

- Paul: Ladies and gentlemen, angry Americans around the country and around the world. Welcome to the Classic Car Club Manhattan for a conversation with an exceptionally special, talented, interesting, inspiring guest. I am really happy that you're here, man. The great and powerful Chris Fussell is here with us today.
- Chris : Thanks Paul. Thanks for having me. Great to connect. Great to find another one of your secret and hidden spots inside of Manhattan. Truly impressive. So, you never know where it's going to be.
- Paul: If a Navy SEAL tells me that he's impressed by my secret spots, I'll take that as a badge of honor.
- Chris : Well deserved. Well deserved.
- Paul: Well, I'm glad you made the trip up from DC. What's it like riding on a train from DC right now with the coronavirus?
- Chris : It's a bit empty. We're here braving the corona frenzy. Yeah. I usually come up in Salem, probably up here three times a month, something like that. Third empty or third full relative to normal crowds. A little ghost street out in town here in Manhattan as you will. Union Station down in DC, the same thing. But my impression is people are doing what they're being asked to do, which is like, be thoughtful about big interactions. We've certainly pulled down the amount of travel. This is, honestly my one exception of the month so far, come up and I figured it was just me and you talking at safe distance. So we'll be okay.
- Paul: And we have drinks.
- Chris : That's right.
- Paul: So the first question I ask of all my guests, Chris Fussell, tell us what is your adult beverage of choice and why?
- Chris : So we went with Hudson bourbon. Given the location, bourbon would be my go-to drink and here in New York it should be Hudson, right? It's a great bourbon.
- Paul: Why do you like bourbon?
- Chris : That's a great question. I think if I was completely honest, it was probably coming up through the military and the SEAL teams. Sort of the go-to bottle of bourbon when somebody is leaving. And so, that just becomes the thing that you share around the team room and it brings back some fond memories.
- Paul: Is there a toast? Is there a SEAL toast or a Chris Fussell toast?
- Chris : None that would be appropriate for my kids to hear on air someday. So we'll leave it at great to see you.

Paul: Great to see you man. So interesting times. But you are a man whose entire adult life has been thrust into interesting times. So there's a lot I want to cover with you because I think you're one of the most impressive, dynamic leaders that I know, and I would argue in America. So having you with us for a conversation right now is so timely because you're kind of a master of chaos. But I want to go back to where it started before you became the president of the McChrystal Group, before you became a Navy SEAL, before you became a bestselling author, you were a philosophy major. Right?

Chris : Yes.

Paul: So, tell me about that part of your background and maybe for folks who don't know, how did you go from being a philosophy major to being a Navy SEAL leader?

Chris : Well, that part was easy because with a philosophy degree, you can do two things. You can become a philosopher, which I was not smart enough to do, or you can become a Navy SEAL I think. It's very binary. I went to University of Richmond. A small school in Virginia, small philosophy program. I was attracted to that.

Chris : I think in one part I started because my dad who I looked up to had gone to Georgetown. And everybody at Georgetown in his day, you had a philosophy minor. So, he never talked about it, but that's sort of attractive. And then I got into the classes and what I found was, I'm not a mathematician, I'm not a scientist. A philosophy degree, I'm still a huge believer in humanities degree, which I advise my own kids on when they're old enough to take off to advanced degrees.

Chris : It teaches you how to deconstruct an argument, how to think critically, how to write something. Long form, which is a dying art as we all know in today's world. So I'm a huge believer. It's a long cycle decision studying that early on for 10 or 15 years. It was kind of useless. Then, when you're suddenly in your forties you realize, "Well I know how to think. I was trained how to think critically, deconstruct an argument, et cetera." So, I've really reaped the benefits of it.

Paul: So how'd you go from there to the Navy? Talk about when you joined the Navy, why you joined the Navy and then if you can briefly summarize your time in the Navy and what you're able to share, what you think is most important to share.

Chris : Yeah. I finished college in '96 and so totally different world as we all know, like peacetime, environment. We weren't even thinking about what the world would look like at this point. I was the youngest of four kids. My dad, my uncle, my grandfather, several folks in my family had all served in the military.

Chris : My mom's brother was in the SEAL teams in Vietnam. My dad was in the Green Berets during those years as well. Never deployed into Vietnam, spent his active duty time in the Green Berets down at their training site in Panama back when we were still there. So I grew up under the lore of sort of that type of service.

Chris : And I think that combined with being the runt of a pretty aggressive four-kid litter, not surprisingly, if you know any youngest brothers or younger sibling, we all grew up as wrestlers and athletes, et cetera. I was by far the least talented physically in my family. So just getting destroyed by my brothers, even my sister throughout my childhood.

Chris : Just, it gives you that bit of a complex like, "Okay, I'm out to prove myself." And we got progressively less talented physically, but I had developed enough grit through wrestling to say, "Okay, I know how not to quit." And wrestling transitions into SEAL selection quite well. I didn't think I was cut out for it, honestly. Just my own sort of reflection until later in college.

Chris : I had an older brother that had also gone into the SEAL teams and did a 20-year career. And my thinking was, we were close going through college, "All right, if he's done it, I'm going to give it a shot." And it was totally different reasons though. You join the service pre 9-11 at 21, 22 years old. At least I wasn't thinking like grand visions about defensive freedom, et cetera.

Chris : You're looking for the next challenge. This is a really exciting community. I'd grown up on small teams, the SEAL teams, that's what it's all about. So, and then like most people in the military, your reason for staying pivots and is much different than the reason you came in, in the first place.

Paul: So 16 years total in the Navy?

Chris : That's right.

Paul: When I met you, you were still on active duty. That was a long time ago now and probably at one of the heights of the workload for you and your guys. The SEALs are often misunderstood, glorified. This idea of movie characters. People probably think that SEALs are more my size. I'm six-two, 230. But in my experience, more of them are your size, which is how big are you?

Chris : Five-eight, buck 45 these days but ...

Paul: And a philosophy major.

Chris : Yeah, but I was 160 at one point, so I used to be big.

Paul: But compact, smart, gritty, dynamic. But talk about if you can, what did you do in the SEALs? Explain to folks who may be outside this world. What was your job? What was your experience? And, it was unique, right? And maybe you can help me show how unique it was. I mean maybe there were more NFL quarterbacks than there are guys in America doing what you were doing to give a sense of how elite it was, how rare air you were occupying. But can you paint that picture for folks?

Chris : Sure. Yeah. And if it was unique, it was only through the fortune of timing and who I was around, the leaders I served under, and like yourself, like when we joined the military, it just happened to be a very pivotal time for our generation.

Chris : So, like I said, joined in the late 90s. We were doing engagement exercises with our allied nations in Europe, et cetera. It was a really great time. My now wife, first time she came to visit me, I was on deployment in Europe and we went to touring castles around the countryside. So, totally different world. Then post 9-11, so I was ... The East Coast, the SEAL teams are either East Coast or West Coast.

