

Crew: [00:00:01](#) We are rolling on Rieckhoff mic-

Paul: [00:00:02](#) Inspired, uh, the first ever Medal of Honor recipient we've ever had on the show. And a man I've known for many years-

David: [00:00:12](#) That's right.

Paul: [00:00:13](#) And a- and admire, and I'm really grateful you could be here. The great and powerful, David Bellavia, welcome to Angry Americans my friend.

David: [00:00:20](#) Well, thank you for having me, and, uh, we have, we've gone back a while, and you know it's crazy, I, I wanted to sit down with you, it's great to work, doing your show, and I want to support anything you're doing, because I think you're a good man. Uh, but I've wanted to sit down with you for a very long time, and, and, and just kind of go over you know this evolution that we had, and how, you know, of all the things of the war, the one thing I never want to see is what happened in 2008, where the gladiators of public policy are the veterans.

Paul: [00:00:56](#) Hm.

David: [00:00:56](#) That absolutely r- it ripped my soul out of my body. I'm- I'm ashamed of being a part of a process where, um, you know, because we disagree, somehow we're different.

Paul: [00:01:09](#) Hm.

David: [00:01:10](#) And, and one of the things that we pride ourselves in, is that in the military, what you loved, who you look, what you looked like, who you worsh-, not of that mattered, we did our, our thing. We argued, we, we, we, we did everything, because we're family. But we, that division is, uh, is something, you know I never want to see again. And if, and if I played a role in that, uh, I, I don't want to be a part of that anymore.

Paul: [00:01:38](#) And back at you.

David: [00:01:38](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:01:39](#) That, that's part of why I wanted to create this show, create this forum, because you can't have real conversations in like a cable news soundbite.

David: [00:01:46](#) Right.

Paul: [00:01:46](#) Right?

David: [00:01:46](#) Right.

Paul: [00:01:47](#) Like you can have real sit down.

David: [00:01:49](#) Okay.

Paul: [00:01:49](#) And a conversation about the most important issues facing this country, facing our families, facing our communities, and you are a really important voice. You were a very important voice before you received the medal of honor.

David: [00:02:02](#) Well folks-

Paul: [00:02:03](#) [crosstalk 00:02:03] Not it's on a whole nother level, and you and I haven't seen each other in person, in man-

David: [00:02:06](#) It's been years.

Paul: [00:02:06](#) Decades?

David: [00:02:07](#) Yeah, it's been a long time, and I f- I found what you do because there, there were, no one f- you filled a, a, a vacuum, that no one really had the, the courage to do at the time. Understand, when Chasing Ghosts came out, we didn't think the Iraq War, we didn't think we'd be 18 years in a conflict.

Paul: [00:02:27](#) Right.

David: [00:02:27](#) This, this was really about the invasion of Iraq. It was a perspective that was like, this is my war experience, who, who and we never thought down the road, that there ... You know, that we'd still be talking about the Iraq War in the sense that we were you know, still had skin in the game. So you, you go from how long is this conflict going to end? What are the needs of the veterans in 2004, compared to the needs of the veterans you know in 2019? I mean, you know the idea that we're, and the other, the other issue with that too, is that we had this existential crisis where we want people to join the military, but the first thing we show after, one of the ... The Army has just invested a ton of money into brand new commercials. They've got Peter Berg doing them-

Paul: [00:03:11](#) Yeah.

David: [00:03:11](#) Huge budgets-

Paul: [00:03:13](#) He was just on the show a couple months back.

David: [00:03:13](#) He's a stud, he's a great [crosstalk 00:03:15] guy. But, but you've got like you know Michael Bay producing Army recruiters, and then right after that, you see a kid literally, right after the Army commercial, there's a kid with a prosthetic arm, and a wounded warrior commercial. And it's, it's such a, a, you're really screwing with moms and dads.

Paul: [00:03:33](#) Yeah.

David: [00:03:33](#) Right? Because you're like-

Paul: [00:03:34](#) That's true.

David: [00:03:34](#) Trust us with your, your son, we're going to make him an individual in the community who's going to better the country, and better when he's home, but you know here's the percentage that he's going to need, you know help opening a microwave when he's 30.

Paul: [00:03:47](#) And like the simplification, that veterans are neither villains, victims, or victors right?

David: [00:03:54](#) Right. Right.

Paul: [00:03:55](#) It's oversimplification that you're fighting a lava monster.

David: [00:04:02](#) (laughs)

Paul: [00:04:02](#) Fighting in the streets right?

David: [00:04:02](#) Right, right.

Paul: [00:04:02](#) Begging for change.

David: [00:04:02](#) Mouth breather or yeah-

Paul: [00:04:03](#) [crosstalk 00:04:03] An example of a guy who, who defies those stereotypes and, and always has, but, but since it's Angry Americans, first of all, thank you for coming to the car club.

David: [00:04:08](#) Thank you very much.

Paul: [00:04:09](#) You're also a New Yorker?

David: [00:04:10](#) That's right.

Paul: [00:04:10](#) Which, which I, I am always, uh, happy to talk about you, you grew up upstate?

David: [00:04:15](#) Buffalo.

Paul: [00:04:16](#) Buffalo.

David: [00:04:16](#) That's right.

Paul: [00:04:17](#) And, and you're in the city now, but I ask every, uh, every guest to choose a cocktail or a beverage, and would you tell folks what you've chosen and why?

David: [00:04:26](#) Uh, well I just am trying to impress you, so I got whiskey. [crosstalk 00:04:29] And uh, that was on-

Paul: [00:04:31](#) Impress me either way-

David: [00:04:32](#) Yeah, no, no, so I figure-

Paul: [00:04:33](#) Whiskey rocks.

David: [00:04:34](#) Are you a whiskey guy?

Paul: [00:04:35](#) I am. Part of the show, that you will find out, is that, uh, we always talk about American whiskey.

David: [00:04:40](#) All right.

Paul: [00:04:41](#) And uh, I will have a special surprise for you at the end, but cheers my friend.

David: [00:04:44](#) All right [crosstalk 00:04:45]-

Paul: [00:04:45](#) To you sir-

David: [00:04:45](#) Appreciate it.

Paul: [00:04:46](#) To the Army maybe, what are we toasting?

David: [00:04:48](#) Yeah, to the Army, I'll take that.

Paul: [00:04:49](#) To the Army?

David: [00:04:50](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:04:50](#) Because you are the, correct me if I'm wrong, you are the only living medal of honor recipient who had served in Iraq that was awarded the medal for operations in Iraq correct?

David: [00:05:03](#) Right, and, and I can, I can also say with that statement, how absurd that is.

Paul: [00:05:09](#) Right.

David: [00:05:10](#) Because that, it really is shameful, there- there's, I could find, I mean just you name a place that you spend any time in, and we can find a story. I mean to understand how insane Iraq became was that areas that yo might have been in, in 2003, that were you know completely calm and, and became restive and violent, [inaudible 00:05:32], which everyone thought the north of Iraq was the safest place. And then ISIS comes in, and you've got Christians being slaughtered out there. So you could find a, a, a story in every province of Iraq that is worthy of the medal of honor. I don't know what, you know it's easy to say it's politics, but it's an Army thing. You know, the, the Marines are like, why aren't there more marines? That's a Marine corp thing. It's all the branches. I think we made a, a mistake in 2003, where we thought the war was going to end, and started giving out a bunch of awards, and then all of a sudden, it was like, uh-oh. You know, who's to say if this is an award, it's going to be worthy, you know there's going to be a story two, two years down the road. So it's awkward and it's weird to be the only living guy, I think that's pretty shameful.

Paul: [00:06:17](#) And, we're going to see throughout this conversation, you're humble and you're about the team, and that's you know what shined on that fateful day, and what has shined before and after. I think in why, you know when you came in, um, you- you're not wearing the medal, which is something we talked about, because you guys can choose to with it what you want, but you said uh, you know something like, it's over there, want to see it? And it's in your jacket right? And you know, you're just a dude walking around New York City with a friend right? And you're coming to a car club, they, they don't know you're a medal of honor recipient walking in, but for, for me, you know when that comes out, right? The, the reverence and the respect, and just so much of the history and sacrifice that's

baked into that. I mean, I don't know if there's anything outside of my children I've held in my hands, that I feel is so sacred.

David: [00:07:02](#) Yeah Paul, so the first time I ever held one, it's you know literally around my neck. And it felt like, like Lord of the Rings in a way. Like, like I was like probably, I, I, it's, and the other, the other thing is that you feel like, I know I always, I always had a chip on my shoulder because I was an Iraq vet. I always felt like I would hang out with my buddies who did the, the multiple deployment thing. Um, and when I was in the army if you did, you know 15 months, you were like tell us the stories of what was ... You know, you were just the grizzled and now you've got kids that were eight, nine years away from their, their families. But it was, when I'd hand out with my Afghan vet guys, they would say, "Thank you for your service." That was the war right? And then, I'd like, I was, you know in Iraq, and they would say, "I'm sorry man. I'm sorry you had to go through that, that was really horrible." And I, and I was thinking to myself, you know when you make good wars and bad wars, that does trickle down to the vet. And you know, again, I wouldn't know a weapon of mass destruction if it literally fell on me, you know.

David: [00:08:05](#) I mean, if you gave me a vote, I would've stayed home. You know what I mean? Somehow, why, that, that we're pro-war that we're somehow, um, uh, become apologists. The, the biggest concern I had, when this thing happened, was am I going to be asked to defend the policies that brought us to war? Is this just going to be a, an award? Or is this going to be an apology tour?

Paul: [00:08:31](#) Hm.

David: [00:08:32](#) Where we go every city and say, "Let's talk about Iraq, what were we doing? Should've been Iran." You know, let's go back. And, and everywhere I go with that thing, I have gold stars. Every day you hear you know, that uh, what, what is it uh time heals all wounds. Total bullshit. It doesn't heal a thing. If you lose a son unnaturally, catastrophically, many that's every day. And, and, and with this thing, I'm ripping scabs. I, I go everywhere, and I go up to a woman, and be like, hey your son died in, in Ramadi, let me just cut you again? Let's live that again. And, and you get all of this emotion, so it's um, there's nothing enjoyable about going to, to people that are still grieving and saying, "You know, I'm here standing with an award, and your son you know, not only is never coming home, who's reminding people that he lived. Who's reminding people why he died?" You know? And so I, I just personalize all that by

saying, you know, I get the people that ask me, "Why did we fight? What do you tell a mom whose son died?" They died for us. I mean we, we very well could've been, you could've been extended, you could've been put in a different unit, and you're going out doing your thing, um, everyone who kicks down a door, expects a bad guy to be there.

Paul: [00:09:57](#) Hm.

David: [00:09:59](#) Just because you don't find them, doesn't mean you're any less brave, or any less tough, so it's uh, it's been a pretty big burden.

Paul: [00:10:06](#) That, that's a really powerful point, the burden, so I, I've been privileged enough to be around, not more medal of honor recipients, to be around folks like Jack Jacobs, and Bob Kerry, and Sammy Davis, and so many others, actually had you know, you've got a weird Forrest Gump kind of couple of years here. You don't know where you're going to show up right?

David: [00:10:24](#) Right.

Paul: [00:10:25](#) [crosstalk 00:10:25] Some of those experiences where I was at the Indy 500 once, with I think all of the living medal of honor recipients, and many of them you know on the track, at Indy 500, and got to be around Sammy and some of these other guys that are legends, but also just great humans right? But have gone through this really unique experience. Like a totally elite experience or unique experience like going into space. Like no one can, can relate to what it's like, unless you've gone into space right? You just don't know what it's like, and I, I've got to imagine that receiving the medal is similar. And Bob Kerry you know I think was the guy who said to me, "Remember that every time they tell the story it hurts." Like they're, they're sacrificing to some extent. They're tell you often, about what might be one of the worst days of their life. And maybe they're telling it for others, but it is, I think, every time you tell the story, it's a service. And it, and it does help others, but it's also, it's in many ways the award nobody wants to get. Right? Because-

David: [00:11:21](#) Oh-

Paul: [00:11:21](#) It, it is, uh, such a tremendous weight to carry, but you've carried it with such dignity, in part, because you, you got it after you'd been home for a while.

David: [00:11:32](#) Oh absolutely.

Paul: [00:11:33](#) [crosstalk 00:11:33] Were kind of Iraq vet 1.0.

David: [00:11:34](#) That's right.

Paul: [00:11:36](#) Right? We were like invasion phase, came home, now you've got 3.0, 4.0 folks who've gone back over and over again. We were kind of the first wave of veterans to come home and enter the political conversation, the social conversation, the media conversation, but if I can ask you, uh, for folks who haven't heard the story from you, what do you want them to know about this award?

David: [00:11:56](#) I want them to know that, uh, combat is everything Hollywood has told us, and everything the veterans have told us, um, but there is absolute love on the battlefield. We fight because we love. And um, you know, I just, I think of those guys, I think about what they did for me, um, it's y- y- you boil it really down to why you, uh, why you, every day go out there, and do the things that you do for your, for your buddies, for your subordinates. Um, the pressure that's on young leaders. You know, you, you talk about Sammy Davis, and all these guys, as an infantryman, I memorized those citations. They were, I'm ... Wearing this and meeting Sammy Davis, it's like meeting Ironman.

