

Voiceover: Presented in partnership with the US Army Office of Public Affairs Midwest.
(Theme music)

Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs, this is *Pritzker Military Presents*.

Clarke: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* with Medal of Honor Recipient and Vietnam War veteran Specialist 5 James C. McCloughan. I'm your host Ken Clarke, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, and it's presented in partnership with the US Army Office of Public Affairs Midwest. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. Shortly after earning a bachelor's of arts in sociology at Olivet College and accepting a teaching and coaching position with South Haven Public Schools in Michigan, Specialist 5 James C. McCloughan was drafted into the army in 1968 at the age of twenty-two. McCloughan reported to basic training in September 1968 at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Due to his training in athletics and sports medicine from college, he was selected to complete advanced training as a medical specialist. On his last day of training McCloughan received deployment orders to Vietnam and was assigned as a combat medic with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division. The company air assaulted into an area near Tam Ky and Nui Yon Hill. On May 13 with complete disregard for his life McCloughan ran one hundred meters in an open field through heavy fire to rescue a comrade too injured to move and carried him to safety. That same day 2nd Platoon was ordered to search an area near Nui Yon Hill when the platoon was ambushed by a large North Vietnamese army force and sustained heavy casualties. McCloughan lead two Americans into safety of a trench while being wounded by shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade. Ignoring a direct order he braved an enemy assault while moving into the kill zone on four more occasions to extract wounded comrades. He treated the injured, prepared the evacuation, and though bleeding heavily from shrapnel wounds on his head and body refused evacuation in order to remain at the battle site with his fellow soldiers who were heavily outnumbered. On May 14, the platoon again was ordered to move out toward Nui Yon Hill. McCloughan was wounded a second time by small arms fire and shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade while rendering aid to two soldiers in an open rice paddy. In the final phases of the attack two companies from the second North Vietnamese Army Division and an element of 700 soldiers from a Viet Cong regiment descended on Company C's position on three sides. McCloughan again went into the crossfire numerous times throughout the battle to extract wounded soldiers while also fighting the enemy. Over the course of forty-eight hours McCloughan saved the lives of ten men. For his actions McCloughan was awarded the Medal of Honor, which was presented to him by President Donald Trump on July 31, 2017, five decades after the actions for which it was earned. Following his service in Vietnam McCloughan returned to his teaching and coaching profession in Michigan, where he taught at South Haven High School for forty years. Interviewing Jim today is Allen J. Lynch. Lynch is a Chicago native, a veteran of the United States Army, and a recipient of the Medal of Honor for combat actions in the Vietnam War. On December 15, 1967, Lynch and the rest of his platoon were on their way back from a well-deserved rest when they were called in to support another company that had been outnumbered by an enemy force. Lynch, operating under intense fire, carried three wounded soldiers to safety and single-handedly defended them against the advancing enemy for several hours. After leaving active duty, Lynch worked for several years in the veterans administration, advocating for increased

benefits for disabled veterans. He served most recently as chief of Veterans Rights Bureau for the Illinois Attorney General's Office. Now retired, he is the president and founder of the Allen J. Lynch Medal of Honor Veteran's Foundation, an organization providing assistance to veterans and their families. Please join me in welcoming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library Jim McCloughan and Al Lynch. Gentlemen, welcome home.

(Applause)

Lynch: Thank you. So I think what we'll do is have a conversation between two soldiers of a certain age.

McCloughan: Yes. As a matter of fact we graduated at the same time almost, probably June 1964.

Lynch: That's it.

McCloughan: But we were only twelve years old at the time, and--right, right?

Lynch: Yes, twelve. Twelve. I was advanced in my years.

McCloughan: Me too.

Lynch: Well, let's start. You know, we get confused sometimes. We think about, especially with recipients, there's this idea that you're a Medal of Honor recipient then you lived a life after that. But let's start at the beginning. You had quite a career prior to going into the military. Let's start with grade school, junior high, and high school.

McCloughan: Yeah, grade school, I went to a one-room country school called Wood School. It was established in 1849 and built in 1869. That same building is still there actually, and that's only one of two one-room country schools--

Lynch: Oh my gosh.

McCloughan: --in the state of Michigan. I visited there quite a bit. My desk is still there, but there's a computer on it now. And my name and initials is not carved in it. I didn't do that, so--but anyway, yeah, I went to this one-room country school. Walked a mile to school and home no matter what the weather was.

Lynch: Uphill both ways.

McCloughan: Uphill, downhill, both ways. Yup, up and down hill both ways. And it did go up and down hill actually, literally. I had one teacher. Eight grades in the school. My dad actually paid tuition when I was a seventh grader because my older brother Mike was gonna be a freshman at the high school in Bangor, so he wanted me to get used to being in a school situation where there were several kids of my age and in my classroom setting at the same time, which I was grateful for because then that's where I started my competitive sporting career.