Chris : After going through selection in San Diego, I did all my time on the East Coast SEAL teams two and eight that are there in Virginia Beach. I was about five years in when the events of 9-11 occurred. And even then it took a while for things to change and ramp up.

Chris : The community that I joined in the SEAL teams almost non-recognizable versus what it has become. Like just so much bigger, more professional discipline in its approach and execution, et cetera. And I was very fortunate to be part of that.

Chris : After spending about eight years in those ... Six, seven years, I guess in those teams, I was able to screen and select into development group, which is an East Coast based element of the SEAL teams. And spent the remainder time of my career in that community, which is really where the fortunate part started to happen.

Chris : I mean, just the most amazing group, not just the SEALs, but you've become part of a joint community that includes army, includes air force, et cetera, all the services. And then post 2001 under the leadership of Stan McChrystal, he took over this global force in 2003.

Chris : We were put under this umbrella of change through his leadership and he said, "Look, we are thousands of people around the world under this common heading now. And we have a singular mission, which is to defeat Al-Qaeda." Which no one really understands yet, but I believe this is what Stan McChrystal was saying at the time.

Chris : We were going to have to fundamentally redesign ourselves, communicate differently, share information differently, make decisions differently and more aggressively down in the field than we've ever done in the past. Not by two or three degrees of change, order of magnitude different. And that was just his hunch, his assessment, based on what he was seeing on the battlefield, how quickly Al-Qaeda was growing and changing, and adapting to the environment, et cetera.

Chris : I mean, you remember the early days when we thought, "Okay, this is a small containable problem." Fast forward two years, you realize this is a global insurgency. And I had the unique privilege of being, A, positioned with an amazing tactical organization that to this day continues to execute at the highest level. And then spending time with Stan McChrystal on his senior staff and really seeing how the senior folks were orchestrating this shift at a global level.

Paul: In the book with McChrystal, you described the changes as not like learning new plays, but changing sports, right? An entire organization that was designed to play football and now you've got to shift that entire organization to play basketball, right?

Chris : Right.

Paul: And the transformation happening post 9-11 in multiple countries, pressure's going up. So this experience I think has steeled you for everything this country faces now, whether it's racial division, political upheaval, coronavirus. But I want to go a step deeper if we can to help people understand Chris in whatever way you're able to share.

Paul: How unique are the people that are selected for this role? And what kind of things do they do, and are they doing right now that people don't realize? Because wars don't stop for coronavirus, right? This is happening every day when you're not thinking about it. When March Madness is happening, these men, and maybe now some women are operating at the highest level possible, but can you paint that picture in whatever way is appropriate?

Chris : Yeah, sure. And it is, it's hard to ... I mean, we've talked about this, you and I have over years. The number of folks involved in military service has gone down, I think to the detriment of who we are as a nation. From a quarter of the country was involved with World War II in some way, down to 1% or less in today's service.

Chris : You boil that down to the special operations community that is being leveraged constantly, and has been for going on 20 years now. And you're talking about numbers-wise, personnel-wise, just an absolute rounding error in the big books of DOD sort of space. But those are folks who have been working 18 hours a day, seven days a week, nonstop for 20 years. And I don't say that as a point of exaggeration. I mean that is literally the tempo.

Chris : And again, I know we've bantered these ideas back and forth over the years. I left the service in 2012. And when I reflect back on that, there's a whole list of reasons you decide to make serious life decisions like that. And only in time can you reflect and understand why. One of them was, and I'm a pretty resilient, gritty person. I was smoked, I was just exhausted. And, I'm not proud of that fact, but it's a reality.

Paul: It's reality.

Chris : Yeah. And I mean it just, for me it's been an important reflection to say A, that happens to the most focused gritty people out there. And B, there are still guys, operators and families that have been cranking through it since. Since I left, there's new folks that are going to go down the same path.

Chris : It's the most intense lifestyle and community I've ever seen, and now I've had the privilege of working in various parts of high-end industry since I got out of the service. But the sacrifice from families to the third grader who doesn't see their parent, but 10%

of the year. To the spouse, to the operators on the front line losing friends. I mean, it remains very real to this day.

Paul: And why are they so special in what they're asked to do for the country? So describing whatever way you can carefully. Obviously there's classified concerns and other issues. What are they tasked by America to do?

Chris : Yeah, I think at that level, one of the easiest ways for most of your listeners probably understand it, is there are organizations in the military. The military is by design, and very smartly designed a top-down sort of very structured enterprise. And so Paul, you're the CEO, you make a decision in the board room that passes down, et cetera, et cetera. And eventually you get to a point of execution and you can sort of map that by process and time to impact sort of thing.

Chris : The military wants to be controlled because it's big and create real problems if it does something wrong, right? There are other parts, very, very small niche parts where you have to cut through that. And so the senior leadership on the civilian side can reach directly in and talk to certain components of the military.

Chris : So you cut through layers and layers, and layers intentionally. But you don't want there to be a huge swath of the enterprise or you create a lot of chaos. So most of the forces that you're talking about are kind of in that direct line communication. And so as a result, you're going to put more money into that. You're going to be very, very thoughtful in your selection process of the individuals that are in those units, commanding those units, et cetera.

Chris : But one of the things that sort of the misunderstanding that has trickled in to sort of the zeitgeist out there of what special operations is, understandably we think of SEAL team movies, TV shows, et cetera. And to your point, it's everybody's six-three can bench press 400 pounds and looks like the cover of GQ or something.

Chris : In reality, you're looking in that space. We're very thoughtful, disciplined, gritty person. Rarely is there a bench press contest on an objective. So the Delta between the capability of our forces and those we're interacting with is not purely a physical one. It's a thinking person's game, it's weaponry, it's technology, et cetera.

Chris : As I said earlier, the Delta between the SEAL teams that I joined in the 90s and now is, as I said earlier, my uncle was a SEAL in Vietnam. The SEALs I joined were closer to his SEAL platoon in Vietnam, but by a significant degree than my first SEAL platoon would be who's in the field now. We've just improved and changed our capabilities at an exponential rate for 20 years straight. It's really incredible.

Paul: So I want to push a little bit. What do they do? For people who say, "I think they shoot Bin Laden." Like for 16 years of checking in with you guys, I felt like I was checking in on friends who were NFL running backs or quarterbacks. Because the physical demands of jumping out of helicopters, falling down, carrying shit, not to mention getting shot at, blown up, et cetera.