Paul: [00:12:43](#) Right.

David: [00:12:43](#) It's like the Avengers. [crosstalk 00:12:45]-

Paul: [00:12:45](#) Say is like, is actually the inspiration for Forrest Gump right?

David: [00:12:47](#) Well Sammy, well Sammy Davis, in case people don't know, he basically made an inflatable raft, and he, he took a mattress raft, and put his buddies on it, and like suppressed a battalion of enemy with a rifle while inflating a raft. If you, it's, it's like a Ma-

David: [00:13:04](#) Running people back and forth to save lives. I mean it's like, it's MacGyver and it's just ridiculous, it should never happen. And then my-

Paul: [00:13:12](#) And his name's Sammy Davis.

David: [00:13:13](#) And his name's Sammy Davis.

Paul: [00:13:14](#) He's a white guy-

David: [00:13:14](#) And my first response to that [crosstalk 00:13:16] when I'm, I'm reading that story in basic training thinking, why don't we have inflatable mattresses, this is so ... These, these beds are so uncomfortable. But uh, no he, that guy's a stud. Uh Jack, all of them. Uh, Hershey, [Mya Mura 00:13:29], my God, I mean that dude is uh, you know and again, but you bring up that generation. And here's the thing, nobody talked about legacy until they're getting ready to die. Right, so when you're in your 20s and 30s, what is your legacy. You think kids, or job, or whatever it is, but you know this Vietnam generation, they protected us from a whole lot. And they made sure you know, every time I hear a World War II guy you know talk about the Vietnam generation, it's like, wait a minute you would have nothing at the VA if it wasn't for the Vietnam guys.

Paul: [00:14:02](#) Right.

David: [00:14:02](#) I mean the Vietnam guys literally have done everything for every veteran that's today, uh, before us and after us, so uh, it's an incredible generation. But they are totally different than we are right? And there's something to be said about the narcissism of us young, younger people, but that narcissism also allows you to look in the mirror and say, this is my purpose, this is my, who I am, right? And that generation is so new to the thanks, and new to the appreciation that they're, they're kind of new to this too.

Paul: [00:14:38](#) Yeah.

David: [00:14:38](#) You know what I mean? Like the Viet-

Paul: [00:14:39](#) They- they're kind of like reborn through us right? Like when I was at the Veteran's Day parade a couple years ago, there were Vietnam Veterans who walked for the first time.

David: [00:14:47](#) Exactly.

Paul: [00:14:48](#) They said they had never been welcomed. They didn't know what to do, or how to display their medal of honor in the 70s right?

David: [00:14:55](#) Right.

Paul: [00:14:55](#) Like that was very polarized, complicated time, where people blame the warriors for the war.

David: [00:15:01](#) Right.

- Paul: [00:15:01](#) You might have to actually be worried for your safety if you wore a medal of honor around right?
- David: [00:15:05](#) You're, you're absolutely, and so Gary Beikirch and, and Jack Jacobs, and, um, you know Joe Marm and, and, uh, Gary Littrell, all these guys have um, they really only experienced general thanks and appreciation, really since September 11th. You know, for 50 years they've had the award, and it, it really didn't, uh, so, so my, my takeaway is I look at these young guys, these guys in Afghanistan, I'm the oldest of the GWOT recipients that are living, and I look at how they've handled it, and everyone of them, incredible pressure, and there was no safety net. Sal Giunta was just out there, the army didn't even support him.
- Paul: [00:15:44](#) We talked about this earlier, he, he was I think the first living medal of honor recipient post 9/11.
- David: [00:15:48](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [00:15:48](#) He was working I think in the subway, like five years before that. Joined the army, received the medal of honor, comes home, and then he's standing at you know the 50 yard line at the Superbowl, right? I mean he's on this trajectory, it's almost like when you, I hate to say like, hit a lottery, or win an Oscar, or some- I don't know how to compare it. But overnight, you go from being an average person to someone whose life will never be the same again. And on a stratospheric level, where I remember Sal sitting down with you know every late night talk show host. You know, it's got to be a surreal experience, especially in the social media generation.
- David: [00:16:22](#) Oh.
- Paul: [00:16:22](#) And also Dave like the, the, the Vietnam vets, and the World War II vets, we're losing them quickly.
- David: [00:16:28](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [00:16:28](#) So there's going to be a unique burden on you guys, and they're all guys right now, maybe there'll be a woman at some point in the future, a couple dozen of you. Like those guys will all pass.
- David: [00:16:38](#) That's right.
- Paul: [00:16:39](#) There'll only be like a very select almost Knights of the Round Table.

David: [00:16:42](#) Well they, but here's the other things, you've got 18 years of conflict, America, I don't care who you elect President, we're not going to sustain contact again. We're, we're not going to move 200,000 troops in an area that we're going to have to own. I think the, the America's now waking up to what the future warfare looks like. You're not going to have a USS Missouri press conference, and, and you hand someone a sword. Your, if you go to war, it is going to a 50 year occupation. So think about that, before you, you start going down the list of countries you want to throw against the wall, because i- it's different. It's totally different now. But as you said, to me, when you talk about Sal and all these other guys, it's a testament to that guy. I mean, because Sal Giunta is you know, bore all that burden himself. Today the army has totally redone everything. They've send a team of 12 generals to your house, they walk you through public relations and how to talk, and how to think, and you know they're much more protective of the recipient today, than they were when the other guys go it. And the other phenomenon that's a little bit weird, is when you start awarding two guys for the same fight.

Paul: [00:17:49](#) Hm.

David: [00:17:49](#) And that's a really unfair burden to put on a unit. Because you know now you're essentially saying, "Well this guy did this, and this guy did something very similar, but here's his award." It's not fair to either one of those guys. There's, there's got to be a way that we can, you know, I think do this process better, so that all the branches quite frankly are in the room.

Paul: [00:18:13](#) Right.

David: [00:18:13](#) I mean, what, what happened to Brian Chapman, you know I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but he's an Air Force guy. And, and I think people look at Air Force, they don't understand how many different jobs are in the Air Force, or the other thing is, those combat control guys, they are in the fight every single day, they're getting shot at. There's incredible stories of Air Force guys doing good things. Uh, but you know you look at these Seals if they, they can't get an award, because now they can't operate you know.

Paul: [00:18:43](#) [crosstalk 00:18:43] Can't be recognized-

David: [00:18:43](#) They can't [crosstalk 00:18:44] ... Right.

Paul: [00:18:44](#) It compromises their identity.

David: [00:18:45](#) But so, but am I, but am I supposed to say that a Navy Seal who kills you know 10 guys in a house fight is what? He's supposed to do that, because he's a Navy Seal? So what do you say when a, you know, if an infantryman makes a cake, they're in a fire fight, you know like well hey, it's amazing.

Paul: [00:19:02](#) I think uh, somebody, maybe it was [Dean West 00:19:02] or someone said that in a medal of honor, um, something extraordinary has to happen, someone has to see it, and someone has to write about it.

David: [00:19:12](#) Oh absolutely. Yeah, yeah.

Paul: [00:19:14](#) The story isn't told. The, the medal usually doesn't happen. And I think it was our friend, I don't know if you know that Michael Ware-

David: [00:19:21](#) Oh yeah. Yeah.

Paul: [00:19:21](#) Who I've known for a long time, he's a wild man, but an, an incredibly courageous reporter, I hope he'll join me on the show. But you may remember Michael Ware from CNN during the early days of the Iraq War. Now, he was I think one of the people who first told your story.

David: [00:19:36](#) I, I don't, I don't know the role of, you know I don't have evidence of anything, because quite frankly they don't tell, they don't show you, your packet.

Paul: [00:19:43](#) Hm.

David: [00:19:44](#) So you don't even know who the sworn statements were. You don't know anything.

Paul: [00:19:48](#) The packet that he's submitting on your behalf.

David: [00:19:49](#) Right, nor have I ever been formally interviewed about the story. I, I, the Army has never taken me down and said, "What happened?"

Paul: [00:19:58](#) Really?

David: [00:19:58](#) Yeah, they, they went to everyone else, and said, "What did you see?" Don't, don't tell me what happened, tell me what you saw. Like if you heard gunfire, and, and but you were outside, they don't care.

Paul: [00:20:11](#) Hm.

David: [00:20:12](#) Who did, what did you see?

Paul: [00:20:13](#) Can you tell the story as much as you're comfortable, if you-

David: [00:20:16](#) Oh yeah, yeah, I mean.

Paul: [00:20:17](#) As you would like it to be told.

David: [00:20:19](#) Uh, we, we were, um, uh, so, so my story of my unit was 22 Infantry. Uh, we were out of Germany, and we were the first ID, and we were long considered to be, just a peacekeeping division. I mean the, the days of the, of the Normandy Beaches were long gone. I mean Bosnia, Kosovo, nothing was happening there. And, and when I got to Iraq, I was just like, "I don't even think we're going to get a combat infantryman's badge." Uh, there were talk, that we wouldn't even get a combat patch. You know, and so, we got there, everyone's kind to us. Uh, Diyala Province has is right on the Iranian border. Did not see a lot of, uh, you know American soldiers. So they were kind of new to this invasion thing. But, it was, contact was few and far between, and it wasn't real, uh, you know, a guy here or there. But man, [Abu Ghraib 00:21:12] happened, and that started the, the Easter uprising in 2004, now you've got Muqtada al-Sadr, you've got the [Mahdi 00:21:20] militia, and then Al-Qaeda takes over in Anbar. And it just seemed like a perfect storm of everything was falling apart.

David: [00:21:29](#) And because we had a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, in and urban fight, it was the most conducive way to get troops in and out, and at 25 millimeters is, is awesome. So, so we, we go to Najaf. And then, a, a, a company is sliced out to Mosul. And then, we get the Fallujah fight, and, and really you know the Fallujah fight took forever to kick off, because Bush and Kerry were going at it. And so we had to wait for the election re-

Paul: [00:21:55](#) [crosstalk 00:21:55]-

David: [00:21:55](#) Right-

Paul: [00:21:55](#) Was kind of waiting for the political okay.

David: [00:21:58](#) Right. And, and again, we lost the city, we gave our equipment over to the, what we thought was a, a friendly element of Fallujah, they took it. So it was just, you know information operations was really, the, the key during that era. Fallujah kicks

off, we get through the city without a problem on our breach, our engineers blow it up. The Marine Corps gets stymied. So, imagine 10s, you know thousands of American troops lined up, ready to blow a bugle, and head over the berm, and they've got one entry way. So it, it took like two days for everyone to get into their combat position, and attach, and in that time, you know we're doing our thing, which is supporting the Marine Corps, that, that was their fight. We were just 27 on one flank, 22 on the other, uh, and a bunch of tanks. And we were the only thing in town. And that just brought everyone to that section. And so for like five days, it was, it was pretty hairy. But then, uh, you know it became hairy for everyone else in, in Fallujah, but, we, we locked in, uh, a bunch of guys in a city block. My sergeant major was killed on day one, which was like emotionally debilitating.

David: [00:23:07](#) That's like your, the principal of your high school dying, you know? And then, uh, my company commander is killed, and then my XO is killed, and it's like lieutenants, ROTC kids, branch transfer, you know guy that's in accounting now infantry, he's running a company. You know, he's running a, a, a, you know a, a, working, uh, doing things he never thought he was going to be able to do. A lot of stress on those young LTs. Um, but we get into this building, and we're looking for these guys, the Bradley's locked them in. Eight to 10, and of course you know we walk in it's an ambush. And then it's just a matter of, what do you know, and what can you actually do? You know the reason why vets make great finance guys, I mean Wall Street is full of veterans. We don't need a hundred percent. You give us, you give us, look, I know what you could do, and I know what I can do. I don't know anything about what's on the other side of that wall, but I know you, and I know what you can do, and I know what I can do, let's, let's roll the dice. Right?

David: [00:24:09](#) I think between you and me, we could figure out whatever's on the other side right? In the real world, you've got to have a 100%, don't waste a dime unless you know a hundred percent. You never get that in the army. You'll never get that. And in this case, I just, Paul, I can tell you honest to God, if I did something similar to that, uh, 99 times, I'd probably you know killed 97. It, you, you know, you talk about what the basis of valor awards, a lot of it is really shitty situational awareness. I mean really, like not knowing, Paul Ray Smith knocks a wall down, and there's a battalion of enemy right there. Now, someone should've told that unit, that they were on the other side right? What does he do? I- it's not that, oh my God, we're all screwed, it's I'm going to shoot him until I can't breathe anymore, and that's why Paul

Ray Smith is an American icon, because he made that decision knowing he was going to die. A lot of times you just don't know what the hell you're doing. And, and Paul, it's dark, you're shooting at targets, you know I don't want to sound like a, you know, every terrorist looks the same, but in a dark area, when people are shooting AKs, you really don't know if it's a different person, or the same person.

David: [00:25:25](#) Am, am I hitting people? You know, it's not like in Hollywood where you shoot a person and they just drop. You know, they will fight with every ounce of life they have. And so would you by the way. You would do the exact same thing, so it just, you, the first time I got shot at, I remember thinking, man Spielberg. You don't know what you're doing. You know? [crosstalk 00:25:47] Yeah, nothing blows up.

Paul: [00:25:49](#) Look like that yeah.

David: [00:25:50](#) You shoot a car, it doesn't blow up.