Lynch: Now you--during conversation before you mentioned that you weren't born to a very rich family.

McCloughan: No, no. We didn't have running water in our house until I was eight or nine. We got electricity in there when I was four or five, and my dad worked hard to put the house--he worked at a factory all day long at the Everett's Piano Factory in South Haven, Michigan. He'd come home and get a bite to eat and go right to work on the house and actually put the basement in after the house was done upstairs. I haven't told you this story, but he dug underneath the house with a shovel and a wheelbarrow, and that's how he dug out underneath and would dig out a corner and then put a prop in there, and then he'd dig out another corner and put a prop in there. And my brothers and I--I think I was about three years old when we were awakened one night, and the house was starting to tilt. And I didn't realize it until I was older, but my father was underneath rearranging the props and the house to get it back balanced. And the house could have literally fell on top of my father.

Lynch: Oh my gosh.

McCloughan: But yes, I said we were--we weren't really poor. We just didn't have very much money. And I really thought that's the way everybody else lived.

Lynch: Was the difference back then you could be poor and not be poor at all? You could be very, very rich with your family.

McCloughan: Very rich with love, yeah. And I know how much my parents loved me because they both went to work in a factory so that--that's before both parents worked a lot, back then. My mom worked in a factory that made pistons, and of course Michigan was quite an--

Lynch: Oh, yeah.

McCloughan: --automobile industry. So, yup, and in those days, I got my initiation with little league baseball in South Haven. Although I lived in Bangor, we played in South Haven. And my uncle took me to play some basketball on Saturdays, so I got initiated into basketball. But, yeah, that was my early days.

Lynch: And then you get in to high school. It's a little bit different circumstance.

McCloughan: Little bit different circumstances. I had played basketball ran track in junior high. Those were the only two sports available to me there. And I was quite musical. One thing I didn't cover there--quite musical and got into a lot of musical groups and choirs and that. I had four leads to four musicals in high school, and along with my eleven varsity letters that I earned in football, basketball, baseball, and track.

Lynch: Wow. That is amazing. And then you graduated high school at top--you had to be top ten?

McCloughan: Top ten. Seventh in my class.

Lynch: Wow. Class of how many?

McCloughan: Class of seventy-two. That, my kids always point out to me. And I also told them I was number one in my class through the sixth grade, but I was the only one in my class through the sixth grade, so I don't know if that's bragging rights or not.

Lynch: Well, yeah, you know, might as well.

McCloughan: But as I pointed out earlier today when we had a conversation, I'm dyslexic, and I didn't find that out 'til later on in life. And I think that too many times--that's only one of my characteristics. Too many times we put labels on kids. And I had one--I went out to get my master's degree when I came home, and I only had one B+, the rest were A's in my master's program. And it was after that that I found out I was dyslexic. So I kinda think that I'm glad I didn't find that out until later on, 'cause I might have even labeled myself as not being able to achieve academically. I was thirteenth in my college class.

Lynch: Well just really quickly, how did you deal with being dyslexic?

McCloughan: I don't know, I--

Lynch: I mean, you didn't know it, but--

McCloughan: I didn't know it, but I--it took me longer to read. That's one thing that I remember back, and it still does. Because a person with dyslexia will put a word in there that's not in there. And I'll say to myself, "That didn't sound right," you know, so I'll have to go back over it. But the more--and my wife's gotten me into reading a lot. Before I met her twenty-six years ago--we just celebrated our twenty-sixth anniversary--I didn't read a lot, but since I started reading more it really is helping me with that. And it's kind of better that I read and challenge myself.

Lynch: So what would you say to kids right now that are having problems in school with dyslexia or whatever?

McCloughan: I wish we'd quit putting labels on 'em, but we still are putting labels on kids. I've had a lot of those situations, and I'm not gonna go into some specific ones, but what I did is treat that individual just like they were another kid in the class. And I think that's--

we're all different. God throws away the mold when he gets done with us, so you really do have to treat everyone as if they are special, because they are special.

Lynch: And the kid that has an issue, what would you say to him or her?

McCloughan: I would say that, you know, that's one of your weakest points. John Wooden said, "Never let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."

Lynch: Boy, that's good advice.

McCloughan: And that's good advice that John Wooden had. And you know, for instance if you're not left-handed, you've got to work on your left-handed layup. But work on your right-handed because you're real good at that. So make sure you still do that good--the parts of you that are very specifically a good part of you, a talented part of you, a skilled part of you, use that because everybody needs your skill. I've always found that to be true with my athletes, and I've found it to be true with individuals that are my friends.

Lynch: So you graduated high school, and you went right to college. But you have a story about how you got to college. Talk about how you earned the money to do that.