- Paul: Very physically risky, demanding lifestyle, but requiring that high level of cognitive discipline and planning, just such the elite warrior class. We've created essentially a warrior class in this country where the civilian is disconnected. But I want a chance for you to talk about the unique nature of what we're asking them to do in terms of missions, if you can.
- Chris : Yeah. I mean there's multiple ways to look at that. Like what were special operations designed to do in the first place? And we didn't invent that history in the United States, right? That goes back, the Roman legions had versions of special operations. So an easy way to think about that is, go back to World War II or 2000 years ago.
- Chris : I've got this big huge army and I'm moving it in this direction. And the force that that brings to bear is unimaginable to most that haven't been in service. But there's occasionally going to be this real headache problem. "I've got this little insurgent group over here that's going to blow up this bridge. And so my tanks, I won't be able to go across it. I need to get a few folks there really fast."
- Chris : So let me create this ranger unit or this specialized team that can detach from the mothership, go and solve some hard problems and come back in. And to be able to do that, they need special training in weaponry and they're going to be a little bit of a headache. They're going to grow long hair and beards and, "Okay, I'll deal with that." Because those are going to be headaches that I need to solve for.
- Chris : So the classic missions are like reconnaissance, direct action like I need to send some raiders in and hit a small target, or try to rescue somebody, et cetera, et cetera. So, that's where we were 20 years ago.
- Chris : Those core missions still exist, but I believe one of the important things for all of us to consider as a citizen of the US and our political leadership and military leadership is, how far off that bearing are we getting in our leverage of special operations?
- Chris : I had a SEAL chief, so like a senior enlisted member when I was in my first SEAL platoon say, "Be wary of the ..." What did he call it? The mailbox syndrome. I said, "What's a mailbox syndrome?" He said, "Well, you've got a bunch of competent folks in your platoon. You'd happily have them come in like build your mailbox for you, right? Because you know they'll get it done fast and efficiently, but you can also just hire a local carpenter. Make sure you're being selective for the right missions."
- Chris : And so we've overstressed this force in my opinion because it can do whatever it's asked quite well, but it's a very, very small number of people. And the more we allow ourselves on the civilian side to say that's my go-to force, not just the SEAL teams but special operations in general, combined with a little bit of a sprinkling of intelligence, which serves a much bigger role than we'd like to actually consider.
- Chris : The world will sort of take care of itself. It's not true. The world's based on very, very long cycle, structured relationships that sometimes include aircraft carriers being present in certain parts of the world that include diplomatic efforts and go on for

generations, et cetera, et cetera. So, special operations does and will always play a critical role. But when we honestly assess that it's at the front end of our national policy, not our action, but our national policy, there's real risk being introduced into the stability of the system.

Paul: There was a time when they used to say the 82nd Airborne was the president's 911, but now you guys have kind of become 911, 311, Zappos customer service, everything else wrapped into one, right? Like the demands that the president and the defense leadership have put on you is unprecedented. But it's also now prepared you for this new phase of your life where you're an author, you're a thought leader, you have been designed, and trained, and honed to be a problem solver. And now you help other people solve problems in the corporate space, in the private sector.

Paul: And part of why I wanted to have you on now Chris, is because you're talking about corona. How do you deal with a emerging, morphing threat in a chaotic environment? And how can you as a leader, tackle that? So I wanted to give you a chance to expand on, if you're a leader of a family, if you're a leader of a small business, if you're a leader of a team in an emergency room, what are your thoughts and recommendations on how to lead specifically right now in a moment like this?

Chris : Yeah, I mean to your opening comments, riding up on a one-third full Amtrak train, it sends a message like this is a real thing. There's no denying it. The amount of schools and businesses, et cetera that have gone into remote work status is real. Effects on the economy, like you can just look at that every day on CNBC, et cetera.

Chris : So undeniable. The parallels, and one of the reasons we, inside of McChrystal's ... I had since gone on obviously and partnered with Stan McChrystal trying to deliver some of this thinking into industry. But this particular very acute moment, the banner of, "Well, we'll go to social distancing, isolation and remote work status, et cetera." The assumption that, that's just a flip of the switch, and we wait three weeks and then get back together.

Chris : I'm not anywhere near able to comment on the disease itself and the spread. There are brilliant people that are going to get ahead of that, but the effects on organizations, on their culture, on the economy that we all inside of, will have very real impacts very quickly. And leaders need to get ahead of this. So, one of the striking parallels here is, Stan McChrystal entered and took over an organization that was top-down structured, designed to give very direct orders and detach small teams.

Chris : It could be centralized and hierarchical by design. It had been built like that for generations. And he realized, "I am now facing a distributed network of human beings that are digitally connected." So my disease that I'm trying to treat is radicalization and a violent ideology. And that doesn't have to be in secret rooms anymore. That can be distributed globally at light speed.

Chris : We have to change the way we operate. So he put us into a remote work status. We would use a different language, but same thing. Everywhere from clusters of hundreds



of folks at centralized bases in Iraq, et cetera, to small teams that were on the edge with two or three folks. The first team that I was ever part of in his community was three people sitting on the border, Afghanistan or Pakistan with some sort of specialized mission, but networked into this very large global enterprise that he had built.

Chris : So we had a structured piece where you allocated assets, et cetera, and then you had a very decentralized piece where you could solve problems. The spread of a problem, like the coronavirus, it's very similar. We're interconnected. Anything can travel around the world in 36 hours now. We interact with each other on a scale that the world we're not ...

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:24:04]

Chris : We interact with each other on a scale that the world ... we've never been this flat before, so the spread isn't surprising when it has this sort of a stabilization and 14-day period before it pops up, et cetera. The numbers are not surprising. What leaders have to recognize is I have to create some sort of network methodology to be able to maintain my stability as an organization while we go through this. It's a very similar process. The methodology, I'm happy to dive into, I think, there's a lot to learn from what the military has gone through over the past 20 years to be able to communicate like that, that leaders need to learn from very, very quickly.

Paul: Yeah, take us through that, right? Let's make this a masterclass on how to lead in chaos, because that's what you do. That's what McChrystal does. That's what your team does. Again, you could be running a garage, you could be a teacher in a classroom, you could be trying to figure out how to connect your family. It's dispersed across the country. What are Chris Fussell's recommendations for leading your unit?

Chris : Yeah, and you're right, it's going to range from ... it already is, from small to big Fortune 10 companies down to startups, local, school, et cetera. At the top of that, one of the hard parts on this and the challenge for any leader is I think the hardest challenge. If you look at great case studies in leadership throughout history, go back as far as you want, it's easy to read that history through a black and white lens. Of course, they were going to do X, right? But if you really dive into it, they hit a moment where most of us would back down, because they hadn't gotten the directive. No one told Lincoln to do what he did. No one told MLK to do what he did, to choose very big macro examples. It's leaders that get to the edge and say, "This is a much bigger problem than anyone can articulate now. I'm going to take the first step and try to solve it."