Paul: [00:25:52](#) It's not American Sniper, when you see down the barrel, and you watch the round cut through the town-

David: [00:25:57](#) Right. Right.

Paul: [00:25:58](#) [crosstalk 00:25:58] Target, it's just kind of noise and chaos everywhere.

David: [00:26:01](#) Everywhere and, and a grenade isn't fire-

Paul: [00:26:03](#) Right-

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Paul: [00:26:03](#) Chaos everywhere.

David: [00:26:03](#) Everywhere. And, and a grenade isn't fire.

Paul: [00:26:03](#) Right.

David: [00:26:04](#) And, and, uh, you know, an AT4 doesn't blow (laughs) anything up.

Paul: [00:26:07](#) Right. (laughs)

David: [00:26:08](#) You know? It's a flaming pencil. You know? I- It's what it is.

Paul: [00:26:11](#) Flaming pencil, that's [crosstalk 00:26:12].

David: [00:26:12](#) You know, so, so my thing is is that, like, uh, so much of the combat experience, I was really unim- unimpressed.

Paul: [00:26:18](#) So you did not, the bottom line is you did not know what you were going into.

David: [00:26:21](#) I, oh, yeah, that, I didn't know what I was going into. And, and I just kept going until my luck ran out. And honestly, uh, the smells, and the propane, and the explosives really changed that entire fight for me, because I don't know anything about propane, and I don't know anything about (laughs) explosives. And when I'm smelling natural gas-

Paul: [00:26:39](#) [crosstalk 00:26:39] uh, correct me if I'm [inaudible 00:26:41] there, there were propane tanks in a room.

David: [00:26:42](#) Oh, they, they're all lined up, and there's C4 and everything else lined up and, and you start w-

Paul: [00:26:48](#) About to explode, because they're rigging it to blow.

David: [00:26:49](#) ... Right. A building contained IED. And the thing is that, you know, now you're shooting and missing. Am I hitting a tank? What's that do? You know, uh, uh, I mean, am I going to blow myself up inadvertently just by f-

Paul: [00:26:58](#) Because you knew there were propane tanks in the room.

David: [00:26:59](#) ... Yes. Tripping over 'em.

Paul: [00:27:01](#) [crosstalk 00:27:01] even if you shot in the wrong direction, you might hit one, and everybody goes.

David: [00:27:03](#) I was smelling a really pungent, uh, natural gas smell that was really, it was actually almost, uh, uh, you know, making me lightheaded, it was so strong.

Paul: [00:27:14](#) And simultaneously trying to take out an unknown number of-

David: [00:27:16](#) Right. And you don't know who you're and how many and, and what's going on. So my, my goal at that point was just to soften 'em up, get 'em to run out of the house, get the guys to shoot 'em. And, and at some point, I just realized, well, maybe I'll rile 'em up and get 'em y- on one level of the house, and then I'll

just get near the, you know, because once you don't, you know, once you're running around, you could very well get shot by your own.

- Paul: [00:27:38](#) Right.
- David: [00:27:39](#) So, you know, I'm, I'm worried more about getting popped. A- And then, of course, now it's a bomb's coming in. The bomb that we called hours before so this would never happen is now ready to be dropped. So now the clock is ticking, you know? Is the bomb going to kill us? What we're going to do. Um, you know, uh, so it was, it was really stressful.
- Paul: [00:27:58](#) And in those moments, Dave, is it your training? Is it your upbringing? Is it muscle memory?
- David: [00:28:05](#) It's just j-
- Paul: [00:28:06](#) How did you get through that? Or what, or in what way did you get through that?
- David: [00:28:10](#) ... I just thought about, I had a four-year-old boy, and I just thought, you know, "I hope to God if my kid ever is in harm's way, that someone cares enough, as much about him as I do."
- David: [00:28:23](#) And so I just kept thinking of those, those soldiers and just thinking, you know, "Could you imagine being the leader that has to hand a, a folded flag to a parent? And you were like, 'Well, and I was there. (laughs) I could've done something, but, you know, it just didn't work out that way.'" You know?
- David: [00:28:41](#) Um, I just felt a huge obligation. It was like a life changing obligation that I had to, I had to love them like they were mine. And, and that meant just making sure that they weren't scared or hurt or anything else.
- David: [00:28:56](#) And, um, because God, when I needed 'em, they were there. And they, they just, they were just, they saved my life. They, they did things I didn't have the strength to do. They, they did things I wasn't brave enough to do. It was, it was our family. It, you are Monday. I'm Tuesday.
- Paul: [00:29:10](#) (laughs)
- David: [00:29:10](#) Right? That's how we do it.

Paul: [00:29:12](#) Right.

David: [00:29:12](#) And if, and if it's Monday, Paul, guess what. You're doing it.

Paul: [00:29:16](#) Right. And it comes, I, I think it's, it's really is, um, enlightening for folks to hear you talk about it in that way, Dave, because it's, uh, from the outside, people would think it's about anger or it's about hate or it's about politics [crosstalk 00:29:29].

David: [00:29:28](#) Oh. No. I've tried it.

Paul: [00:29:30](#) It's abou- it's about love.

David: [00:29:31](#) Oh. It is. It-

Paul: [00:29:32](#) [crosstalk 00:29:32] love for the person next to you-

David: [00:29:33](#) ... Your country.

Paul: [00:29:35](#) ... [crosstalk 00:29:35] something else. It's about the realization that what's in front of you in your situation is nothing I can even relate to, but you hear that constant theme, whether you're a Medal of Honor recipient or you were in, you know, the chow hall just doing your job. Like, everybody does it from a sense of love and obligation to each other and to something bigger, right?

Paul: [00:29:52](#) And the end of the day, it's not about politics. It's not about any president. It's about those men and women to the left and to the right of you, right? And that's why you have been credited with this valor because you did it for others. And I think anyone who knows you can see that's who you are. And in that moment, you became the best of who you are.

David: [00:30:09](#) It was, uh, yeah. I mean, I don't know. That's kind. That's awesome. But a- again, I, I s- this is our generation's award. I try to give it, to, to let people hold it as, as much as I can, because A, it's, it's easier for me (laughs) to do it.

Paul: [00:30:22](#) Yeah.

David: [00:30:23](#) And the second thing is is that I just think, um, I just think Iraq is one of those fights where, uh, man, you just, you, you're realizing over time that things, this is really, this is really bad.

Paul: [00:30:37](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [00:30:37](#) And w- how are we going to deal with this in 20 years? W- That never enc- did you ever think about your 44-year-old self?

Paul: [00:30:46](#) No. We're the same age.

David: [00:30:47](#) Right.

Paul: [00:30:47](#) You're 44, so you're, you're the oldest-

David: [00:30:50](#) Of the-

Paul: [00:30:50](#) ... O- Of the next generation.

David: [00:30:51](#) ... That's right. Yeah.

Paul: [00:30:52](#) At 44.

David: [00:30:53](#) At 44.

Paul: [00:30:53](#) And when you were in Iraq for this day, you were-

David: [00:30:57](#) 29.

Paul: [00:30:58](#) ... 29.

David: [00:30:58](#) It was my birthday.

Paul: [00:30:59](#) [crosstalk 00:30:59].

David: [00:30:59](#) It was my 29th, but-

Paul: [00:30:59](#) And then-

David: [00:31:00](#) ... What were you? You, oh, you were, like, 25?

Paul: [00:31:02](#) ... [crosstalk 00:31:02] the same age, yeah, I think, basically.

David: [00:31:03](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:31:03](#) I think I was 23, 24 when I was there.

David: [00:31:05](#) W- Were you, were you thinking about this time of your life?

Paul: [00:31:09](#) No. (laughs) Not at all, right? Like, I never thought I was going to be 40 when I got married, which I was, right? And had kids

when I was 41. We were talking about this on the way up. I want my next book to be Old Dad This Shit's Hard.

- David: [00:31:19](#) (laughs)
- Paul: [00:31:21](#) Because (laughs) like, being, I never-
- David: [00:31:22](#) Breaking down.
- Paul: [00:31:23](#) ... [crosstalk 00:31:23] this old, but-
- David: [00:31:23](#) Right.
- Paul: [00:31:24](#) ... Uh, but I don't think I envisioned any of it. And when my book came out around the same time I think your book came out, right, people, when we were going through the publishing process, they said, "Ah, you know, what if the war ends before the book comes out, and [crosstalk 00:31:35] interested?"
- David: [00:31:35](#) Oh. I remember that. Right.
- Paul: [00:31:36](#) Right? And I would say, you know, "This is not (laughs) going to end, and even if it does, it's, it's a historical account, at least my personal account of my time that was there." And everybody, I think, has a, has a book in them. But you, you come home. Um, you [crosstalk 00:31:50].
- David: [00:31:49](#) Well, th- th- let me just say, though, Chasing Ghosts, one of the-
- Paul: [00:31:54](#) Yeah. [crosstalk 00:31:54].
- David: [00:31:54](#) ... No. No.
- Paul: [00:31:54](#) Go ahead.
- David: [00:31:54](#) One of the things about that book that really changed the b- r- the memoir market was that you were basically making predictions of how bad the war was going to be as the war was really getting bad.
- Paul: [00:32:07](#) That's what I want. I mean-
- David: [00:32:07](#) And, and so-
- Paul: [00:32:08](#) ... [crosstalk 00:32:08] I came home, I was basically like, "Hey. This shit's fucked up, and it's going to get worse."

David: [00:32:13](#) ... Right. And it's going to get worse. And so now, so now what's happening is all these publishers are saying, "If you're going to do a, a book-"

Paul: [00:32:17](#) Yeah.

David: [00:32:18](#) "... You've got to have a political point of view as well."

Paul: [00:32:21](#) Well, yeah. And they were worried, you know. What if you're wrong? I remember, you know, you know I've been very critical of, of President Bush, and I was critical of President Bush in the book. And the publishers literally said to me, "What if everyone turns around and loves Bush by the time this book comes out?"

David: [00:32:33](#) (laughs)

Paul: [00:32:34](#) I was like, "Well, it's still the same book. Like, I'm telling my story." And I still think that, you know, George Bush had better be fucking right was the opening line of my book because he was rolling the dice, right? And, and rolling us into this situation. And I never thought we would not find weapons of mass destruction, right? You talked about it earlier. Like, we kicked in a lot of doors looking for weapons of mass destruction, right?

David: [00:32:53](#) Oh. Yeah. Oh. Yeah.

Paul: [00:32:53](#) And I never thought we wouldn't find them. I was like, "Shit. Somebody's going to put something there."

David: [00:32:56](#) Right. They're in Syria. They're somewhere. Right.

Paul: [00:32:58](#) Because there's no way we'd send all these people overseas and not find anything. [crosstalk 00:33:01].

David: [00:33:01](#) There's going to be a lock box-

Paul: [00:33:02](#) Yeah.

David: [00:33:02](#) ... That has them all.

Paul: [00:33:03](#) [crosstalk 00:33:03] predicted. But I, I guess, like, you know, we all kind of had the ability to be like the Tony Romo. We knew the playbook. We could see what was happening. When I came home, and when you came home, we were the first veterans on TV. We were the first veterans writing books. We were the f- th- there was a string of books that first came from journalists.

David: [00:33:19](#) Right.

Paul: [00:33:20](#) Then they [crosstalk 00:33:21].

David: [00:33:21](#) Their embedded experience.

Paul: [00:33:22](#) Then they came from generals.

David: [00:33:23](#) Exactly.

Paul: [00:33:24](#) Then they came from us.

David: [00:33:25](#) That's right.

Paul: [00:33:25](#) We were this wave of, of, like, and really, those are the most important ones, right? If you go back to Tim O'Brien and Things They Carried and so many others, the really good in m- I would argue, most important books, are the ones who are from that perspective on the ground at the intersection between experience, personal story, politics. And so you come home, and you, uh, you write a book.

David: [00:33:46](#) Right.

Paul: [00:33:46](#) You get involved in politics and [crosstalk 00:33:49].

David: [00:33:48](#) Oh. I, I, I jumped in. I, I thought that I was defending th- the, the, the memory of my friends. A- And, and I made the biggest mistake you can make in politics, is I took everything personally.

Paul: [00:34:00](#) Mm.

David: [00:34:01](#) I got super emotional. I got super tied into it. So when you were attacking my fight, you were attacking the legacy of guys who gave up their tomorrows, will never have kids, will never have Christmas. And I, you know, I was so misera- you probably g- go, go through this, too.

David: [00:34:19](#) You're, you're hanging out. It's Christmas Day, and the babies are unwrapping presents, so you're having a great dinner, uh, with friends, being with people you care about. And all you think about is happy, happy, happy. And then you're like, "I wonder what, uh, Carlos Rivera's parents are doing right now."

Paul: [00:34:36](#) Mm.

David: [00:34:37](#) I wonder what, you know, how's Christmas for, you know, the [Faulkberg 00:34:40] family after their... and it just, it just, you just find that you're just d- d- literally imploding, your entire b-you, what you... We validated each other every day.

Paul: [00:34:52](#) Mm.

David: [00:34:52](#) And we come home. We don't have that validation. That political fight, for me, in 2006, '07, and '08, that was like a new platoon.

Paul: [00:35:00](#) Mm.