McCloughan: Well, I started about five, and I picked berries. And then as I got older, I worked in some frozen food plants. I also worked--in high school I worked in a funeral home, which prepared me for handling death, handling those that had died, which helped me later on as combat medic. And then I did a lot of haying, throwing them hays around. And then picking apples and that later on in life, and working in some factories, and so on and so forth. And I would like to tell everyone to think back at the different jobs that you've had, and tell yourself to look into that job and see what you learned from that job. As I said, the job with the undertaker helped me to prepare--I literally worked with kids that were in my school that had passed away and people in my community. So I had been given a little bit of a glimpse into what that might be when the first soldier that I came across that had been shot and killed. But the biggest thing is, and I was a candidate for the navy--for the naval academy. I wanted to go to the air force, but they only take the top. I got a really good grade on the test, but I wasn't at the very top. So I was told that I could get an appointment for the naval academy. And in the process I was top in seven states physically and my test scores were tops, and--but I was colorblind, and all of their flags--flag, you know, things are done with red, white, and green. I'm red and green colorblind. Which--I picked a lot of bad berries.

(Laughter)

McCloughan: I look back, and I picked a lot of bad strawberries. And they all looked the same to me when I was a kid. But anyway, so they said, "Well, maybe we can get you in." Two days before I graduated from high school, I got a letter that they were not gonna take me. So I went to work in a factory that summer, and I figured I'll be a factory worker. Although, my brother, the very first McCloughan to go to college, my older brother was in college. He was a sophomore. I figured I'll just be a factory worker. And a friend of mine came and said, "Hey, Pastor Brown is going to be a professor at Olivet College. How would you like to go check it out?" Pastor Brown was from my hometown of Bangor, and I said, "Wow, I'll do that." So on the way in we passed the football field, and they were practicing on the football field. I really don't remember what the registrar said to me, but I went through the one-hour interview, and then said-- "Have you got any questions?" she said. I said, "Yeah. Even though I'm coming in late, if I register here, can I still go out for football?" She said, "Yes." So I went home and packed my things and came to Olivet College and earned seven varsity letters in football, wrestling, and baseball while I was there.

Lynch: Wow. Wow. And how did you graduate from Olivet?

McCloughan: I was thirteenth in my class. Yup, and I was the first--we started wrestling my freshman year. In 2014 and '15 we celebrated fifty years of wrestling at Olivet, and I was at that celebration. I was one of the very first eighteen-year-old freshmen on the

very first team. And I had never seen wrestling in my life, and they've never let me forget this. When I walked in the wrestling room the first day of practice, I looked around, and I said, "Where's the ropes? I've seen this on TV, and there's supposed to be ropes." But anyway I was the first conference champion for them in a sport that I didn't compete in high school, and I'm very proud of that.

Lynch: So you graduate college.

McCloughan: Yup.

Lynch: And you're getting ready to go right back to go to school and do some coaching, and you get a little notice from your friends and neighbors.

McCloughan: Yes, in May of '68 I signed a contract for South Haven High School to teach and coach. At that time I was only gonna be coaching football and wrestling. They didn't have an opening in baseball then. And I got a little notice in June saying report for physical in July. But I figured that was just kind of routine, so I reported for that physical in July, and when I got done, I said, "Okay, what's next?" And they said, "What do you mean what's next? You're gonna get drafted. Didn't you know that? That's why you're taking this physical?" I said, "No, no, no. Not me because, you know, I got a contract." And they said, "No." So I called up the school, and that's--this is an interesting story, too. So I asked the superintendent if he would come in my defense and maybe get me a deferment. And he said, well, he couldn't, but he'd send the assistant superintendent. And I found later on that the superintendent's son was also up to be drafted, and so that's probably why he didn't come to defend me. But they said, "No dice. He can't--he's not gonna get deferred. He's gonna go."

Lynch: So you get through basic training.

McCloughan: Yup. Fort Knox.

Lynch: Advanced training for--

McCloughan: Advanced training. San Antonio, Texas, Fort Sam Houston.

Lynch: Beautiful place to visit.

McCloughan: Nice place to visit. Wish I could have stayed there.

Lynch: (Laughing) And you thought you were.

McCloughan: And I thought I was. I thought I was gonna be there. As a matter of fact I went up through the interview ranking to--I'm going to classes there, and I figure, "Hey, I got a teaching degree. I can do this. So why don't I see if I can't stay here?" And I went clear up to a two-star general, and he had told me I was gonna get the job. But when we fell out the last day, and they told--they read everyone's name, and they told us where we were gonna go. And they said, "James McCloughan, Southeast Asia." And I thought, "Well, they must have made a mistake." Went up to the captain afterward, and he said, "No, a regular army man got your job." The regular army of course is a three-year man, and I'm a two-year man, so-- they said, "Now if you want to reup, maybe we can negotiate this." And I said, "No, you got me for two years, so, that's it. I guess I'm going to Vietnam."

Lynch: So you went to Vietnam.

McCloughan: Yes, sir.

Lynch: And where'd you go through, Fort Ord?

McCloughan: To Vietnam?

Lynch: Yeah.