Chris : I think that's number one for leaders today. Keep that in mind. This is a bigger problem. There's no playbook hidden in any bunker anyway that says, "Here's how we deal with this." We can learn lessons from Spanish influenza and other outbreaks, et cetera. This is new. This is new to our time, so if you're a leader of anything, from a mechanic shop to a Fortune 10 company, recognize the importance of your position.

Chris : Two, start over communicating now. Your people are as nervous times 10 as you are, right? You're getting updates from the board, et cetera. They are not. The only thing

they were told was, "Don't come into work on Monday. Go to remote status." That's, "Am I going to keep my job? Is my family going to be okay? Are we going to maintain our healthcare if the company starts to fall apart?" There are major concerns. Figure out any platform you can to start communicating with them. If your communication is, "We don't know what's going on yet, but we will figure this out as a team," that's okay. That's better than silence, right? If you overstate it and say, "We've got this all figured out," they know you're lying, right? So just be an honest, real leader with your people and say, "We will figure this out as a team and know we're going to get through it together." Those are the first two blocks you have to check. Then you can get into, okay, what's the process whereby we're going to solve for this? Remote communication is not a flip of the switch. It's easy in today's world to connect everybody. You and I could be doing this via FaceTime or Skype or whatever platform we want to choose. You could pull in 50 people to listen in real time or a thousand people. That's at our fingertips, but most of that is broadcast. I might do my quarterly town hall, everybody can dial in, and, "Well, I talked to 5,000 people at the end of the quarter." Yeah, but you're just talking and you're reading from a script. That's not interaction, right? You have to then look at how do we communicate today when we can all be face to face, and we take for granted the hallway discussions that go on and the chatter in the lunch room that helps us build confidence in our culture.

Chris : I learned to follow on. What did Paul really mean when he said that? Build that into remote structure and think how often do we have to communicate and with whom. What I would say is number three that when you're thinking about the cycle with which you're communicating, it should be, if you look at your Outlook calendar today, it should be faster. If you get together with your leadership team once every Friday, that should be probably two or three times a week. It should be more. If it's your top 10, it's probably now your top hundred plus, and it should be as real as the 10 people around the table that are kind of putting their feet up going, "Ooh, that project went horribly wrong. What are we going to do about it?" Figure out how you're going to have those conversations at scale.

Chris : The masterclass that I received, and this was watching Stan McChrystal implement this inside the task force that he ran. He had north of 20,000 people every time zone around the world solving everything from like procurement to logistics problems to what are we going to do next, literally in the moment on this raid, right? So that entire spectrum from longterm to highly complex, and he had to resynchronize that organization because of change inside of Al-Qaeda on a 24 hour cycle. Every 24 hours, he would sit and stare at a camera wherever he was in the world, and he and his leadership team would have a genuine conversation with upwards of 7,000 or 8,000 people around the world for the first hour, hour and a half of every 24 hour cycle, seven days a week for years on end. That's remote communication. It doesn't happen overnight.

Paul: My brain is going toward two extremes. One is White House briefings and the CDC, and the other is family meeting, right? In my family, we sit down, we have a family meeting, we talk about what we're going to do for the weekend or about how the kids are doing in school, and thinking about the need to increase that communication and that clarity, that trust for my four-year-old, whose school will probably close. Explaining to him what

that means and thinking about the cascading effects of something as focused as that, but at the White House level, the CDC level, death rates, or what's working or what's not, status of a vaccine. When you look at the national system, you look at the White House, you look at the CDC, you're a master of deconstructing complex systems. How prepared or unprepared are we as a nation to face this kind of threat, Chris?

Chris : Yeah. Well I think it's ... I couldn't agree with you more to start at that level, from systems level all the way down to the family level. Stan McChrystal and I have been teaching outside of our practice, a leadership seminar for a few years together, now at Yale's Jackson school. One of the points we try to make to students there is look at any case study throughout history. The best leaders that we like think about, they are very, very intentional in their focus. They may seem erratic, they may get angry, they may waver, but they are nine out of 10 times extremely intentional. When I walk into a room, I am going to have this effect on 500 people, on three people, on one person, right? Whether you're leading a family or leading any organization start thinking about the intentionality of those engagements. What is going on inside of our culture right now? People are nervous, people are scattered, et cetera, et cetera. How can you as a leader solve for that? Set that intention for yourself and start building systems around it.

Chris : That said, I do worry that we've spent 15-20 plus years now moving into the information age where everything is that everybody's fingers tips. We're inundated with white noise and too much information. What the effect of that will be when we really have to be calmer, more deliberate, more transparent and honest in our communications. Can any leader, regardless of party level, et cetera, do we give them the space to do that anymore? I don't believe we do for the most part. You are a real outlier in political systems and many times in large organizations, although I think that will correct itself faster, to be that honest leader that says, "Okay, here's where we are in production of tests. Here's how we're going to distribute them. Here's how we're looking at this crisis growing here, here and here."

Chris : One end of the extreme is a very draconian system like we saw in China. They can just clamp it down, right? Where the other end of that spectrum, you can solve that historically through honest and transparent communications. I think we've taken that away from ourselves, and we're going to have to regain our footing there in this next six months.

Paul: Somebody told me once, Chris, when I was going through military training at some point, when the rounds are flying and the chaos is louder, you as a leader have to be louder or clearer. You have to either raise your volume so they could hear you over the gunfire, or you have to use a hand in arm signal where you put your hand in the face and say, "Stop." Right? Your communication, clarity and volume and type has to change with the atmosphere around you, right? Think about Trump right now trying to cut through everything from fake news to a disparate media to old people who don't have the internet. He's got to figure out how to communicate effectively across many different spans. Can you talk about fear, because you're a guy who has experienced things that are unimaginable for the average person. A lot of folks right now listening are scared, are nervous. You've looked into people's eyes, you've trained them on how

to deal with that. What can you share with folks that are scared that has helped you get through times when you or the people you lead are scared?

Chris : No, it's an important point. I'll talk about that and maybe a bridge over into the military analogy. I'm a huge believer in ... I'm as normal as the next person, probably more so. Huge believer in understanding the irrationality of fear. You can't get through ... One of the sayings in the SEAL Teams was, to your point, "Calm breeds calm," was our way of saying that, right? If it's bad, the calmer you are, that's infectious. Everybody said, "Well, Paul's not losing his mind." A best example is in the Navy is the way that a Naval aviators are trained. A fixed wing aircraft is an insane contraption, and one of the things that aviators go through in their training is they have to listen to their voice as part of their debriefs. When they're going and doing bombing runs, et cetera, if there's a crackle in their voice, they would get dinged for it, right? Yeah, you're upside down doing 400 miles an hour and you're about to drop a bomb, but if you come across to the Army lieutenant on the ground as nervous, well, you just destroyed that entire operation for that guy.