David: [00:35:01](#) And we were going up against the bad guys. But the bad guys were our own people.

Paul: [00:35:06](#) Mm.

David: [00:35:07](#) And it-

Paul: [00:35:08](#) It's really [crosstalk 00:35:08].

David: [00:35:08](#) ... And it, it, it makes me so s- it, it makes me so sad to have not had the wisdom at that point to be able to walk across to my liberal friends and say, "We disagree about the war."

Paul: [00:35:20](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [00:35:21](#) But let's go, like, ta- how are you doing?

Paul: [00:35:23](#) Yeah.

David: [00:35:23](#) Are you all right?

Paul: [00:35:24](#) You, you, you and I [inaudible 00:35:26] always had a personal connection, even if we disagreed about the war at that time. But I think o- uh, you tell, you mentioned the Christmas thing, and your, your way of describing m- the sergeant major as, as the principal is so right. Like, we lost Command Sergeant Major Cook on Christmas Eve.

David: [00:35:41](#) Mm.

Paul: [00:35:42](#) And it was like that. It was like losing the principal. So I think about him on Christmas Eve, right? I remember Christmas in Baghdad. And that always sneaks into my br- it sne- it sneaks

into my brain. And I think we all do it, and it makes, you know, it makes us a little bit sad, and it makes the whiskey a little bit sweeter, right? There was one bottle of whiskey that my father somehow sent over that was Maker's Mark. And on Christmas Eve, after Sergeant Major Cook was killed, I think I wrote about this-

David: [00:36:04](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:36:05](#) ... In the book. We had one bottle that went around that room. And that's what I think I, I often remember, too, is how generous everyone was, how kind everyone was. People get this idea that, you know, soldiers are all, you know, grunts and, and, and want to kill shit and all of that. And that, you know, part of that is part of the training, and part of it's true.

Paul: [00:36:21](#) But they're also the most generous human beings I've ever seen. If there's one piece of food left on the table, they'll split it nine ways. If there's one cigarette, it'll go around the entire room.

David: [00:36:30](#) It, it d- you know, the, uh, the, when, when I saw, like, the Iraq Vets Against the War and the, you know, some of the more th- uh, b- it was a- IVAW was the first group, and then there was a political faction of that. And that's where Vets For Freedom came, uh, you know, out of Vote Vets, v- Vets for Freedom clashes.

David: [00:36:48](#) And then you had people that even more, you know, found a, another position on the, on the, on the political plane there of where they stood. And, and I just became like, why, why isn't McCain and Obama on Chris Matthews beating each other?

Paul: [00:37:03](#) It became a proxy war.

David: [00:37:04](#) It absolutely was.

Paul: [00:37:05](#) Right? It, it also kind of became like Baghdad [crosstalk 00:37:06].

David: [00:37:06](#) The things the McCain campaign didn't want to say, they allowed a PFC machine gunner to say.

Paul: [00:37:12](#) Right.

David: [00:37:12](#) And the things the Obama adminis- or the Obama campaign didn't want to put out there-

Paul: [00:37:15](#) Yeah.

David: [00:37:16](#) ... They let John Soltz do.

Paul: [00:37:17](#) Right. Right. And that, that's the proxy war that developed especially between Vets For Freedom and, and Vote Vets, left and right, and then IVA, uh, you know, tried to, to, to, to go above it as best we could and, and remain nonpartisan. But in that atmosphere, everything was viewed as partisan. Everything was viewed as political.

Paul: [00:37:33](#) So for me, you know, it was, it was, it was the evolution of this second fight, right? We had the fight in Iraq. And then we came home and, and what I think we all have learned a lesson about was how the political machines and the politicians turned us against each other.

David: [00:37:48](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:37:49](#) And I think almost always, if you go back and look, I told Hardball and others, I was like, "I'm not going on against [crosstalk 00:37:55]."

David: [00:37:55](#) You didn't. You, you, you sto-

Paul: [00:37:57](#) I'm not, I'm not going on against [crosstalk 00:37:58].

David: [00:37:57](#) ... I'll give you credit.

Paul: [00:37:58](#) There might have been a couple exceptions, like early, um, but I said, "I'm not going on to fight somebody." And I said, "You're not going to put me in a box."

David: [00:38:04](#) Right.

Paul: [00:38:05](#) [inaudible 00:38:05] putting me in a box and putting Dave in a box-

David: [00:38:07](#) Right.

Paul: [00:38:08](#) ... And putting Pete Hegseth in a box-

David: [00:38:09](#) Right.

Paul: [00:38:09](#) ... You know, you're creating this false simplification that we're on opposite sides, and I'm not playing that fucking game. [crosstalk 00:38:15].

David: [00:38:15](#) And I, listen, I, I lo- I love Hegseth. I've known that guy. We, we went, he embraced it.

Paul: [00:38:20](#) Yeah. [crosstalk 00:38:21].

David: [00:38:21](#) That's his thing. And, and I, I don't take anything away from that.

Paul: [00:38:24](#) And so, and so did Soltz. I mean, you know, th- there's-

David: [00:38:26](#) Th- They were, they're political animals.

Paul: [00:38:28](#) ... Yeah.

David: [00:38:28](#) But, but I, there was a time when I thought, like, you know, um, uh, this award has changed everything. I, I have, I went from thinking, you know, "What do you do with a Medal of Honor?" If you're 23 you, you, you go date a model or you-

Paul: [00:38:45](#) (laughs)

David: [00:38:45](#) ... You know what I mean? You g- and then I know it's like, well, you're going to go to a defense contractor, or you're going to sell late night sunglasses.

Paul: [00:38:52](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [00:38:52](#) You know? With (laughs) with other people that have done things kinetically or something. And I thought, you know, "What if we just, like, the new thing was, you get the Medal of Honor, and you're alive, and you go right back to the army?"

Paul: [00:39:05](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [00:39:06](#) You, you go to the, the, the, the outfit, the organization, the family-

Paul: [00:39:11](#) [inaudible 00:39:11] I think and some of the other guys went back-

David: [00:39:12](#) ... Yeah.

Paul: [00:39:13](#) ... [crosstalk 00:39:13] duty, right?

David: [00:39:13](#) Well, I'm, I'm just saying not necessarily active duty, but just, just going and supporting them. Everything is, is back. Leroy does it. Ev- uh, guy. Everyone's doing it now. I think it's a, that's something our generation is going to be different than the Vietnam guys.

Paul: [00:39:29](#) I want to let you take a breath, um, because I know this is intense. But also, there, there's kind of a funny side of this. When we came in, you said, "It's kind of like carrying around the Stanley Cup."

David: [00:39:35](#) That's right. Yeah. Everyone gets a day with it. Yeah.

Paul: [00:39:37](#) I mean, you know, y- you, uh, do you have insurance on it? Or does the government have insurance on it?

David: [00:39:43](#) This is a true story. So here's what happened.

Paul: [00:39:44](#) (laughs)

David: [00:39:45](#) I go, I go and, and, uh, uh, my, somehow my homeowner's, uh, uh, I wanted to get a policy in case someone broke into the house and took the Medal of Honor.

Paul: [00:39:54](#) [inaudible 00:39:54] policy.

David: [00:39:55](#) So-

Paul: [00:39:56](#) I've got one for my wife's engagement ring.

David: [00:39:57](#) ... They said... Okay. (laughs)

Paul: [00:39:58](#) (laughs)

David: [00:39:58](#) So they said, "Listen, we got to, we got to get a price on it, but if it's over a certain amount, you're going to have to get a safe."

Paul: [00:40:03](#) Okay.

David: [00:40:03](#) If it's over a certain amount, you're going to have to have a camera just to reduce the liability. They went to price it. No one would give them a price. It, it's kind of like going, President Trump says his, you know, his, uh, brand is worth seven billion.

Paul: [00:40:17](#) [inaudible 00:40:17]. (laughs)

David: [00:40:17](#) Like, how do you, you know, uh, uh, prove it, you know? Like, what do you know? I don't know. So, uh, everyone says, you know, 250. 250 thou- the Medal of Honor is a \$250,000 value because it's one of a kind.

Paul: [00:40:29](#) Hm.

David: [00:40:29](#) And it represents one thing. Whatever. I got it appraised. It's \$26.99 to replace it.

Paul: [00:40:37](#) Get the fuck out of here.

David: [00:40:37](#) That, the, to repla- so if I went to [Aphie's 00:40:40]-

Paul: [00:40:39](#) (laughs)

David: [00:40:40](#) ... It's 26.99. And your homeowner's is going to be like, "It's 26.99, buddy."

Paul: [00:40:44](#) [crosstalk 00:40:44].

David: [00:40:44](#) Yeah. It's pretty funny.

Paul: [00:40:45](#) That [crosstalk 00:40:45] that has to be a joke. Can I ask you, one of the things that folks have never seen is what's on the back [crosstalk 00:40:50].

David: [00:40:50](#) Oh. Yeah. Yeah. Go ahead.

Paul: [00:40:51](#) I don't, I'm, you know, I'm-

David: [00:40:52](#) No. Please.

Paul: [00:40:53](#) ... [crosstalk 00:40:53] pick it up, but-

David: [00:40:53](#) No. Go ahead.

Paul: [00:40:54](#) ... Do you, can you tell, so on the back is-

David: [00:40:55](#) It's just your name, the date, your unit, where it happened.

Paul: [00:40:58](#) ... So it's, it's Staff Sergeant David G. Bellavia, right?

David: [00:41:01](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Paul: [00:41:02](#) And what's the G stand for?

David: [00:41:03](#) Gregory.

Paul: [00:41:04](#) And then it says, "Company A, Task Force 22," and then is it, uh, 1st Infantry Division?

David: [00:41:09](#) Yes.

Paul: [00:41:09](#) Operation Iraqi Freedom, 10 November 2004.

David: [00:41:13](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:41:13](#) Man. One day from, from Veterans Day.

David: [00:41:16](#) That's my birthday. November 10.

Paul: [00:41:18](#) Ah. So that's your birthday that's on the back.

David: [00:41:19](#) My bir- yeah. Yeah.

Paul: [00:41:20](#) Not the day of, of the operation.

David: [00:41:22](#) The day of the, the event was my birthday.

Paul: [00:41:23](#) It was your birthday.

David: [00:41:23](#) Yeah. It was.

Paul: [00:41:24](#) I did not know that.

David: [00:41:25](#) That was the one thing in the back of my head was, like, you know, I used to go in a cemetery and see, like, born and died on the same day.

Paul: [00:41:30](#) Yeah.

David: [00:41:30](#) And I thought, like, you know, "If I could just get to midnight ch-
" You know? Uh, you know what I mean?

Paul: [00:41:35](#) Yeah.

David: [00:41:35](#) Just change this so my parents don't have to-

Paul: [00:41:38](#) [crosstalk 00:41:38].

David: [00:41:38](#) ... Think of that day as such a horrible day, you know?

Paul: [00:41:40](#) And Veterans Day is the day [crosstalk 00:41:42].

David: [00:41:42](#) Yeah. Yeah.

Paul: [00:41:42](#) [crosstalk 00:41:42] birthday is right around that time.

David: [00:41:43](#) Right.

Paul: [00:41:44](#) So you got, that's a, that's a busy time for you.

David: [00:41:46](#) A, a busy time. Yeah.

Paul: [00:41:48](#) And on the bottom, I ask you this, it s- it says, "Graco G1." Maybe that's the company that makes 'em?

David: [00:41:52](#) It has to be. You know what these guy-

Paul: [00:41:55](#) [crosstalk 00:41:55] that company [crosstalk 00:41:55].

David: [00:41:55](#) ... These guys-

Paul: [00:41:55](#) [crosstalk 00:41:55] for \$26.

David: [00:41:55](#) ... These guys go to (laughs) these guys go to bowling, uh, trophy guys and make facsimiles of it.

Paul: [00:42:00](#) Really?

David: [00:42:00](#) And then take the original, put it in a safety depo-

Paul: [00:42:03](#) So-

David: [00:42:03](#) ... That is the original. I only have one, and that's it.

Paul: [00:42:05](#) ... So I got to, I got to ask you. Um, what was it like when you got the call? You know, what-

David: [00:42:12](#) Paul, I s-

Paul: [00:42:13](#) ... How did that, how did you find out?

David: [00:42:14](#) ... Paul, I swear to God, I thought I was, I was c- in trouble. I thought they were doing an investigation, that someone-

Paul: [00:42:20](#) (laughs)

David: [00:42:20](#) ... Said something, and I was going, I was in trouble. And so I called an attorney, and I was like, "Hey. I got a crazy call."

Paul: [00:42:29](#) [crosstalk 00:42:29] call from the army.

David: [00:42:29](#) I got a c-

Paul: [00:42:30](#) [crosstalk 00:42:30] call?

David: [00:42:30](#) ... I got a call from, uh, a person who was connected to G1 personnel, uh, but there were, there were just questions about are you, is this true, did you do thi-

Paul: [00:42:41](#) Your cell phone ring, maybe [crosstalk 00:42:42].

David: [00:42:42](#) ... They called my work. They called my, my work and, uh, and left a message. But I, I got back to 'em, and they were like, "I can't tell you anything. You got to talk to this person." Uh, so t- you wait. You talk to a colonel. Colonel tells you that a senior member of the DOD needs to talk to you. Asked a bunch of questions that were, like, really super specific about special pieces of whatever. Uh, you confirm, you deny, you do whatever.