McCloughan: No, Oakland. Went to Oakland and then up to Anchorage, Alaska, from Anchorage, Alaska down to Guam, from Guam into Cam Ranh Bay and then up to Chu Lai after I was assigned.

Lynch: And you were in country or with your unit the very first day.

McCloughan: I got there the seventh, and so they did some processing, and I did a little of orientation but not as long as--some of those guys get like three to five days of

orientation, but I didn't get that much 'cause they needed a medic in Americal Division in Charlie Company 3rd the 21st, 196th. So they shipped me right up to them, and the very first day we hit an ambush, and a lieutenant was killed, and found out later that another guy was killed, but we couldn't get to his body. I had several wounded that I patched up the first day. I killed my first enemy soldier the first day, and so initiation was real quick.

McCloughan: Let's walk through--we did this before, but I think this is really good.

Everybody thinks of a medic as just being out under fire and--but there's a lot more that goes into being a medic. Why don't you tell us about what an average kind of a day would be for you?

McCloughan: Okay.

Lynch: Say from the first call of mad minute, all the way through any ambushes and such that you had to go on.

McCloughan: Well, we'd get up in the morning. Of course we'd move before light, because then they can't see which direction we're moving in. So you have your pack right next to your foxhole there so you make sure you slip that on and don't forget anything. We march out really close column so that you don't turn in the wrong direction; you follow everybody follows everybody else. Then we'll probably stop after daylight maybe an hour or so after daylight. It's according to how far we're gonna move. But normally you stop. And when we stop everybody gets to rest and get out their food and everything. And doc is going around changing bandages.

Lynch: And you're doc--

McCloughan: Giving out--I'm doc--medication to people that need medication. Might be--every day I handed out a malaria tablet. We got two kinds, and Al remembers that because we got the little white one every day and then a big orange one on Monday. And one thing I didn't tell you was that those orange ones, I don't know if it happened with your company, but it would give you the--we call it the Michigan quickstep. Diarrhea is what it's called, you know in the common--and so I found out if I took half of it on Monday and half of it on Tuesday, it wouldn't do that.

Lynch: That would have been nice to know.

(Laughter)

McCloughan: That would have been nice--I'm sorry you weren't with me, but I passed that information on to all my men. That's a crappy thing to do, but anyway.

(Lynch and audience laugh)

McCloughan: So I passed that information on to them, and I actually would--then I took it upon myself to give them half of it on Monday and half of it on Tuesday so that some guy that wasn't smart enough to listen to me would get it on right. We had a disease called impetigo. If you'd get a cut--and often you will see that the American fighting man of Vietnam had his sleeves down, and you're wondering, "Why does he have his sleeves down? It's hot out." Well, there's a couple reasons. Number one, if you absorb that sweat you don't get as hot. And number two is you don't get cut by the elephant grass. If men got cut by the elephant grass, and that dirty, sweaty stuff got into that cut, a disease called impetigo would develop. It was a pus-y sore, and it would take me probably five to six days for one man with impetigo changing his bandage every time we stopped every day until I got that healed. I would have men come from other platoons--I was not their platoon medic--because they knew that I could get them healed. And I didn't care. It was extra work for me. So when we stopped like this I wouldn't rest. I would do my job. And then we'd load up and get going. If I did get a bite to eat, thank God I got a bite to eat. If not, you know, maybe I'd get it later on. We might run into an ambush or we might be on a mission on a given day, so we are going into an area where we may count on getting in contact with the enemy. So I was always prepared. One thing I didn't tell you earlier--the first time that I got off the helicopter, this first guy that greeted me was Sergeant

Hatten. His helmet was on crooked, he had a tooth missing here, and he (imitating Hatten) talked real slow.

Lynch: Oh, that would drive me nuts.

McCloughan: And I'm thinking--shame on me, I was not raised this way. "Lord, you put me in a life-and-death situation, and this is the man who's supposed to help me out?" Well, Sergeant Hatten, couple days later I had learned that Sergeant Hatten had a high school diploma. Jim McCloughan had a college degree. But Sergeant Hatten had a master's degree in fighting a war, and Jim McCloughan was a kindergartner. And I often say I was smart enough to know how dumb I was. And I did everything that that man said. I'm sitting here to this day--I found him after forty-two years, about six years back. And that summer I went to visit him, and he (talking slowly) still talks real slow.

(Laughter)

McCloughan: But anyway, he would tell me if we were--on a given day as we were moving out, "Uh, you better carry more grenades," or if he told me not to go over--"Don't go over there," I didn't go over there. I mean, and sure enough there might be a booby trap there. But he just had that sixth sense. So we may run into something, but if we didn't, then around four o'clock-ish or so, this is when I knew I might get something to eat. And I've never even told my wife this, but she'll say sometimes during the day, "Jim, have you eaten yet today?" And it's like four o'clock. And really I was used to going sometimes all day in Vietnam and finally getting something to eat. Then I'd go around again and change the bandages and give out the medication I had to give out. Sometimes the guys would dig my foxhole. They took care of their doc real well. I felt very respected--

Lynch: Well, we always found it was a good idea.