Chris : So, yeah, thinking about like, am my projecting calm in the situation I think is critical. But, to your point, the broad sort of projection of fear, and we've had conversations inside my family about this for sure. It's easy, especially in a hyper connected space, to let that become the problem, right? Like a run on toilet paper. What are we doing here, people? Let's take a breath. This is a serious situation, but we're going to deal with it rationally, and let's look at the numbers. It's not something to joke about. Let's take the appropriate precautions, but we're also going to figure it out, right?

Chris : Personally, very, very small example, but when I left the service, I found myself transitioning, probably like you did, to speaking to larger, different sort of corporate audiences. I found that incredibly hard, because I was used to giving military briefings to like-minded people that looked and talked like I did. Suddenly you're in front of these alien species, right? My anxiety went through the roof, and I had to sit down and say, "What's the core of this stress? What's the worst that can happen, sort of standard procedures," all of which I had learned in the military, and things like that I think are very applicable today. Here's the actual problem, here's how we're going to deal with it, here are the likely and preventable outcomes, so let's apply rationality.

Chris : But to your point, in times like that, it is absolutely critical. I think we're, again, regardless of party, but we are collectively sort of missing this opportunity. Remember the early days of the invasion into Iraq? Agree or likely disagree with those events, right? Remember we were doing daily and then twice daily briefings out of the Pentagon Press Room. What was that doing? That was alleviating like, "Hey, we're the United States of America. This is going to be fine. Here's what literally happened in the last 12 hours." Things like that should be happening right now. Who's the voice? Should it be the President of the United States doing sort of fireside chat? That might be a little too much time for someone in that position, but absolutely that should be happening. Communicating broadly, "Here's where we are, here's where we're going," but to the earlier discussion that requires an honesty about what's working and not working right now in the moment. I don't think we have that luxury anymore.

Paul: There's a lot of emotion happening in this country. This show is a lot about exploring emotion. These trying times that we're all facing and we're all navigating, and I think we're going to look to leaders like you and Stan McChrystal and many others. I think especially in times like this, the country's going to look to experienced leaders to help guide us through difficult times, but you are emotional too. You are human beings. You're not just robot samurais that go out to execute American foreign policy. A lot of folks are understandably frustrated with what's happening in this country, not just around coronavirus but in general, and this show is about exploring that. I'll ask you the question I ask of all of our guests. Chris Fussell, what makes you angry?

Chris : That's a great question. Every time I listen to your show, which I love, I'm always curious what people are going to say. I had someone say to me once, "I've never seen you angry. Why is that?" I said, "I get angry, I just don't express it." This is probably not healthy, because I don't like myself when I demonstrate temper, but let's forget the current ongoing crises. Probably since, and like you said, we knew each other when I was still in the service. Since I've left the service, and I guess I felt this a bit in my active duty time, but it has remained with me. One thing that frustrates me is the false patriotism that we've come to sort of ingrained into the system of ... For example, I've always appreciated when people, like you probably do, thank us for our service, that sort of thing.

Chris : But we've over-leveraged into that space and sort of put service members, whether it's special operations or whatever community you come from under the superhuman pedestal. I remember when I got that in the service, "Hey, I really appreciate what you guys are on the front line," I would think, "Hey, you don't have to thank me. I volunteered for this, and frankly, I really like my job. I look forward to going forward and doing what we're trying to do, but you could show up and mow my lawn, because my wife's trying to raise a kid while I'm gone. Don't forget our families." If you are really in this, participate. If not, I appreciate the yellow ribbon that you have on your bumper sticker, but let's be honest. Are we all in this together or not? There are absolutely pockets in this country that are 100% on board with that, but I think the branding of it has consistently frustrated me for 10 or 12 years.

Paul: Chris, personally, would you support a draft or some kind of government service, mandatory service, compulsory service to tackle that or what? What is your view on how we solve for the fact that guys and gals like you are getting deployed for 16 years, and a lot of other folks are watching American Idol, which I don't think is good for our country. I think what we've created is a situation that is great for the military but not great for America, where a small group of people continue to serve over and over again, and an even smaller group like you and others serve at a much higher level with even higher demands. It's almost unimaginable. I don't think it is in the best interest of our country to continue this way, but what do you think?

Chris : Well, and folks like you as well, Paul. I'm sure all your listeners know your background of service. I didn't have a high paying job that I walked away from to join the service, so you've made equal sacrifices as the rest of us in uniform. I would strongly concur with the idea of a national service, and I'll show you my sort of emotional and rational view.

My emotional side says, probably like yourself, I've spent time in countries where there's a conscript model, and you just do it. I'm a personal huge believer in that. Once it's the mandate in a country, it sends a different message. It says, "If you want to be ..."

Chris : Pre 9/11, I spent a few weeks training in, in Sweden with the Swedish Special Forces. Really, really tough duty. You can imagine, right? For a weekend we went into the capitol city and went and toured the castle with all these like six foot five good looking Swedish special operations guys. It was a great weekend. The castle in the capitol city is guarded by conscripts. Every conscript unit spends one night during the year guarding the castle, which means every citizen of the country has spent a night guarding the royal family. It's kind of a big like party night for the unit, et cetera. Every person in the country shares that experience. You can't put a price tag on that. We don't have anything close to that. Yeah, the emotional side of me says that would be really powerful for our country.

Chris : Is it feasible in our generation? I don't think so. Opening up the window for national service far beyond where it is, and I don't care if you serve in the 82nd Airborne, you want to be a SEAL, you want to work in national parks, you want to work inside programs like Teach for America, City Corp, Food Corp, et cetera. Go for it. We should have massive funding dollars going towards those programs so that everybody that wants to serve, which is a far higher number. The application rate versus accepted rate in things like Teach for America is dramatic, except all those kids, they want to serve their country.

Paul: You spend a lot of time looking at structures, and often antiquated structures that haven't evolved to meet current needs. The one that I talk about and explore a lot in this show is our political system. I'm an independent, I don't have a party. Many folks listening don't have a party or have a party by default. I know you can't get into the specifics of candidates or politics, but when you look at ... You are an expert on leadership. We are right now looking to leaders to guide us, not just through coronavirus but through a potential recession, through an election that no matter who wins will divide us. What are your thoughts on the leadership that we see? We're down to Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden and Donald Trump, none of which would have made it through the SEAL Teams, but are now in a position to command the SEAL Teams and much more. Just as a leadership case study, the individuals and maybe even more specifically the structures that we're depending upon to guide us through perilous times, what do you think?