David: [00:43:05](#) So I call an attorney and said, "Look, uh, just find out what's going on." He's like, "Uh, you're either going to be an ambassador to a country or (laughs) you're going to jail for the rest of your life and they're going to extradite you to, like, you know, you're going to c- Camp X-Ray, you know?" Like-

Paul: [00:43:19](#) You're living in Buffalo?

David: [00:43:20](#) ... I'm living in Buffalo. I'm doing my thing.

Paul: [00:43:22](#) [crosstalk 00:43:22].

David: [00:43:22](#) I was doing, I do a radio show.

Paul: [00:43:24](#) Yeah. Yeah.

David: [00:43:24](#) So I'm doing, you know, my standard, uh, uh, conservative radio talk, cat declawing, a little bit of (laughs) controversial-

Paul: [00:43:31](#) Yeah.

David: [00:43:32](#) ... Drive time talk in Buffalo. And, and, and this stuff just keeps happening and happening. And so, uh, I get a phone call. This important person in DOD's going to call me. And, like, s- th- th- they blow me off. And I, I d- it happened, like, four times. Keep getting blown off. And I'm thinking, but every time something weird happens, like Mattis resigns or, you know...

Paul: [00:43:53](#) And you've been a very vocal supporter of, of President Trump.

David: [00:43:55](#) I b- oh, I'm a conservative.

Paul: [00:43:57](#) [crosstalk 00:43:57] right?

David: [00:43:57](#) So I'm a c- Republi-

Paul: [00:43:58](#) [crosstalk 00:43:58] possibility you would be appointed to some position somewhere.

David: [00:44:00](#) ... Well, it is, with me, it is. W- Uh, you know, but if they're appointing me-

Paul: [00:44:04](#) (laughs)

David: [00:44:05](#) ... I would say it's well with-

Paul: [00:44:06](#) I don't think Trump's calling me [crosstalk 00:44:07].

David: [00:44:07](#) ... But I'm just saying. You, you've got to-

Paul: [00:44:10](#) [crosstalk 00:44:10] me to get [crosstalk 00:44:10] out of here.

David: [00:44:10](#) ... You, you got the UMass. Uh, you've got all that stuff on y- on your resume. Uh, I wasn't thinking anything. I was just thinking, you know, maybe it's the Secretary of the Army.

Paul: [00:44:18](#) Right.

David: [00:44:18](#) And maybe they upgraded the Silver Star.

Paul: [00:44:20](#) Okay.

David: [00:44:20](#) I get a letter in the mail.

Paul: [00:44:24](#) At the time, you had had, uh, was it a Bronze Star for Valor for the o- for the [crosstalk 00:44:25]?

David: [00:44:25](#) No. I, I just had a Bronze Star for Service, which is I-

Paul: [00:44:28](#) Okay.

David: [00:44:28](#) ... You know, lifetime achievement.

Paul: [00:44:30](#) [crosstalk 00:44:30] had been-

David: [00:44:30](#) Silver Star.

Paul: [00:44:31](#) ... Recognized with a Silver Star.

David: [00:44:32](#) Right.

Paul: [00:44:32](#) So the question was always, would they upgrade it?

David: [00:44:35](#) Would they upgrade it? And I get a letter saying that my Silver Star is rescinded. And I was like, "Whoa. What is happening? You know, th- is this because of the award? Is this, or, you know, because of the charges?" (laughs)

Paul: [00:44:47](#) [crosstalk 00:44:47] radio. (laughs)

David: [00:44:48](#) What's happening here? And, uh, I, I get a phone call, and, and they said, "Hey. The phone call is going to happen at 2:00 PM. Pick up." And it's the President of the United States. And then you're thinking someone's messing with you.

Paul: [00:45:00](#) Right.

David: [00:45:00](#) I- It's Alec Baldwin. It's, you know, some, some-

Paul: [00:45:04](#) (laughs)

David: [00:45:04](#) ... (laughs) Some dude's just messing with you. And it was him, and I was just, I freaked out. You know, I was just blown away by it. And then, um, uh, you know, the, the, the real thing is I, I can't tell anyone. C- Uh, and how do you keep this out of the media? How do you, you know, just live your life but still freak out?

David: [00:45:22](#) And I just started talking to all these guys I haven't talked to in 15 years, and it was, like, so cathartic to just be able to... You know, when you're 25, you don't tell a man you love him. You know? But at 44, I'm not going to, I, if I love you, I'm going to tell you I love you. You know? And, and it's just a different world.

And so i- I just got to be with these guys again, and it, it just felt f- so warm.

David: [00:45:44](#) And then all of a sudden, you're, you know, people want a piece and they want, you know, you to go to every event and every memorial. And you become a mascot. It's like when you put that on, it's almost like a, you're putting on, like, a Batman uniform. It's not-

Paul: [00:46:00](#) Sure.

David: [00:46:00](#) ... You know what I mean?

Paul: [00:46:00](#) Yeah.

David: [00:46:01](#) Like, you're not, that's not you.

Paul: [00:46:03](#) [crosstalk 00:46:03] you walking around, you know, in Buffalo in the city. People didn't know who you are.

David: [00:46:05](#) No one.

Paul: [00:46:06](#) You're a normal dude. You put that on, and it's a Superman cape.

David: [00:46:08](#) And that's with a radio show. (laughs) So as just to show you the effect of the radio show-

Paul: [00:46:12](#) (laughs)

David: [00:46:12](#) ... No one knew who the hell I was. Um, but no. It just is weird. It's weird.

Paul: [00:46:17](#) So what did, what did Trump say when he called? Do you remember what he said?

David: [00:46:20](#) Um, I was just trying not to say the F word.

Paul: [00:46:23](#) Do you remember where you were standing when you got the call?

David: [00:46:24](#) Uh, yeah. I was at the radio station, um, and, uh, we were just hanging out and, and getting ready for this phone call, not really sure it was Trump, not knowing what would happen. But at that point, it was like, "Who's that?" Well, the Secretary of the Army's not that busy.

Paul: [00:46:38](#) Right.

David: [00:46:38](#) We played navy one time. (laughs)

Paul: [00:46:40](#) Right. (laughs)

David: [00:46:42](#) No. But it ended up happening that it was him, and he just said, um, you know, he actually did the Woody Williams th- the Wood- thing he got in trouble for Woody Williams. I wish I could give one to myself.

Paul: [00:46:54](#) Oh. Right.

David: [00:46:54](#) He said that to me on the phone.

Paul: [00:46:56](#) [crosstalk 00:46:56] said he, he said to Woody Williams, uh, when [crosstalk 00:46:58].

David: [00:46:58](#) It's a cool award. Yeah. So-

Paul: [00:47:00](#) [crosstalk 00:47:00] cool award. I wish I could give one to myself. Something like that.

David: [00:47:02](#) ... That, that's his, like, funny, that he's-

Paul: [00:47:03](#) Yeah.

David: [00:47:04](#) ... Trying to be humorous-

Paul: [00:47:05](#) Yeah.

David: [00:47:05](#) ... When he does that.

Paul: [00:47:06](#) That's what he said to you?

David: [00:47:06](#) He said that to me. It was funny. I mean, it was like, you know, this is an awesome award. As president, I'd like to give one to myself, but they said I'm not that brave. And that's literally what he said to, like, three other recipients. So it's not like... I don't know. My, my point is is that (laughs) it was, it was weird. The whole thing was weird.

Paul: [00:47:23](#) [crosstalk 00:47:23].

David: [00:47:23](#) I'm talking to the President of the United States and m- and the president's, you know, cracking a joke and b- and then he gets

really serious. And when he gets super serious, I start, you know, realizing that this is happening. And, um, you know, it just, everything changes. You can't have an opinion anymore. I, I, I can't do a radio show with a Medal of Honor. It's like, you know, the Medal of Honor is against free trade. (laughs) The Medal of Honor...

Paul: [00:47:47](#) But you can. I mean, you know-

David: [00:47:47](#) Well, you can.

Paul: [00:47:47](#) ... Bob, Bob Kerry ran for president, right?

David: [00:47:48](#) You know what?

Paul: [00:47:49](#) Bob Kerrey ran as a, as a Democrat from Nebraska. I hope he'll join us on the show at some point in the future [crosstalk 00:47:53].

David: [00:47:53](#) Great man. I'm not that-

Paul: [00:47:55](#) [crosstalk 00:47:55] mentor to me.

David: [00:47:55](#) ... Yeah.

Paul: [00:47:56](#) Um, you know, you can absolutely. I'm, I'm going to tell you, like, in, in many ways, you know, you absolutely can. And you're still an individual, and we need your voice more than ever. And what's frankly hard sometimes is to get candor out of Medal of Honor recipients, because you've seen so much.

Paul: [00:48:09](#) Like, a- and especially now, in the second phase of your, this next phase of your life, you've seen so many different sides of politics and this country and the world. You know, you guys, I've said it before, i- if, if America was a religion, veterans are the clergy. And in some ways, you know, the Medal of Honor recipients are like the samurai elite. I mean, you all are the protector of the, of the flame.

David: [00:48:30](#) What would you, what would you do? Uh, do you see politics? Would you ever run?

Paul: [00:48:34](#) I, well, this is a great question to, to have with you, because I was going to ask you that. And I mean, I'm an, I'm an independent, right? Like, I really am. I don't have a political

home. And, and for me, this is the path to continue to serve and continue to make noise and to fight for the issues I care about.

Paul: [00:48:49](#) And Congress fucking sucks. And being in politics really sucks. Uh, and I, and it's not my path, man. I, I don't know where I would go in that w- and I like New York City too much. I don't want to leave. I don't want to wear a fucking tie.

David: [00:49:02](#) But don't you think though-

Paul: [00:49:04](#) [crosstalk 00:49:04] you know.

David: [00:49:04](#) ... But in your most honest moment-

Paul: [00:49:05](#) Yeah.

David: [00:49:06](#) ... Don't you think, I thought veterans made the best politicians in the world-

Paul: [00:49:10](#) 100%. But maybe not this veteran.

David: [00:49:12](#) ... But, no, no. But I got to tell you, I don't know if that's true anymore.

Paul: [00:49:15](#) I agree with you on that. [crosstalk 00:49:16].

David: [00:49:16](#) I think we're actually really bad politicians.

Paul: [00:49:18](#) We might be. I think, look, look. You know, veterans are not a monolith, right? There's some great veterans. There's some shitty veterans. Um, but you did run for Congress twice.

David: [00:49:25](#) I did. And I, uh, but I, I'm, I'm saying that I believe that-

Paul: [00:49:29](#) Before you got the medal.

David: [00:49:30](#) ... Before I got the medal-

Paul: [00:49:30](#) You, and now, just a couple of weeks ago, you announced you will not run.

David: [00:49:33](#) ... N- N- Yes. Everyo-

Paul: [00:49:34](#) [crosstalk 00:49:34] you run again-

David: [00:49:35](#) ... There were d- s-

Paul: [00:49:35](#) ... You would probably win.

David: [00:49:35](#) ... Clearly-

Paul: [00:49:37](#) And you're in the 27th congressional district?

David: [00:49:38](#) ... 20, yeah. New York 27.

Paul: [00:49:40](#) Upstate New York outside of the Buffalo area.

David: [00:49:41](#) Right. Right.

Paul: [00:49:42](#) Right? The, uh, the, the, the, the, the, uh, current occupant has now resigned in scandal.

David: [00:49:48](#) The, well, right.

Paul: [00:49:48](#) Right?

David: [00:49:48](#) Because indicted.

Paul: [00:49:49](#) And so [crosstalk 00:49:50] essentially coming up?

David: [00:49:50](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:49:51](#) Right? Am I getting it right?

David: [00:49:52](#) It would be a special election, and then it would be... Look, I, I, I'm confident that if, if I chose to, I could hold that seat for 20 years.

Paul: [00:49:59](#) Right.

David: [00:50:00](#) Because it's, it's an R+12.

Paul: [00:50:02](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [00:50:02](#) Which is a very conservative area.

Paul: [00:50:04](#) Right.

David: [00:50:04](#) Um, lock and step with the, with the president. Uh, conservative stuff, I- guns, all that stuff. You know, i- it'd g- w- but w-

Paul: [00:50:14](#) What about, what about something else? [crosstalk 00:50:14].

David: [00:50:14](#) ... Why, but why would you do it? Why are you doing it? You're, you're, you're doing it because the award has somehow...

Paul: [00:50:21](#) Yeah. But what about, what about governor?

David: [00:50:22](#) I-

Paul: [00:50:23](#) What about governor? What about Senate? You could run against Kirsten Gillibrand?

David: [00:50:25](#) ... Or-

Paul: [00:50:25](#) [crosstalk 00:50:25] something like that [crosstalk 00:50:26].

David: [00:50:26](#) ... Or we can, we can inspire, you know, uh, 6,000 New Yorkers to join the military.

Paul: [00:50:31](#) Mm.

David: [00:50:31](#) And we can put a whole new generation of cyber guys out there so we don't have to bleed.

Paul: [00:50:37](#) Let, let me ask you a related question. You are close to the president, right? He, he praised you at the last Medal of Honor recipient-

David: [00:50:41](#) He was kind.