McCloughan: Yes, sir. Well, and I respect them, too, because here they were digging my hole for the night and-- because I had other things that I had to do. And so then we'd set up for night, and during the evening you would watch from your position so many hours. I'm not a sleeper. I'm a late-night person. So sometimes--they liked having me at their position because sometimes I would stay there for somebody else's watch because I didn't need to sleep. So I'd just say, "Go back to sleep. I'll take your watch." And then I'd wake the next guy up that, maybe if I got sleepy enough to take a little nap.

Lynch: Let's walk--I know we've talked about this, so let's walk through the events of the two days that you received--that you earned the Medal. Let's start from the beginning and work our way all the way through it.

McCloughan: Let's go one day prior to that. Early in the morning on May the 12th, I've recently since my name shot out there found out at least three men that I saved their life on LZ Center when LZ Center got hit by sappers early in the morning of the 12th, which would be the day before we moved into Tam Ky. The far north end of LZ Center got hit. They came up the hill. They blew up one of the artillery bunkers. A couple men were buried alive in there. But I got two guys out that were really badly wounded right away. And later on two or three others that were badly wounded, I got out later on. But then the day carried on, and the evening of the 12th, Lieutenant Carrier, who was the company commander, was called into battalion headquarters. I think they call that--what do they call that, C2 or TO2 or something--

Lynch: TOT

McCloughan: Yeah. And he was called in to be told that they wanted us to move out the next day, combat assaulted by helicopter into Tam Ky. And this guy was on his second tour. He was not twenty-one years old yet, and he turned twenty-one the day after he got his captain bars later on in this tour. And he said that this was a flawed mission. And it was Lieutenant Colonel John Brandenburg was the man that was talking to Ernie Carrier at the time. Ernie Carrier said, "I don't think we should take my men in." Said, "What do

you mean it's a flawed mission?" He said, "Well, you haven't sent any forward observers in, so we really don't know how many enemy soldiers are on that hill." And our mission was gonna be to be a blocking force for a track unit coming over and flushing these men out of the hill. Well, wouldn't you want to know how many people they're gonna flush out of the hill? Our company was down at that time.

Lynch: How many men in your company?

McCloughan: We had only eighty-nine men in our company at that time. If you could keep 135 guys in your company, that was pretty good. I don't know if you know this, but in WWII a company was 180 men, and they could keep them because their companies kind of went in together. But we were constantly losing and gaining men, and here we were down to eighty-nine men.

Lynch: Yeah.

McCloughan: So we got on a helicopter, 1000 hours in the morning and flew in. Got two helicopters shot down right away. Hot LZ. Hot LZ, they don't land the helicopters. You jump out of the helicopters. One of the helicopters was shot down, and it threw one of our men out of the helicopter. His name was Bill Arnold. And they were told to bring the crew back in because they couldn't get another helicopter in to get that crew out of there, so bring those men in, and we'll try to get them out behind our perimeter. Well, the rest of the guys got in pretty quickly with the crew, and I could see this one guy lagging behind. He was out there about a hundred yards, and he went down. Didn't hesitate. I knew something was wrong. I didn't know whether he had been shot or what. So I ran out to him swerving to be a moving target, slide in next to him, ask him if he was hit--where was he hit. "I'm not hit. I hurt my leg. I got thrown out of the helicopter, and my knee's swollen up, and I can't move any further." And I said, "Well, hang on to your M16 'cause you're going over my shoulders." And so I kind of swerved. And my men were missing me, but the NVA were on line coming at us and bouncing the AK-47 rounds off the ground next to me, and I got him in safely, neither one of us hit. That was my initiation to what we were gonna be facing. I knew there was quite a few people out there probably, because you don't have just a platoon on line of NVA.

Lynch: Right.

McCloughan: They travel in pretty big units. So that night at about 4 o'clock, we were asked--my platoon was asked to go out and search and (chuckles) clear the area or search and destroy anything that was in it. Well, I'm thinking, "These guys are nuts. I mean, it's--we got two helicopters shot down coming in. This is a--there's probably quite a few people out there." I don't know how far we went out, but I was behind the lead squad when they turned a right corner, and the trench line that we were traveling in--had ended up in and traveling in--when they went around that, they hit the ambush, and they were waiting for them. The guy that was pointman was killed outright, the second man was killed outright, and then the guy that was carrying the radio ditched his radio and started running away. And I saw him running. At first I thought he was NVA 'cause he didn't have a hat on, but then I recognized he was blonde and it couldn't have been NVA. I heard "medic" up above the berm from the trench line where I was, and Sergeant Hatten and a guy by the name of Sergeant Middendorf had their M60 machine guns set up, and they were covering me. And I said, "Well, I'm going to get these two guys." And I jumped on to the berm, and as I traveled over to get them, they were in some bushes, and they didn't have any weapons. And I heard an explosion behind me, and it was RPG that pelted my body from head to foot. And although I felt it, I didn't pay too much attention to it. And adrenaline was flowing pretty hard at that time. So I went over. These guys were not wounded at all. They were just scared. They didn't have any weapons 'cause they quickly withdrew from that ambush and got up in these bushes where they weren't being seen. So they wouldn't move. I literally dragged--one of them weighed