Chris : Yeah. I think with the primaries now being sort of in their last leg, my big sort of shocking takeaway was from where it started, the energy, the diversity we saw in that field to where it ended, and this is not a comment about Biden or Sanders. I'm just an observer of that system like anybody else, but I was really surprised. I thought this was a year where, okay, Hillary Clinton opened a significant door. There's going to be significant changes inside the system as a result of that four years later, and we're not seeing it. I don't know what that says. I'm not a political scientist by any means, but it is certainly surprising to me.

Chris : I think, more broadly, a thing that we haven't gotten right yet, and I again was hopeful that this would be the cycle where this sort of became more ingrained in the discussion, and some of this is our fault as citizens, right? I think we still have collectively this hero worship syndrome. Not to overstate that like we think the three that are left that are obviously going to be in the race forthcoming is that we put them on this person will solve these issues, right? We need to move past that. Of course, we should still have a president, no doubt, but I want to see personally, as a voter, would love to see candidates that we're willing to push further away from it's about one individual towards creating a model of teaming. It's core to my nature. It's core to what I've been looking at for 20 years, right? But the world is far too complex for one individual to solve. Great leaders throughout history have known this, and some have been overt about it.

Chris : Team of Rivals, an amazing case study on how Lincoln built out his cabinet, it makes this case like. This isn't new thinking, but how do you pull in the diversity of viewpoint and voice to be able to solve very, very fast-changing and multi-dimensional problems that the world's going to encounter? It's not one person sitting behind the Resolute Desk ordering people left and right. It's a person that can build teams, that can have impact across a broad spectrum, with trust, decentralized authorities, all the blocking and tackling that we know works really well, that has to creep into our political system. But what this current field tells me, not just the candidates that are up there, but who we have decided to put forth tells me that we're not having that conversation as a population yet.

Paul: Your best-selling book with General McChrystal was Team of Teams and talking about decentralized leadership and this evolution that needs to happen really in all spaces across the globe, right? One of my core beliefs is that we are operating in almost a battlefield every day. You wake up, you don't know what's going to happen, whether it's coronavirus or the subway shutdown or Trump saying some crazy shit. Every day is unpredictable, so you've got to be built for that new reality. The days of predictability and stability, in my view, are gone and may never come back. This is our new normal, so we've got to be built as individuals and as teams and as a country to be durable enough to endure and to not just survive but thrive. If there was ever maybe a case study in why Team of Teams matters, it's that we're boiled down to these three dudes, who are going to have to be more dynamic than any candidate ever before, and seem to be more limited than almost any candidate ever before.

Paul: I think this is a real moment to examine not just the leaders but the structures in which we have empowered these leaders to be in charge. Congress is going to face the same problem. The Supreme Court's going to face, the CDC is going to face this same problem. I want to ask you a very focused leadership question. When you're sizing up a leader, what do you look for, whether it's ...

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:48:04]

Paul: You're sizing up a leader, what do you look for? Whether it's a candidate, a CEO, a CO recruit, maybe a teammate on your kid's basketball team, what do you as an expert on

leadership look to that you believe define the leaders who excel and the leaders who don't?

Chris : Yeah, I'd give you my one word answer, which is humility. I don't think there's a more important trait in a leader than, ideally genuine humility, but I'll even take stage humility, right? And sometimes that's probably a good combo, right? You want leaders that are willing to step into that fray, step off the edge without the mandate, like we were talking about earlier, because they recognize this is a hard problem that no one has a solution for. I have enough confidence in myself and my team to step into that mix, which, that's a little bit of ego and confidence, but the humility when you get there to say, "I literally don't know what's going to happen next, but we're going to solve this as a team." I mean, think of the best ground force leaders you saw when you were in the service, right?

Chris : The best quote I heard from a peer when I was in the SEAL teams that I really respected was trying to get permission to do some pretty crazy operation in somewhere in Iraq. And the colonel in the Marines that owned that local battlespace said, "Well, what's going to happen when you get there?" And he said, "Sir, I have absolutely no idea, but we'll solve for it." And he said, "Okay, approved." I mean, just having that, "I am confident that I will get on this helicopter and go into that very bad space that nobody wants to touch," and humble enough to say, "I have no idea what's going to happen, but I know I have the best team out here and we'll solve for it."

Paul: Can I challenge you on this Chris? Because I wonder if... there's a uniquely American attitude there, right, encompassed in that humility and that idea that they can solve for it. Some would argue that too many of our senior leaders in the military have said they can solve for it, when they can't. The insurgency, Afghanistan, maybe one of the faults of the American general is they always believe they can no matter what, even when they can't. And maybe that's part of why we slugged through Vietnam as long as we did while we were still in Afghanistan, because civilian leaders defer to military folks who say, "Yeah, it's just coming around the bend," right? If we had a nickel for every time we heard Afghanistan was going to turn around, we wouldn't have to worry about finding money for corona.

Chris : Right.

Paul: So I want to ask you to really level on that one. And now, and maybe expand if you're able, Afghanistan is now going through this negotiated situation with the Taliban, where a couple of days ago Trump said, "We have an agreement with the Taliban," a couple of days later, the Taliban resumed attacks. It looks like they're... I don't know if there's anything really there or not, but seems to be a political will to claim victory, even when in my view, there are no victors in this situation. So, what are your thoughts on the failures of some of our leaders and a lack of accountability? In Israel they fire generals, in America they don't fire generals, and they just kind of fail upward no matter what happens.

Chris : Yeah, there you go.



Paul: And if you're able, your thoughts on Afghanistan and what happens next there?

Chris : Well, starting with Afghanistan, I can't say that I'm surprised that, we can circle back to that, but you build these things up, there's not going to be a binary and to what happens inside of a place like Afghanistan, right, so we shouldn't hang our hopes too much. But it really ties to the broader question where I think one of the... I mean, you were in the services as well, right? So the service creates a mentality of, "Here's your mission, give me a binary solution whether or not you can do it," right? And that's one thing when it's 20 of you on helicopters going into a place, it's another thing when it's accomplishing pretty culture changing objectives in a place like Afghanistan, but we're not hardwired and we don't really allow from that service, at least in the recent generations, an honest answer of, "Well I can get you this far on that thing," but what you're talking about some pretty broad longterm issues here.

Chris : One of the iss- I think in the last, at least our generation, things that we have to come to terms with, is given the other dynamics of the world we live in now, and this ties to coronavirus as well, the speed of movement, the interconnectivity, et cetera, et cetera, and we were flat and hyper interconnected in a way that 50 years ago no one could have imagined was possible. And so, a lot of the mentality of our traditional thinking, "Win, lose, let's be here for this long, let's accomplish these objectives," is now being superseded by, I would argue the way the world's kind of always run minus this brief 150 year history that we're very comfortable inside of, which is there are forever problems, right? And you and I have 70 to 90 years on the planet if we're lucky, and we're going to move things and hopefully improve them, but we're not going to solve for world peace. We'll maybe make it better and our kids will pick up the ball, and we have to consider these through very, very longterm lenses.