Paul: [00:50:41](#) ... Uh, ceremony for, uh, Williams, right?

David: [00:50:44](#) Right.

Paul: [00:50:45](#) And, uh, called you out personally.

David: [00:50:47](#) Right.

Paul: [00:50:47](#) And what about going in the administration? Would you go work at Department of Defense, go work in the White House, go do something like that [inaudible 00:50:53]?

David: [00:50:53](#) I, I just think the award is a holy thing, and if it, uh... I mean, I'm a conservative. I'm never going to change my ideology. This is who I am. I'm unapologetic about it. But the award can't be.

Paul: [00:51:04](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [00:51:05](#) The award can't be pro-life.

Paul: [00:51:07](#) Hm.

David: [00:51:07](#) (laughs) You know what I'm saying? The award can't have a, a stance on-

Paul: [00:51:11](#) [crosstalk 00:51:11] really [crosstalk 00:51:11].

David: [00:51:11](#) ... On fracking. (laughs) The, the, the, the award would like to talk about hydraulic fracking.

Paul: [00:51:17](#) [crosstalk 00:51:17]. You can do a cartoon on, like-

David: [00:51:18](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:51:18](#) ... The actual award itself.

David: [00:51:19](#) Right. Right.

Paul: [00:51:20](#) So let me, let me ask you a question I always ask of all folks, and thank you for taking us through this journey. I ask every, every person I've ever interviewed, um, because you are a person who is shaping what this country is, what it has been, and what it will be going forward. David Bellavia, what makes you angry?

David: [00:51:35](#) Uh, f- fear. When I get scared, I, I get really hostile. It's like, um, I don't know what it is, but it's, it's a thing that, that's my Achilles heel, you know?

Paul: [00:51:51](#) Yeah. I think that's really honest. Yeah.

David: [00:51:53](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:51:54](#) And I, what, part of why we created this show is because I think anger is a real thing, and we got to talk about it.

David: [00:51:58](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:51:58](#) And also, you know, can we turn that anger into positive outcomes?

David: [00:52:02](#) Right.

Paul: [00:52:02](#) Right? I think that's what you've been able to d-

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Paul: [00:52:03](#) ...If you're into positive outcomes.

David: [00:52:03](#) Right.

Paul: [00:52:03](#) Right? I think that's what you've been able to do [crosstalk 00:52:05].

David: [00:52:04](#) Right, well tried to. Yeah. [crosstalk 00:52:06]

Paul: [00:52:06](#) With, with, with the metal and r- related question [inaudible 00:52:11]. What makes you happy?

David: [00:52:16](#) Uh, uh, purpose.

Paul: [00:52:18](#) Hm.

David: [00:52:20](#) Now, knowing that this is what your supposed to do, this, these are the people you're supposed to be with, uh, this is the life you're supposed to live. Um, you know it's like... I grew up watching wrestling, uh, you know. The, the idea of pinning someone was the ultimate and now I'm starting to realize that, you know, as I get older that, uh, we argue because we want to dominate. We argue because we want to prove and we want to prove because we're insecure, right? So, I don't have to, I'm not insecure about what I believe and if you want to be really loud about what you believe, I know what I know to be true. So, I'm not at all... I don't need to bash you. I don't need to wrestle with you. I don't need to scream at you. Let talk about what we agree on. You're a Giants fan. I like the Bills (laughs). [crosstalk 00:53:12].

Paul: [00:53:13](#) Bills are better than the Giants and Jets right now. The Bills are-

David: [00:53:15](#) Uh.

Paul: [00:53:16](#) Kind of making you happy-

David: [00:53:17](#) [crosstalk 00:53:17] I gotta tell ya. I love the Bills so much. But I gotta tell ya, th- some of the... You gotta be honest with yourself. It, this, this, this schedule has been really kind.

Paul: [00:53:25](#) Yes.

David: [00:53:25](#) Yeah, this is not, this isn't a team-

Paul: [00:53:28](#) [crosstalk 00:53:28]. I root for the Bills.

David: [00:53:29](#) Oh, I appreciate it. [crosstalk 00:53:30].

Paul: [00:53:30](#) Best football team in New York right now.

David: [00:53:31](#) Only.

Paul: [00:53:32](#) Oh, yeah, true. Well, you got Army and Army, unfortunately for us, sucks this year.

David: [00:53:35](#) Well (laughs), that's true.

Paul: [00:53:36](#) Not looking good [crosstalk 00:53:37]-

David: [00:53:37](#) That's true. Yeah. That is true. Army. Poor Army. Yeah, we're too focused on winning wars to-

Paul: [00:53:43](#) There you go [crosstalk 00:53:43]-

David: [00:53:43](#) To play football.

Paul: [00:53:44](#) Jokes for days.

David: [00:53:45](#) That's right.

Paul: [00:53:45](#) So let me ask... When you growing up in Buffalo... So the other question we ask of all our guests-

David: [00:53:49](#) Uh-huh.

Paul: [00:53:49](#) [crosstalk 00:53:49] what was your first car?

David: [00:53:50](#) I had a 1982 Grand Marquis.

Paul: [00:53:53](#) Ooh.

David: [00:53:54](#) Light blue, white leather, and a CB radio. My brother, uh, purchased it. I got it from my brother. It was \$2000. And a, a cowboy had the car before us and he wore a hat that wore away at the top of the, uh, interior. Um, and so it had a hole right where the cowboy hat was. And it was just an absolute... It was a boat. You could get in a c- I got in a car accident with it. I didn't even know I was in the car accident (laughs), you know?

Paul: [00:54:25](#) That's amazing.

David: [00:54:25](#) Huge.

Paul: [00:54:27](#) I was in multiple car accidents with my first car. But I gotta ask you, so you had a CB in the car?

David: [00:54:31](#) A CB radio.

Paul: [00:54:32](#) What was your CB handle?

David: [00:54:33](#) You know, I, I just would listen [crosstalk 00:54:36]. I was too afraid to-

Paul: [00:54:40](#) I had a CB in my house.

David: [00:54:41](#) Really?

Paul: [00:54:42](#) Yeah.

David: [00:54:42](#) Who did you talk to?

Paul: [00:54:44](#) Anybody (laughs). Anybody who would listen.

David: [00:54:46](#) Now that, isn't that funny, though? [crosstalk 00:54:47].

Paul: [00:54:46](#) There just trying to talk to people [crosstalk 00:54:48].

David: [00:54:48](#) But think about this-

Paul: [00:54:49](#) I thought it was like... I thought I was in some kind of movie, man. I was gonna talk to aliens. I was out there talking to anybody (laughs). I would talk to truckers-

David: [00:54:55](#) Truckers?

Paul: [00:54:55](#) They would come by, and they, you would scoop 'em up [crosstalk 00:54:58]-

David: [00:54:57](#) Yeah, th- that's the equivalent, that's the equivalent of unsupervised kids [crosstalk 00:55:01] on the internet.

Paul: [00:55:02](#) But that's like relatively harmless, like, you know-

David: [00:55:04](#) Mm.

Paul: [00:55:04](#) Unless I tapped into NASA or something else-

David: [00:55:06](#) Right.

Paul: [00:55:07](#) But I had, I had what I thought was a very cool handle at the time. I called myself-

David: [00:55:12](#) What was it?

Paul: [00:55:12](#) Excalibur.

David: [00:55:13](#) No.

Paul: [00:55:13](#) Yeah!

David: [00:55:13](#) Stop it.

Paul: [00:55:15](#) I was like 12 [crosstalk 00:55:15]-

David: [00:55:15](#) Stop it.

Paul: [00:55:17](#) I thought I had a cool fucking name [crosstalk 00:55:17]-

David: [00:55:18](#) Excalibur? [crosstalk 00:55:18].

Paul: [00:55:18](#) Excalibur.

David: [00:55:18](#) When, when did you know you wanted to join?

Paul: [00:55:20](#) Join the Army?

David: [00:55:21](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:55:22](#) Always.

David: [00:55:23](#) Really.

Paul: [00:55:23](#) It was like... Yeah. For me, I'm trying to describe it. It was like, um, people who, who describe they wanna join, um, the seminary, or something like that or... I feel like it's, and I felt like it was like that... My grandfather was drafted. My father was drafted. Uh, on some levels, I felt like I had to do it or I wasn't doing my part. I felt like I couldn't look my father or my grandfather in the eye.

David: [00:55:46](#) Right.

Paul: [00:55:46](#) And on some level it felt like I would be a freeloading piece of shit if I didn't do my part. Because I went to college... Well I, when I joined, my father was gonna kill me.

David: [00:55:55](#) Right.

Paul: [00:55:55](#) He was like "You know, you"-

David: [00:55:57](#) Wasted [crosstalk 00:55:58]-

Paul: [00:55:57](#) "Play football, you got a chance to go to college. You want to go down South and roll around in, in the mud with a bunch of rednecks and play Army?" He's like "You don't have to do that shit. My grandfa- you know, your fa- grandfather did it. I did it. You don't have to."

David: [00:56:08](#) Right.

Paul: [00:56:09](#) And I think they kind of saw it as an opportunity to break the cycle because we were an old school military family in that every family was military, right?

David: [00:56:15](#) Right.

Paul: [00:56:15](#) Like all my grandparents who have, the men on my grandmother's side all got drafted. So, you know [crosstalk 00:56:21]-

David: [00:56:22](#) Did, did, did your, did your Iraq experience change the way you look at the Army?

Paul: [00:56:25](#) A hundred percent. Yeah, all of it changed. It's always evolving, right?

David: [00:56:28](#) But what, what, what happened for you... I'm not, I'm not saying personally, but I'm saying what happened for you where you lost that passion? Would you [crosstalk 00:56:36], let's just, it, it-

Paul: [00:56:36](#) I haven't lost it. I mean, I love, you know, the Army is, is kind of like a family member, right? Like you love things about it, you hate things about it-

David: [00:56:42](#) (Laughs) Right, right.

Paul: [00:56:42](#) Right? Like, you know, it, it, it, that's the familiarity. And you know it, right? That's the difference about joining is you know it.

David: [00:56:49](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:56:50](#) I've said before that-

David: [00:56:50](#) That's a good point.

Paul: [00:56:51](#) There's only two things that I don't think you can ever understand unless you've experienced them. It's combat and parenthood.

David: [00:56:59](#) Whoa.

Paul: [00:57:00](#) You can talk about it. You can say you understand it. But until that baby's in your hands-

David: [00:57:03](#) I would add kidney stones to that.

Paul: [00:57:06](#) Get o- [crosstalk 00:57:06].

David: [00:57:06](#) (Laughs)

Paul: [00:57:06](#) (Laughs)

David: [00:57:06](#) No, it's true. It's true.

Paul: [00:57:06](#) But I got, I got to ask you, man-

David: [00:57:09](#) Yeah.

Paul: [00:57:09](#) Because now you... This is a show that's largely for independents-

David: [00:57:14](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Paul: [00:57:14](#) And for unaffiliated, so people who don't have a party. Especially right now... You know, you've talked a lot about honor and integrity, and there's a, I think a crisis going on in the Republican party. What is the party going to be? And you have an in- opportunity, whether you like it or not. You're going to be a face of the Republican party. So I ask this of Democrats and I'm going to ask this of other Republicans on this show. 'Cause I'm, you know, a political [inaudible 00:57:38]. Why are you a Republican?

David: [00:57:40](#) Well, I... There's a lot of reasons why I'm a Republican. And I, I would tell you the same reason, you know, it starts off when your, your parents are one thing. You know, you either want to be the opposite of them or you want to be just like them. So, you know, you're... The way you look at the world is always shaped by the way you were raised. And I was raised by very religious, uh, conservative people. And, um, there's a lot of, of, of, of peace in, in the idea that I control my own destiny. That really... At the forefront of conservative politics is, you know, we don't believe you (laughs), right? We don't believe anything. You prove it, right? I... You know, you say you're not going to break into my house. I'm still gonna look the door. And I'm, and I'm st- Just in case you get through that, wh- you know, there's, there's a... In order to truly appreciate liberty, there has to be a, a paranoia about protecting it.

David: [00:58:34](#) Now when it goes too far, it's radical, and it's crazy. And just like on the left, that is the way we should all live. In a utopia where everyone is, is going to be treated the same and everyone has the same opportunity and everyone will take advantage of it, and there won't be anyone who will exploit it. That's Heaven. I believe that's what I'm going to see when I meet Jesus is that I will see a liberal's utopia. I don't disrespect that. And I don't want to fight... I don't wanna stop to fight to get to that. But it's not real, and it's never gonna happen. And as soldiers, we found out that all those stories and all that training's great, but that's not real either. 'Cause as soon as you get fired at, rank is ceremonial-

Paul: [00:59:16](#) Mm.

David: [00:59:17](#) And you're just out there hooking and jabbing trying to stay in the fight. So a lot of it... I'm just saying that I'm, I'm proud of, of what I believe, and I'm proud of... But my party, I don't want it to be... I don't want to be identified by my party. I wanna be identified by my Army. I want to be identified by my generation and my peers.

Paul: [00:59:38](#) That's fine. But that makes me ask you, then why be in a party?

David: [00:59:42](#) The-

Paul: [00:59:42](#) Because you, you're exactly the type of guy that could transcend-

David: [00:59:49](#) You, the, the liberal [crosstalk 00:59:49]-

Paul: [00:59:49](#) I'm not saying be a Democrat.