about 225 pounds, the other weighed about 180, and I must have been all of 140 or 145 at the time. I dragged them across the top of that berm and got them in the trench line. Looked around, and Hatten and Middendorf were gone. Well, about that time, I looked up to the left, and the ambush was coming around the corner from where the right turn had been made with the first squad. And I turned and looked down the hill, and looking right straight at me were two NVA soldiers with AK-47s, and they might have been ten, maybe five meters away. So they were close. And so I said to the two men that I drug in, I said, "Follow me." And I started running. I ran down the trench line, and I wasn't making good time. So I got up out of the trench line so I could be a little faster, and I started weaving. And I think I ran the best fifty-yard dash I ever ran in my life. And I could--but I could see again the bullets were skipping off the ground next to me. Hatten and Middendorf had pulled back, but again they had set up their M60s, and I don't think those that were chasing me could get a good shot at me. I think that was part of the reason why I didn't get hit then. And so I got back almost near them, and I heard a call for medic, so I turned and ran back into it. I did that about, oh, five times. And then after I had gotten I thought everybody in, I heard another call for a medic. By the way, one of those five guys that I'd brought in up to this point was our interpreter Te. And the NVA have a little thing that they do, and they'll call for a medic, and they want to lure the medic out to them. And of course the medic will answer that call. So when I came up on Te through the crossfire and I saw it was a Vietnamese, I thought I'd been trapped. I thought I'd been duped into coming out to an NVA position, but it wasn't. It was Te. And I threw him up and got him in. But as we were--I heard one more call. It was getting dark by this time. And I went out, and it was a sucking chest wound. It was a guy by the name of Frank Patton, who I found out later was qualified to be a priest, as a PFC, and we lost a good priest that night. (Pause) But I got him in, and actually I did all that I could do. A sucking chest wound--one of the worst kinds of wounds that you could have. I got the bandage on and set him. So the helicopter was a little late getting in. It couldn't get in; it was getting fired at. And they got him out of there. I've talked with someone that was with him when they got back to the 91st Evacuation Hospital, and he said he was alive when they got back there, so I felt like I did my job. So they lost him either in the emergency room or in the operating room. And I have made contact with his older brother Bill, Bill Patton, and Bill's oldest son's name is Frank Patton--

Lynch: Nice.

McCloughan: --named after his uncle. So I'm loading these guys on the helicopter, and Lieutenant Carrier says to me, "Get on, doc." And then it came back to me, "Hey, I got hit out there." And I looked down, and there's blood on my hands, and I looked on my arm. There's some blood on my arm. And then I started feeling some of the places--I said, "Well, I'm not getting on." When I was out there in that trench line, I looked up on the hill, and the enemy looked like lava coming down that hill. There were that many people. It was far enough away that I couldn't make a distinct look at it, but they were so close together and so many of them, they looked just like lava coming down.

Lynch: You had the opportunity to get out of dodge.

McCloughan: Yes, he told me to get on.

Lynch: Now, why do you think you stayed? Other than the adrenaline.

McCloughan: Wouldn't even thought--wouldn't thought about going. I wouldn't have--

Lynch: A lot of guys would have got on that helicopter and got out of there just as fast as their little legs could carry them. Why not you?

McCloughan: You know, I really think that there are few men that would do that with the men I've fought with, though, and probably a lot of the men that you fought with. But, yes, there would be those that would say, "Hmm, nice hot shower, bed to sleep in, probably a little blue suit." You know, and--

Lynch: Some cerveza.

McCloughan: Yeah, something to eat and drink and, sure. Cute nurse, you know, coming your way. Even if she's ugly, she'd look good, you know.

(Laughter)

McCloughan: That's right.

Lynch: There you are.

McCloughan: There you are. So anyway, yeah, so I said--

Lynch: But why did you stay? Why did you--

McCloughan: There was no way. I would not leave my men there. There was no way-- my job was to be a combat medic, and my father told me, "If you're given a job, you do it right to the end. You do it the best that you can do, and don't do it halfway."

Lynch: So it was the influence of your dad and others?

McCloughan: My dad was a big influence on me. And so was the coaches that I had, you know. So what, you're down two touchdowns. You don't give up, right, so you keep on fighting--

Lynch: I would imagine you've played hurt before?

McCloughan: Pardon me?