Chris : I remember one time as a young officer spending some time with the Israelis, so I was over in their country for a couple of days. And great experience, amazing allies, et cetera, and someone was asking me, and this was pre-world falling apart sort of world, and well, "What would you do if you were a Middle East peace policy between the Israelis and Palestinians, et cetera?" And I just said flippantly, "Well, I think we talk about solution too much, right? I would create a policy that just, you're always trying to buy down tomorrow's violence, right? Let's win tomorrow. Let's keep people from blowing each other up for a week, knowing that you're this far away from it happening again. There's always going to be the next Intifada. There's always going to the next major blow up, right? Push that inevitability out as far as you can every single day." And one of the senior officers in the room said, "I wouldn't vote for you on that platform. That's not very impressive," right? But I do think it's true.

Chris : Let's just recognize that the world is in a multi-generations long competition forever, and we show up and think we're the most important generation, we're going to solve for all this stuff right now. And we set ourselves up for this sort of disappointment, because we then say, "Well, if I've got a three year tour, I'm going to solve this problem. Here's how I'm going to do it." It doesn't work.

Paul: It's a dicey tight rope walk, right? Right now to say, "We can solve for coronavirus and we have it under control."

Chris : Right.

Paul: That's the tight rope that Trump is falling off of it seems every couple of hours. This idea of projecting confidence and the can do attitude and marshaling your forces, but at the same time having the humility to level with people to say, "We don't have a vaccine. We don't know how long it's going to take." Have that humility to break it down. I think it's a real, it's a fascinating exploration of leadership happening in real time around everything that you do.

Chris : Totally.

Paul: Right? And so, I want to pull a piece of humility out of this show that we always drill down on that we have not gotten to yet. But going back to your early days before you became the man you are today, Chris Fussell, what was your first car?

Chris : My first car was not nearly as impressive as what's surrounding here at the Classic Car Club in Manhattan. So this is actually pretty funny, my dad was a... I come from a medical family so my dad was a physician, sort of primary care guy. And great role model, taught at the medical school, just kind of all-American, and this... I was born in 72 so in the '80s, my dad got his first real doctor job, post-residency, all that stuff, and bought a, think 1981, right? This big four door, brown Cadillac cruiser, classic lawyer, doctor car for 1981. And we lived in just total middle-class, suburban Virginia, and he rode that until it was dying and then it just sat in the garage and it was our car to inherit. So if you do the math, I was probably, I don't know, 10 years old, 8 years old, somewhere in that range when he bought it. So when I turn 18 I finally inherit, because it had been passed down through my brothers. And at that point it was just a total junker, way out of date, but went through being uncool, uncool, and then cool again.

Paul: Yeah.

Chris : And by the time I inherited it, we were all wrestlers and one of my brothers had ripped the, wrestling the trophy you would get, the little wrestler on top, the little gold thing that looks ridiculous, had ripped it off some trophy and super glued it to the, taken the Cadillac thing off the front and super glued this wrestler on the front.

Paul: Nice.

Chris : Yes.

Paul: Nice.

Chris : It was easily identifiable. All the police around my hometown, they're like-

Paul: What color was this Cadillac?

Chris : Oh, it was dirty Brown. It was the ugliest classic car you could have.

Paul: And how many wrestlers could you fit in that Cadillac?

Chris : You could take half the team to practice, yeah. And it got four miles to a gallon, it was great. I think I'm the brother that finally ran it into the ground and it just had to be shot after I was done.

Paul: I love it. I love it. I love it. So, I want to come back to another question we ask of everyone, you are, it's interesting that your dad's a doctor, right, because of the way you deconstruct problems. And that's really one of the things that most impresses me about you and a very small number of leaders who America has yet to really get to know. Because I think you are the problem solver of our future, right? You in a very, very select few. I hope that one day you are a nominee for Secretary of Defense or I, and we've talked about this, I hope you run for office. I imagine you're going to tell me you won't, is that right?

Chris : Not anytime soon.

Paul: You're the kind of guy we need in public service because you know how to break down problems with a surgical precision and a humility that is so sorely lacking in our politics and our national leadership. But you're also a guy who knows how to appreciate life. You've been through shit that other people can't imagine. So, in that exploration and that journey that you've gone through, Chris Fussell, what makes you happy?

Chris : It sounds canned, but it's my wife and two kids, right? I mean, at its core, I think that's just in, if you're a decently good person, that's in your DNA. I know you're the same way, right? So we live in D.C., we've got this pretty hectic lifestyle as everyone in that city does or here in New York, but combined my family, we have a house in a small town in West Virginia called Fayetteville, West Virginia. Bought the house there years ago, it's some of the best rock climbing and river sports on the East Coast, that's our retrieve. We have good, amazing friends up there that are locals, that you show up and they could care less about what's going on in D.C. or your consulting practice. They want to throw on climbing gear, go out and have a fun day, drink a beer afterwards on the porch. That's, for my wife and I, that's our happy place.

Paul: I love it. You've been through some big transitions and a lot of folks listening are going through transitions. Could be a transition in a career, it could be a transition of family, this is a time of transition. People always have this idea of a veteran who's challenged a transition and they think of a private, they don't think about a general like Stan McChrystal, for anybody going through transition, do you have any insights now having gone through the other side of this? And now you have a very successful private sector business, you've gone from being not just a Navy SEAL who wrote a book because just about every Navy SEAL writes a book, right, writes a book. You wrote a smart book, right, not just a memoir, but you wrote a leadership and a thought leadership book, you're a philosophy major. But you're a contemplative guy, you think about this journey

you're on, for someone who's going through a tough transition right now, what counselor advice do you have for them?

Chris : Yeah, probably like yourself, it wanes now as I've been further out of service, but every month or so probably have a chat with somebody that's getting out. And so, I've gotten sort of a standard 45 minute spiel, I'll try to boil it down, hard lessons that I've learned along the way. But to boil it down, I think the key things for folks to remember, regardless of what branch, et cetera, that you're getting out of the service, and frankly, in many ways how long? 4 years versus 20 years?

Paul: Or even beyond the service.

Chris : Yep, transitions in general, yeah, for sure. I mean, I talked to a lot of industry leaders now in my current role, that are transitioning from one position to another, et cetera, or retiring from CEO. I think the number one thing is remembering that, or recognizing that it's going to be harder than you would anticipate. That's easy to say, but I say that to folks that are transitioning out of a, sort of pay it forward appreciation, four months from now when you think, "It can't, I must be doing something wrong. This is way harder than I thought it would be?" You're probably not even there yet, right? And then digging into that a little bit, and I went through this myself, was a recognition that coming from, for example, the SEAL teams or army units that have been in combat, et cetera, you can't put into words the emotional strain and intensity that, that puts into your psyche, right?