David: [00:59:49](#) No, no, I understand [crosstalk 00:59:49].

Paul: [00:59:49](#) What you said, I'm the party of the Army.

David: [00:59:50](#) D-

Paul: [00:59:51](#) There, there, there's a rising... What we've seen in the veteran's community especially, the fastest growing community's unaffiliated independents.

David: [00:59:57](#) Right.

Paul: [00:59:57](#) And if there was the veteran's party tomorrow, right, and we had you and West Moore, right, guys who are different sides, politically different issue. But you have this same sense of cohesion-

David: [01:00:07](#) Right.

Paul: [01:00:07](#) Of honor, of integrity, of, of, of country over party. I think a lot of people would get behind you, right?

David: [01:00:13](#) But, but it, I, I think that when you, you know, wh- I meet Libertarians all the time, and I tell them "I fear Libertarians more than I f- fear liberals."

Paul: [01:00:22](#) Why?

David: [01:00:22](#) I just think Libertarians are a danger to the Republic (laughs). No, I really do. I, I, I love them. They're, they're brilliant. They're always thanking. They're always reading, right? The reality is that, um, there's always a reason someone doesn't want to identify as something.

Paul: [01:00:38](#) Mm.

David: [01:00:38](#) Right? You could be a pro-choice Republican that is just so passionate about abortion that you're just like "Screw the party. I'm a Democrat." Uh, blue, blue hawk, the blue dog Democrat did not die. They just stopped talking about it in public.

Paul: [01:00:54](#) Mm.

David: [01:00:55](#) They're still out there, and, and the still exist. But honestly, they, uh, the thi- You gotta have four parties to be real. And you can't just third party it, you can't just indepen- independent it. All you're going to do is, you're going to screw up an election. You know, and, and-

Paul: [01:01:11](#) Or save the Republicans.

David: [01:01:13](#) Save the Republicans the s- If we were parliamentary-

Paul: [01:01:16](#) [crosstalk 01:01:16].

David: [01:01:16](#) If we were a parliamentary system, yes.

Paul: [01:01:18](#) Like i- in my view... Let me just give you an example. I think a lot of folks listening to you today believe in you.

David: [01:01:23](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:01:23](#) And support you. And if you, if you stand alone are running for office, you'll probably do better, especially in New York than if you run as a Republican. And maybe in your district if you run as Democrat.

David: [01:01:35](#) Right.

Paul: [01:01:35](#) Like I think you have a unique ability-

David: [01:01:37](#) But what if [crosstalk 01:01:38]-

Paul: [01:01:38](#) Transcend party. And that's part of what I'm, I think on some levels being an Independent is a little like being a Libertarian. It's a little hard, 'cause you always have to try to... It's a harder path.

David: [01:01:48](#) Oh, it is.

Paul: [01:01:48](#) Libertarians have to constantly to not explain why they're Libertarian, they have to explain what it means to be Libertarian (laughs), right?

David: [01:01:52](#) They're like s- yeah, they're Seventh Day Adventists.

Paul: [01:01:54](#) (Laughs) Yeah.

David: [01:01:55](#) [crosstalk 01:01:55]. They're constantly explaining why they're different but the same.

Paul: [01:01:57](#) Let me ask you this, this related question too, Dave. You have been a very public supporter of Trump, right, for a long time and, and now. As a military person at a time where they're have been so many issues, the most recently, um, the, the criticism of Lieutenant Colonel Vindman. But before that, let's talk about these ones. John, John McCain.

David: [01:02:18](#) Right, right.

Paul: [01:02:18](#) Or, or the [Khan 01:02:20] family. Or [crosstalk 01:02:20]-

David: [01:02:20](#) Khan was in my unit, by the way. Kevin Khan was in two two infantry, so he, the... I, I knew the man. So I'm not, uh, I'm not gonna reflectively, um [crosstalk 01:02:29]-

Paul: [01:02:30](#) But what I would view, and I think what many would view as crossing a line-

David: [01:02:35](#) Listen there is no doubt at all... I mean here's the thing that, that just b- b- I am just... I don't deal... I don't stick up for like the, the total B.S., right?

Paul: [01:02:44](#) Right.

David: [01:02:45](#) There is not a person out there that is shocked by anything President Donald Trump says. I mean, it's absurd [crosstalk 01:02:52], at this point.

Paul: [01:02:53](#) I'm shocked sometimes.

David: [01:02:53](#) Oh, come on.

Paul: [01:02:54](#) I'm shocked sometimes.

David: [01:02:54](#) No one's shocked.

Paul: [01:02:55](#) I'm shocked sometimes.

David: [01:02:56](#) He could, he could literally just record himself, uh, going there, there, going the b- No one would care at this point. Donald Trump knows exactly what he's doing on Twitter.

Paul: [01:03:05](#) Uh-huh.

David: [01:03:06](#) That, and, and, and is it presidential? A lot of people thought Obama wasn't presidential when he sent e-mails.

Paul: [01:03:11](#) A hundred percent.

David: [01:03:12](#) So, so this-

Paul: [01:03:14](#) I'm not gonna be the guy who defends [crosstalk 01:03:14]-

David: [01:03:14](#) I'm saying, I'm saying that, that, that the Democrats are gonna select a candidate, and the Republicans have Donald Trump. There are a lot of things that I would make the argument that whether you're a hundred percent with the President and his policies or believe in the man, the people he pisses off are people that have never been touched in our spectrum-

Paul: [01:03:39](#) That's true.

David: [01:03:39](#) Ever.

Paul: [01:03:40](#) Sometimes gold star families.

David: [01:03:41](#) Well, but understand, though. A gold star family that is so offended that they take their outrage to the Democratic committee is a little bit [crosstalk 01:03:51] to me... Here's the thing.

Paul: [01:03:52](#) I guess the question I think, Dave, is h- h- can he do it in a way that, dare I say, more respectful?

David: [01:04:00](#) You can- i- i- i-

Paul: [01:04:00](#) More civil.

David: [01:04:00](#) I- I- It-

Paul: [01:04:03](#) More honorable.

David: [01:04:04](#) I, I, of cour- We can all be more honorable.

Paul: [01:04:07](#) Right.

David: [01:04:07](#) Absolutely we can be more honorable.

Paul: [01:04:08](#) Right.

David: [01:04:08](#) But again, what I'm saying, though, is that this is not a shock.

Paul: [01:04:13](#) Right.

David: [01:04:13](#) Wh- you, you can report on it and say it's disgusting-

Paul: [01:04:17](#) Doesn't make it okay.

David: [01:04:17](#) No, but to me it's like talking about the smell emanating from the restroom. You know, it's [crosstalk 01:04:21] horrible, I agree. What are you going to do about it? [crosstalk 01:04:24]. Yes, sir. Yeah.

Paul: [01:04:25](#) The most unpopular move I've ever seen him make with regard to the military was abandoning the Kurds.

David: [01:04:31](#) Oh, stop.

Paul: [01:04:32](#) No, it really was.

David: [01:04:33](#) Paul-

Paul: [01:04:34](#) Bi-partisan-

David: [01:04:34](#) Paul-

Paul: [01:04:35](#) I don't think, again [crosstalk 01:04:35]-

David: [01:04:35](#) Listen, listen.

Paul: [01:04:36](#) Do you think... I want to ask you.

David: [01:04:37](#) I don't, I think it, I-

Paul: [01:04:38](#) Do you think, do you support that move?

David: [01:04:40](#) I, I, listen, I, I think-

Paul: [01:04:42](#) And, and what do you think about it? I'm asking you... And if you don't wanna talk about it, we don't have to.

David: [01:04:45](#) Oh, no, no, no. I love it. I love this stuff.

Paul: [01:04:46](#) Because that's what I've seen, honestly. Republicans, Democrats, inside the Pentagon.

David: [01:04:49](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:04:49](#) People on active duty were really pissed off.

David: [01:04:52](#) I think they're all full of shit.

Paul: [01:04:53](#) Really? [crosstalk 01:04:54].

David: [01:04:54](#) A hundred percent full of shit. They're the... First of all, we're not talking about the Kurds, we're talking about the PKK, right?

Paul: [01:04:59](#) No, all Kurds [crosstalk 01:05:00].

David: [01:05:00](#) No, no, but the, what, what Turkey wants is the PKK. The reason we have the relationship-

Paul: [01:05:07](#) Turkey wants to attack the PKK.

David: [01:05:08](#) The which is terrorist organization [crosstalk 01:05:10] it's pa- Arguably, they're on our state department list.

Paul: [01:05:13](#) Okay.

David: [01:05:13](#) I mean, Obama said it, Bush said it. PKK are bad guys.

Paul: [01:05:16](#) Turks definitely said it.

David: [01:05:17](#) The Turks say it.

Paul: [01:05:18](#) Right.

David: [01:05:18](#) But I'm saying it.

Paul: [01:05:19](#) Yes.

David: [01:05:20](#) It, b- b- If anyone went to Kosovo-

Paul: [01:05:22](#) Right.

David: [01:05:22](#) Knows the PKK is a terrorist organization. So that's here nor there.

Paul: [01:05:26](#) [inaudible 01:05:26] Let's say the, the, the, the, the, uh, the Kurds that our special forces were standing next to a month ago-

David: [01:05:32](#) Okay now this is, this is a completely different scenario [crosstalk 01:05:36].

Paul: [01:05:35](#) Right?

David: [01:05:36](#) Right. I would make the argument that if anyone was pale faced when Yazidi Christians in that same zip code were being slaughtered, when Barack Obama didn't choose to do a damn thing in northern Iraq. I think the hand-wringing is completely political and r- ridiculous. I love to have a relationship with Peshmerga. I didn't make Turkey a NATO country, okay? The Republican party certainly didn't make NATO, uh, a partner with Turkey. That's a r- You roll the dice on that, okay? So now-

Paul: [01:06:07](#) They said, they said "No" to us when we wanted to come invade from the north.

David: [01:06:10](#) And now they want F-35s. And now the want missile defense. And now you elect an idealouge-

Paul: [01:06:15](#) Right.

David: [01:06:15](#) That's the, that's the problem with democracy, is that in the Middle East you're going to get some really popular assholes, and, and they're gonna, they're gonna... But E- Erdogan has got major, major problems. I don't, I wouldn't trust him for anything, quite frankly, right?

Paul: [01:06:30](#) Right, right.

David: [01:06:31](#) But I will say that if we're gonna look at the wheels coming off the cart in Iraq, there was a three mile convey that came into western Iraq from Syria when ISIS invaded. We're dropping [Jaydems 01:06:47] on dudes who are making butt dials, who are living in caves. There is no way on Earth that someone at Sancoms, someone in the administration did not see that convey of RAV4's with black flags coming into Iraq. They chose to let them come in and they chose to let a lot of slaughter happen. So, a- as... If we're gonna talk about Trump's relationship with the Kurds, my god, Paul. I mean, there is a lot of shame in Iraq.

Paul: [01:07:14](#) So you're, you're okay with it.

David: [01:07:15](#) I- I'm tell-

Paul: [01:07:17](#) [crosstalk 01:07:17] pull out and even though our troops are now getting eggs thrown at them by our Kurdish allies. We were standing next to them in a trench fight a- you know, a month ago. And then President says "Hey, you guys are out of here." [crosstalk 01:07:27].

David: [01:07:27](#) So wait, wait. If the Kurds are-

Paul: [01:07:29](#) We've left them, I think you will admit, we've left them to a much more difficult situation, potentially to be slaughtered.

David: [01:07:35](#) Actually, they're not in a more difficult situation, because now they have actually weapons to defend themselves and [crosstalk 01:07:39] in the Obama administration they didn't get that.

Paul: [01:07:41](#) You don't think they were better off with Green Beret's standing next to them?

David: [01:07:44](#) I... First of all, I don't think the Green Beret's are better off standing next to the Kurds.

Paul: [01:07:47](#) But that wasn't the question.

David: [01:07:48](#) No, but I, I... Do I think the Kurds are better off having America's presence there? Of course. Do I think that we should ever abandon our relationship with Peshmerga? No, I think that is shameful. But I think that the response to President Trump leaving the Kurds is the same response I get from President Trump on everything else.

Paul: [01:08:08](#) Yeah, but that's not what I mean. Right, I'm talking [crosstalk 01:08:08]-

David: [01:08:08](#) But, but it-

Paul: [01:08:08](#) I'm talking about it from a tactical standpoint. [crosstalk 01:08:09].

David: [01:08:08](#) Well, how about this. [crosstalk 01:08:10] Do you think-

Paul: [01:08:10](#) I know... When you and I were in Iraq, we had a Iraqi allies.

David: [01:08:12](#) Right, right.

Paul: [01:08:13](#) If, if tomorrow, you know, President Bush said "Boom, you guys are out of here" and we had this happen. You had had this

happen. We got pulled out and our friends died. I, I had, I had Iraqi friends who, when we pulled out we got the call to go, they were left behind and they died [crosstalk 01:08:27].