Lynch: I would imagine you've played hurt when you were in high school and college, wrestling--

McCloughan: Oh, yeah. Matter of fact, my senior year I had separated some ribs, and I actually dislocated my shoulder. And I went to the doctor, and he told me, "Take a couple weeks off." And I went to my coach, and he said, "What did the doctor say?" "He said to tape it up really well."

(Laughter)

McCloughan: So to (chuckles)--is that a lie? That could be a lie.

Lynch: That would be a lie, yeah. I think that would qualify as a lie.

McCloughan: That's okay because when I went back two weeks later, the doctor said, "I'm glad you took that two weeks rest. It looks good." I said, "It feels good, too." So--

Lynch: So, all of that training and all of that motivation and the examples set by your coaches and your father and your parents and all that--that made you stay.

McCloughan: That and the love for those men. Yeah. I would not have left them. I'd rather be dead on that battlefield than hear later on that one of my men died because they didn't have a medic. And of course the next day is the second part of the story--

Lynch: All hell broke loose.

McCloughan: All hell broke loose again, and we lost the only other medic we had. And he was killed on about his second, third, fourth, about his fifth time out. Forth or fifth time out--I'm trying to count them out. And so I was the only medic left. I'm in charge of the whole company now. And hadn't had anything to eat or drink for going on two days, but I didn't even think about that. And by the way, I lost a little weight from football to wrestling, because I played football about 162 and I wrestled at 130, so I knew how to go without something to eat or drink for a while. And so I just concentrated--what did it matter if I had anything to eat anyway--if I was dead, didn't matter one way or the other, so let's try to get through this--

Lynch: You thought you were gonna--

McCloughan: I thought I was--when I told him, "No, I'm not getting on the helicopter," I thought that was my last day on earth. That the next day I--because I knew how many people were out there. I didn't know number-wise, but we know now there were 2,000--possibly 2,000 NVA, at the least 1,500 NVA and 700 VC against eighty-nine men. That's not a good ratio.

Lynch: That ain't good odds.

McCloughan: That's not good odds. I wouldn't play a football game with that. That's for sure. Let alone with them having weapons in their hands. So I stayed, and I did my job the next day and went out several times. Was wounded in the arm with an AK-47 working on a man with a stomach wound. I was wounded with RPG going out to get a machine gunner who had been shot through the shoulder and came out the front part of him. Kept him alive all night long with three morphine syrettes. Kept--went back periodically when I wasn't fighting out front. That man is one of the top geoscientists in the nation out of the University of Texas. We reunited with him, my wife and I with he and his wife and met his grandson. And the greatest thing that he found out from me was that he wasn't shot by his own men. For forty-plus years--we were in a U-shaped ambush, and he was out front. He got shot from behind, so he didn't know whether his own men had hit him or he'd gotten shot by the--I said, "Take off your shirt." And you'll appreciate this. He took off his shirt, and the hole of exit was about that big around, about the size of a quarter. And I said, "Do you see that?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "If that had been an M16, the hole of exit--it tumbles, and it blows a hole about that big around in your chest, and I wouldn't have been able to--" You should have seen the relief on that man's face, that he was shot by the enemy and not his own men. Only you and I know how important that is to an individual. Even though it would have been a mistake that he got shot--

Lynch: Still.

McCloughan: --still, the enemy got him. Not his men. It wasn't his own men.

Lynch: So this is a very long day, and finally you have to be medevac'd.

McCloughan: The next morning, what happened was I got everybody prepared and got them on helicopters, and all I remember was I was walking back to a position to get my weapon, 'cause I had set it down while I was loading them on, and I woke up about two hours later with IVs in both arms. I had dehydrated so much, I had nothing to drink or eat for forty-eight hours, and I just collapsed.

Lynch: The body can only stand so much.

McCloughan: The body shut down, yeah. I remember waking up with both of them in, and I knew I was okay now because I had to *** like a racehorse.

(Laughter)

McCloughan: I knew I was rehydrated. (Laughter) Sorry, that's just a term we use.

Lynch: I think everybody here has heard that. Anybody not hear that term before?

McCloughan: So then, I told them, "Get these things out of me," and I got back to my unit. We were not longer in contact with the enemy. The enemy had left. When I collapsed the enemy had already gone. We got a lot of help. I want to give credit to the--every branch of the United States except for the coastguard was helping us out through that night, unless Allen and Jim wouldn't be sitting here talking with each other. Allen might be here, but Jim wouldn't be here. And I'm grateful for the big team, and there isn't anybody but a coach that can understand the big team better than I do.

Lynch: Navy long-range fire can do just wonderful things to the enemy.

McCloughan: From way out on China Sea, they were firing near Chu Lai, and I don't know how far that was, but it was a long ways. And the ground would shake when those would hit.

Lynch: Yeah.

McCloughan: Yeah. Well, how big are those?

Lynch: Really big.

McCloughan: Really big.

(Laughter)

Lynch: There's big, and then there's really big, and then there's like really, really big.

McCloughan: Well, really big was coming in and helping us, so I appreciate it very much.