Chris : There was a time when I was a happy, lucky go, fun loving kid, and then fast forward 10 years and you're in the middle of chaos, right? And so, it's in all of our psychology, you build up defensive layers, right? You become part of the tribe, you talk differently, you walk differently, because you're trying to go back to your core DNA, which is, here's the birds of a feather mentality. "These are the people that will save my life and protect my family, and I will become as much like them to fit in as possible." And they're doing the same thing, right, so we all map toward each other. And that's the, I'm not saying that's a bad thing, it's a very important survival mechanism, especially inside of specialized units. When you get out, that's gone. That immediately goes away, right? So, you leave on Monday, on Friday, nobody even wants to see you show up.

Chris : So you've you, I tell guys all the time, you have this emotional and psychological body armor, you're going to drop your kit, but you're still wearing this body armor and it's going to take you months or sometimes years to take it off. Because every time you take it off, you discover a new layer of yourself that existed 10 years ago, and you have to reconcile with that. And I've also found that, and you certainly lived this, we constrain our, in high pressure situations, whether it's industry or military, we constrain our emotional bandwidth down to this thousand yard stare, that I'm certain you had on your face and you saw on your soldiers. And I don't think that's a one way street, you aren't constraining the downside, you're constraining the upside as well, right? Which is why people would... they can lose a friend and go out on patrol the next day, but they also come home and they don't smile and they see their wife, right?

Chris : So you live in this really constrained space, and as you start to unpack it opens back up, which is one of the reasons I think guys don't want to do it, right, because you deal with all that emotion you left behind 10 years ago. And that's, it took me probably two years, and I did not have anywhere near the intense battle fear experience that folk, operators in my community had, certainly the 19-year-old under-serviced private in the 82nd had patrolling the streets of Baghdad. And even for me, it was about a two year cycle.

Paul: Thank you for sharing that man.

Chris : Yeah.

Paul: Thank you for sharing all of this. For folks that don't know you, you do teach and you write books, and part of what I've loved about this show is a chance to introduce a broader audience to leaders that I believe are important, inspiring and, or iconic. And for all the folks who are looking for hope and an exceptionally high level of competence, and I want to say that in the best possible way, because competence can be a bit dismissive. But at a time when we're concerned about the leadership of this country and whether or not they can handle the shit that's flying at us, to be able to hear from you, Chris, and to be able to see your leadership example, and the fact that you're teaching it, you could've gone to West Virginia and hung out in the mountains and just said, "Forget it, I'm going to build mailboxes and go fishing."

Paul: But you continue to give back to this country and this community in such a powerful and important way, and I know you're just getting started. So I'm really grateful that you've spent this time with us, that you braved the Acela and the crowds after fighting Al Qaeda and ISIS, I got a feeling that corona is not really going to stop you from going to another city, but I'm really grateful for your friendship, your leadership, your candor today. And as is tradition on the show, we have the giving of the gifts, so I am going to give you, I can hold your mic if you'd like, you got some, first of all, some American made-

Chris : Oh I love this. I love the brand you've come up with, just straight angry.

Paul: Yeah. Well you-

Chris : When I look at this, my first SEAL platoon, you all come up with your little logos and stuff.

Paul: Yeah.

Chris : Our logo was anger.

Paul: Really?

Chris : Not angry but anger. We had these ball caps.

Paul: Wow. Wow.

Chris : Our commanding officer didn't like-

Paul: There's some SEAL probably with a clothing line, he's beaten me to it. But thank you for that. And then we've got, you're a fan of bourbon. And this, we always pick an American made bourbon or whiskey, and this is Peerless.

Chris : The team of Peerless will appreciate this because a lot-

Paul: Because I really think you are without peer.

Chris : Thank you.

Paul: And I think sharing of your story that you were still so humble in doing, is powerful as, hold on, don't get to that yet. Don't get to that yet, I'm still talking about the whiskey. But you are without peer. And I think it's important for people to understand, this is a country where we celebrate NBA point guards and so many other folks. The rigor and the discipline and the demands that have been put on you to get to where you were, what you had to endure to get to where you were is without peer, and is exceptionally rare, especially in this culture. So I want folks to understand that at a time, we didn't get into it, but Ellie and Eddie Gallagher's on 60 minutes, the image of the SEALs has taken a hit. And in some ways fairly, right? You are a guy who I think represents the best of what the SEALs are about, the best of what this country is about, and you are without peer. And you're not going to agree with me on that, but-

Chris : I will appreciate.

Paul: ... but I want you to know you are appreciated. And then lastly, this one might actually break the ice man down. So we got three colors of peeps, yellow, blue and pink. Chris Fussell, which one would you choose and why?

Chris : Oh, this is great. Well, first a backstory on peeps. My brother in law, who is one of my personal role models, just think of world, I've learned a lot from over the years, ear, nose, throat surgeon, just brilliant guy. His favorite food in the world is peeps.

Paul: Really?

Chris : Only person I know that actually eats these, maybe you're the second.

Paul: Yeah? Yeah, well we're expanding -- one person-

Chris : They will survive any natural disaster.

Paul: They will. They will, they're corona proof.

Chris : Let's see, what would I, which color would I pick? I will pick pink peeps because the only person in my family, I think that would actually partake in these would be my 11-year-

old daughter. This matches the color of her, the drapes in her room, so that speaks to me.

Paul: There you go, man. There you go. Well, you've spoken to us powerfully, it's been a masterclass in leadership and an examination of all that our country's going through. But Chris Fussell, you're an outstanding American. You're a Patriot. You're a great leader. And you've been operating without any notoriety for a long period of time and I'm very, very excited to be able to share a bit of time with you, share your voice with the country, and to watch what you do next. If folks are listening, they need to read your books, they need to watch your speeches and need to keep an eye on you because you are a real source of hope and inspiration in what is some definitely trying times.

Chris : Well Paul, I appreciate it. And let me take a second to return the thanks, because as some of your... your listeners probably may under appreciate, you've been a pioneer in our generations military leaders from day one, that's what connected us originally, the work you've continued to, not just inside of VA, which is an amazing and needed organization. I don't know another person that could have done that like you did, and what you accomplish there has real and deep meaning for an entire generation of vets. So, you've already stamped your tombstone man. So it's amazing, and so keep up the great work.

Paul: Thanks man. Don't go burying me just yet. We got a lot of work to do. Ladies and gentlemen, the great and powerful Chris Fussell live from the Classic Car Club in Manhattan. Watch him everywhere and he may be riding in the Acela near you. Thanks brother.

Chris : Thanks buddy.

Paul: Appreciate it. And we are actually shaking hands and we're going to go disinfect after this.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [01:09:19]