- David: [01:08:26](#) That's all I care about. What you're saying right there.
- Paul: [01:08:28](#) That's what I worry about is, is this message that has been sent. Whether you like it or not, whether you agree with it or not, they were our allies and we left them hung out to dry. And now I worry, will other allies stand with us?
- David: [01:08:43](#) Okay, but what, what I would have loved-
- Paul: [01:08:46](#) Do you worry about that?
- David: [01:08:47](#) Paul, I am a hundred percent with you, and I appreciate you acknowledging that. What I would have loved to seen is [inaudible 01:08:48] in 2010, which would have gone in the New York Times, Washington Post, you name it, saying "President Obama, what the F are you doing?"
- Paul: [01:08:57](#) Oh, I, you, dude, I, I, I-
- David: [01:09:00](#) But that was... I didn't hear it.
- Paul: [01:09:01](#) Absolutely. Well, you weren't listening. [crosstalk 01:09:03].
- David: [01:09:03](#) No, no, I'm saying, I'm saying from the, from the group, from the group.
- Paul: [01:09:06](#) No, no, no, dude. When I was in [inaudible 01:09:09] speaking on behalf of [inaudible 01:09:10] constituents-
- David: [01:09:10](#) Right.
- Paul: [01:09:11](#) And issues we were focused on, we had to pick, I had to pick my spots. Now the gloves are off, just like you, man.
- David: [01:09:15](#) Right.
- Paul: [01:09:16](#) This is the fun part, right?
- David: [01:09:16](#) Right.
- Paul: [01:09:17](#) You're on radio, and I gotta let you go soon. You're on radio everyday. I'm on radio. I'm doing the podcast. And now, I think,

I think I have a more important role to play and I think you do too. These are the conversations that are going to move America forward.

- David: [01:09:30](#) And here's the thing. It's-
- Paul: [01:09:31](#) That's why, honestly, I tell you man, I hope, I hope as an Independent and as an American that David Bellavia is the future of the Republican party and not Donald Trump. The way you carry yourself [crosstalk 01:09:41]-
- David: [01:09:41](#) Well that, that's kind. I-
- Paul: [01:09:42](#) The, the, the, the, the, the values that you embody... And I'm, I, I, and again, I'm a guy who's voted for Republicans. I will vote for, for the man or the woman, not for the party. And, and what I hope happens is a different kind of leadership to come. We had, um, J. T. Louis on. He's 19 years old, running for, for, uh, for office in Connecticut after his brother was shot and killed in Sandy Hook, right?
- Paul: [01:10:03](#) Plenty of things I don't agree with him on. And he is a hundred percent on board with Trump. But I think this kid's amazing, and I think he does represent a new face of the Republican party in part because of the way he carries himself. And I do think that's important, because you and I have the opportunity to bring the temperature down or turn it up.
- David: [01:10:19](#) Absolutely right. [crosstalk 01:10:21] Absolutely right.
- Paul: [01:10:21](#) What I've loved about our conversation today-
- David: [01:10:22](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [01:10:24](#) Hope we can continue going forward-
- David: [01:10:25](#) I do. I, I think it will because it has to start with mutual respect-
- Paul: [01:10:28](#) Yeah.
- David: [01:10:28](#) And it also has to s- to, to, to come to a point where you're, you're talking about issues you're passionate about, but you can separate an idea from a man-
- Paul: [01:10:39](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [01:10:39](#) And a woman.

Paul: [01:10:40](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [01:10:40](#) And, you know-

Paul: [01:10:41](#) Sometimes you can, but I mean, it's, it's hard, because, you know, you are the person... I, I, I like you, I respect you, I appreciate you. And with that comes a lot of goodwill and trust.

David: [01:10:52](#) Right.

Paul: [01:10:53](#) Right? If you turn around and start shittin' on my wife, right, or shittin' on my friends, it's not gonna be the same. Right? And, and I think that's the tone is what I think is different. And I think that transcends partisanship. And, and that's why I hope it can go in the right direction, but we'll see. And I think it's gonna be voices like yours [crosstalk 01:11:10]-

David: [01:11:10](#) But, but in that... Good, good.

Paul: [01:11:12](#) So the question now is who's gonna be Trump's VP? Now there are, are rumors that maybe it's gonna be Nikki Haley, maybe he'll switch from Pence and pick someone like Nikki Haley.

David: [01:11:22](#) Right.

Paul: [01:11:22](#) So who would you like to see be the future of the Republican party? As, as a, as a ambassador for the Republican party, as an advocate for the Republican party, who do you think represents... Not now, but the future.

David: [01:11:34](#) I think, um, you're looking at these hybrid, you know, um... There's a new form of Republican that's out there. We have to have more women. We have to have more diversity. It, it's, it's just a sign of the times. Um, you, you can't, you know, even if you're saying the same things, you have to look different. You know, the Republicans are not the party of rich, you know, white guys, and yet we were (laughs) rich white guys for President every four years, you know? So it, it's... There's gotta be something that we, you know, move to just I, I think America is. And the other side of that, though... I believe the future of the Republican party is African-Americans.

Paul: [01:12:13](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David: [01:12:14](#) I really do. I think African-Americans are going to realize that they are a hundred percent correct with the way, uh, most Black people live in our cities. That housing is... uh, we have Guantanamo people living better than some people do in the city.

Paul: [01:12:32](#) Is there... I'm not gonna challenge that, but I'm gonna ask you... Is there anyone in particular you think-

David: [01:12:37](#) No, I, I'm just saying that-

Paul: [01:12:39](#) That is a leader that like... Who would you [crosstalk 01:12:41]-

David: [01:12:41](#) I believe-

Paul: [01:12:42](#) Who do you, who do you see as, as, as folks that you could get... Let's assume that Trump get re-elected and, and leaves after the second term. Who, who are you looking to and hope that will run for President for the Republican party down the line?

David: [01:12:54](#) Oh, I, I mean, again, I'm not an ideologue. I'm not just gonna just look at someone and say "Because you're my party, I'm automatically with you." [crosstalk 01:13:03] I do. I mean, look, I look at-

Paul: [01:13:04](#) On the trail. You see the star. You see the grass roots. You see the farm team.

David: [01:13:08](#) Right.

Paul: [01:13:08](#) Right? And there are many vets. Somebody like Dan Crenshaw, right?

David: [01:13:11](#) Right.

Paul: [01:13:13](#) [inaudible 01:13:13] was the star for a long time, right? He was considered kind of the future of the Repu- Dunkin Hunter for awhile. There are things out there-

David: [01:13:18](#) Well, yeah. Sure. Tom Cotton is a rock star. All those guys like Crenshaw and everybody else. But, but again I think it's going to be, uh, a woman. I think it's going to be someone that is not, uh, not typical from the playbook. And, and the other thing is that I think... I, even if liberals get elected, I think we still are gonna rotate around the sun.

Paul: [01:13:39](#) Hm.

David: [01:13:39](#) You know?

Paul: [01:13:40](#) Yeah.

David: [01:13:40](#) I mean, just to-

Paul: [01:13:41](#) I appreciate that [crosstalk 01:13:41].

David: [01:13:41](#) No, no, I, I do.

Paul: [01:13:42](#) I think that's really important, because we gotta, not matter who wins next year we gotta figure out how to get along together.

David: [01:13:47](#) Now don't get me wrong. I don't want to see it happen.

Paul: [01:13:49](#) Oh, right, right, right.

David: [01:13:51](#) But, but I don't believe the world ends because someone, you know, gives the vote up.

Paul: [01:13:54](#) Well, I, I think we should do this every week (laughs).

David: [01:13:57](#) No, it's, it's fun, man. [crosstalk 01:13:59]. You're really good at this.

Paul: [01:14:00](#) Football, but I wanna, I wanna thank you, for you- for your time, for your advocacy, for the way you represent this country, the way you represent this state. I think if you ran for governor, a lot of people would be shaking in their boots. I think you could-

David: [01:14:12](#) Well.

Paul: [01:14:12](#) Do whole state wide. Um, you know, it'd be interesting to have Trump stomping for you in New York City.

David: [01:14:18](#) [inaudible 01:14:18].

Paul: [01:14:18](#) You'd have to get some serious security.

David: [01:14:22](#) Well, long as I know where to get a car, that's where-

Paul: [01:14:23](#) Before we leave, I have a last thing-

David: [01:14:24](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:14:24](#) Giving of the gifts.

David: [01:14:24](#) Aww.

Paul: [01:14:27](#) And so have gifts to thank you for your-

David: [01:14:30](#) Do we have anything?

Paul: [01:14:30](#) Conversation today. No, you're... I'm gonna hold the mic for you.

David: [01:14:32](#) Oh, thank you.

Paul: [01:14:32](#) We got three things in there.

David: [01:14:33](#) Wow.

Paul: [01:14:35](#) First is... You can start with that, 'cause I think you went right for the whisky [crosstalk 01:14:37].

David: [01:14:37](#) Fort Hamilton. [crosstalk 01:14:38] Wow, that's awesome.

Paul: [01:14:39](#) Military base in New York-

David: [01:14:40](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:14:41](#) And it's, uh, Fort Hamilton's new double barrel rye whiskey.

David: [01:14:46](#) Wow.

Paul: [01:14:46](#) Great history. It's named after Fort Hamilton.

David: [01:14:48](#) That's really cool.

Paul: [01:14:50](#) A lot of people don't even realize it was, it was a base in Brooklyn.

David: [01:14:51](#) That's right.

Paul: [01:14:51](#) Next, this is a great supporter of this show and the military.

David: [01:14:55](#) Hey, we got-

Paul: [01:14:56](#) We got Peeps. So this is part of the show. Usually we have yellow, pink, and blue.

David: [01:15:00](#) Right.

Paul: [01:15:00](#) And you have to pick a color w- Somebody stole the yellow Peeps. [crosstalk 01:15:04] gonna track them down, maybe get some of your Army buddies. But if you, if you had to choose a color of Peeps-

David: [01:15:08](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Paul: [01:15:09](#) Yellow, pink, or blue?

David: [01:15:12](#) Uh, blue. Yeah.

Paul: [01:15:13](#) Oh.

David: [01:15:13](#) I just, blue is just like the, it's like Infantry colors. That's what we do.

Paul: [01:15:18](#) Why, why is the sky blue?

David: [01:15:19](#) Because god loves the Infantry. That's right. [crosstalk 01:15:23].

Paul: [01:15:22](#) So as an Infantry man, you'll appreciate this. We've got an angry Americans t-shirt.

David: [01:15:27](#) Awesome.

Paul: [01:15:27](#) And it's American made, by the Veterans of Oscar Mike, made in the U.S.A..

David: [01:15:30](#) Very cool.

Paul: [01:15:32](#) Very hard to do-

David: [01:15:32](#) Very cool.

Paul: [01:15:32](#) But these guys are great and I hope you will wear that and enjoy it-

David: [01:15:35](#) Thank you.

Paul: [01:15:37](#) On my travels. Um, I know you've been-

David: [01:15:39](#) I appreciate that.

Paul: [01:15:39](#) On the road a lot and you've been... I can't imagine... Oh, let me ask you a last question. The movie-

David: [01:15:45](#) Yeah.

Paul: [01:15:45](#) You sold the movie rights about your life at some point. Are they gonna do the movie about your life?

David: [01:15:49](#) Yeah, no, we're still waiting on it to, the, the big issue here is that these are real people. I'm not gonna change their names. They lived, they died. I wanna tell America how they died. And I just, I really am not gonna, um, turn those men's legacies into star ship troopers with [inaudible 01:16:08]. It's not, it's not war pornography, it's a story about men who did incredible things for all of us and, uh, if that's not the agenda then, you know, I'm good.

Paul: [01:16:16](#) Hm. [inaudible 01:16:19].

David: [01:16:20](#) Have not, have not.

Paul: [01:16:20](#) He was in this chair a couple months ago.

David: [01:16:23](#) M-

Paul: [01:16:23](#) Maybe we can make that happen.

David: [01:16:24](#) Well, he's a good man.

Paul: [01:16:26](#) [crosstalk 01:16:26] the story, it must be told. How many books you got?

David: [01:16:27](#) Uh, one and another on the way.

Paul: [01:16:30](#) When's the new book coming out?

David: [01:16:33](#) Uh, not sure, probably about a year.

Paul: [01:16:33](#) And how can folks listen to your show with all [inaudible 01:16:36].

David: [01:16:36](#) They just go to duty1st.com. It's duty1st.com and, uh, that's the website.

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Paul: [01:16:42](#) I am infinitely grateful my friend for you spending this time with us, for all you do for this country. And, uh, I'm excited to see what happens. What you've shouldered is, uh, is unimaginable, and-

David: [01:16:56](#) [inaudible 01:16:56].

Paul: [01:16:56](#) Shouldered has been incredibly important and diplomatic. And now you're kinda the elder statesman of this new generation of, of, uh, Medal of Honor recipients. So they're the, they're the Avengers. You're like Captain America.

David: [01:17:07](#) Well-

Paul: [01:17:08](#) The Avengers-

David: [01:17:08](#) Well, you-

Paul: [01:17:09](#) I mean it in all sincerity [crosstalk 01:17:10]-

David: [01:17:09](#) Oh, that's very kind.

Paul: [01:17:11](#) To be the, the elder statesman of that group is really, really important for America.

David: [01:17:15](#) That's, that's very kind [crosstalk 01:17:16]. Thank you, bro. I appreciate. You're great. Thank you.

Paul: [01:17:19](#) All right, and we are out from New York with David Bellavia.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [01:17:23]