is a Force Recon guy, he had, he had a Hilux pick-up truck, and they would put big, big Dan in this van, and he's like squeezed in this thing. He's like all over the steering wheel. He's just a giant man and this van, I don't know why he was the one put in the van.

(TI): [Laughter]

(CR): He's, he's in the middle of us and the three vehicles were cruising down this road, and as we're cruising down this road. It was this long dessert road. It's kind of known, not really dessert, but kind of like, you know, if you've ever been to Afghanistan.

(TI): Dry and rocky.

(CR): Yeah, dry. Yeah, exactly, and this roads like really narrow. Barely wide enough for two cars to go, but, but the sides of the road of this area was full of minefields. Never been cleared from the Russian's air dropping mines in there. So, you don't go off the road in there.

(TI): Wow.

(CR): And, then in addition to, you know, the, I don't know, the Taliban just like Afghan thugs would go out and dig like a trench through the road. Break the, break the asphalt and dig a trench through the road. Make like a, make like a speed bump and put a little uniform on it. Put a little hooch out there and either shake you down for money. Like it was a check pointer, or, you know, rob you and shoot you, and kill you, so. You don't just stop for those. Just blast over them. So, we were cruising pretty fast, probably going like 60 kilometers an hour. Anyway, we're driving, right, and I, and I notice in my rear-view mirrors that we got the lead, and I notice in the rear view mirror this black Mercedes Benz that was like pristine clean driving like, coming up behind us, super-fast and starting to pass us. If you were in Iraq, you might see a Mercedes Benz, like, clean, in Afghanistan? No, like everything's old, dirty. You don't see like nice cars there. It was very, very out of place, and so, this cars passing us. I'm looking at it like, "What the heck," and I start to watch it pass us, and as it starts to pass us, I see it like swerve around something in front of me. It goes off, and I realized when it swerved around, it's this giant boulder in the middle of the road. Like, like the size of my couch. This giant boulder in the middle of the road. Maybe I'm exaggerating the size of the couch.

(TI): Love seat?

(CR): I knew there was no way I was going to be able to break. Dan's like right behind me. There's no way for me to break, so I just kinda brace

myself and the steering wheel, center my vehicle, and I cleared it. I don't know how I cleared it, but I barely, this this was so big, but I barely cleared it. And as I cleared it, I was kind of having this relief, and I realized, Dan was behind me in this little van, and I look at my rear-view mirror and he just crashed into this thing. BOOM. His van went airborne. It was like, it didn't really go airborne, like probably, probably like chest height. It didn't go airborne but turned sideways in the air and I'm watching it in my rear-view mirror and I'm like, "He's gonna roll, or go off the side of the road in a minefield." This thing lands on all four wheels. It bounces and bounces back, and forth like one side of the road to another. I'm waiting for it to roll and he finally like, somehow it never rolled. Comes back and he just skids to a halt, and we all jump out, jump out the vehicle 'cause we were like, "It's like an ambush." Me and Bink did. Dan stayed in the vehicle. We jump out with our, we had informers.

(TI): Yeah.

(CR): Made sure everything was cool and then realized everything was cool, we look at the vehicle, and it's like smoke. It smells like rubber, burning smoke coming out of the vehicle, and Dan's in there, pale white. Steering wheel, he like sheared the steering wheel in half. He like breaks it. The whole dashboard caved in from the impact and he was in there like, his nose is bleeding. He's like pale and white, and me and Bink, in the middle of this road, in the middle of Afghanistan, I fell on the ground laughing so hard I couldn't breathe. Laughing so hard. And literally, the, underneath the vehicle, it looked like somebody took a hook and just ripped it. It just totally, the vehicle was dead. We had to, we just left it on the side of the road.

(TI): I'm just thinking about your daughter relaying this story in a, in a-

(CR): I thought it was a great story. She tried to tell her, tell her fourth grade class about it. We, we, had to leave the vehicle there. We, and had to go to our squadron and, "Hey guys. Sorry we don't have your vehicle and its dead. The captain of the Titanic here found an iceberg in the middle of Afghanistan."

(TI): Wow, wow.

(CR): And killed it. Some bad guy, some bad guy got off the hook that night.

(Text Transcript Ends)