Lynch: So you're with your unit, and your tour ends with one year?

McCloughan: My tour ended in one year. After one of those men that I drug into the--he didn't follow me. He went the wrong direction, and he was captured. His name was Larry Aiken. And Larry Aiken, you can look it up. It's A-K-I-N. A-I-K-E-N. Excuse me. A-I-K-E-N. Larry Aiken. He was the only one that was recaptured in the Vietnam War by an American and Vietnamese unit. Only one in the whole war that was recaptured. But they had beaten his head in. And he was a linebacker in high school, and he was down to about ninety-five pounds when they brought him in. So they brought me in to identify him. This was in late July. And so I came in, I identified him. I had to go up to headquarters to the casualty branch and sign some papers. Didn't have DNA back then, and they didn't want to take the time to do the dental things. They wanted to get a quick ID, and me being his platoon medic, they figure I could be somebody who would be able to identify him. So I went up there, and when I got up there the warrant officer, who by the way, in those pamphlets on the end you can see a guy awarding me the Bronze Star, that's the warrant officer that said to me, he said, "Hey, we did research on you, and we see that you got a college degree. And you've been wounded more than a couple of times. What are you still doing out in the field?" I said, "Well, that's my job, right?" He said, "Well, we've got a liaison going home from the 91st Evac." 91st Evac in Chu Lai replaced the 312th. The 312th, if you remember in June of 1969, the only female KIA in the Vietnam War was hit by a rocket in the 312th, and I think they moved that unit out because of that, because of the morale being kinda low, and the 91st had been moved in. So he said, "How would you like to take that position?" I said, "Well, I'll have to ask my boss." That's the way I was raised. Now I know why he looked at me kinda like, "What's wrong with this idiot? You know, I'm asking this guy if he'd like to have a rear job, and he's telling me he's got to see his boss." So a couple of days later I went up to Captain Carrier--by this time he was Captain Carrier--and I said, "Sir, they asked me if I wanted to take a job being a liaison or something like that over at the 91st Evac Hospital." And I'll never forget his answer. He said, "What the hell are you still doing here?" And I can't tell you the emotions that I went through when I took my personal gear out of my pack. I was gonna leave that there, my helmet there, my weapon there for whoever my replacement was gonna be. But I was leaving my men. And real mixed emotion. I knew I was going to a safer place. And they shared with me later on that they didn't want to lose me either because they knew that they could count on me, but they were happy for me that I was getting out of there. So I finished my tour at the 91st Evacuation Hospital as the liaison for all of the Americal Division reporting all the DOAs--dead on arrival--and the WIAs from all of the units of Americal Division to the casualty branch and the Red Cross.

Lynch: So you get back to the States.

McCloughan: Get back.

Lynch: And you get a job with the high school that you were gonna work with?

McCloughan: Yup. I was recontracted by the high school, and by this time the head baseball job had also opened up. So I was gonna teach--they didn't have the same teaching position open for me, but they put me in the middle school. And if you've ever taught middle school out there, whoever's ever taught middle school, they'll know one thing. I told those kids Vietnam prepared me for them, because there's--they're bouncing off the walls. And so I was in the middle school for about five years. I coached football, wrestling, and baseball from the get-go.

Lynch: What about family life? I know you're a great coach--

McCloughan: Family life, I had--

Lynch: --but what's going on with the family?

McCloughan: I had a son in December then. Kinda figured it was about nine months after I had gotten back that he was born. Yup, yup. I'm pretty potent. Very potent.

Lynch: (Laughing)

McCloughan: I'm a very potent guy. Anyway. And I shared with you earlier that one of my favorite numbers I wore in high school with my home jersey in football and basketball was ten. And for thirty-eight years in high school and American Legion ball, thirty-five summers, I wore the number ten. And my first son was born on December 10, 1970. I wore number twenty-two in football in college, and my other son, my second son, was born on September 22, 1972. So, and my daughter was born in '75. And so that's all of my children. And then their mother and I divorced after twenty-one years of marriage. And I didn't want to see another woman the rest of my life but ran into a beautiful lady, inside and out, and I changed my mind. I decided I wanted to get married a second time. And we just celebrated--Cherie and I just celebrated our twenty-sixth wedding anniversary.

Lynch: Wow, nice.

McCloughan: She's put up with me that long. Twenty-six years--

Lynch: Well, she looks like a very saintly woman with a lot of patience.

McCloughan: She is. They decided to make her a saint because she's put up with me--

Lynch: I heard that.

McCloughan: --for twenty-six years. Yes, so--and she has a daughter, so we have four grown children and two standard poodles. That's where we're at right now. But yes, I enjoyed a wonderful career. I coached 133 teams at the high school level in football, wrestling, and baseball, twenty little league teams when my kids were coming through, thirteen junior wrestling programs, and ran the park programs in the summer time. And got real busy as a workaholic, and I know now that I was doing that to keep--partially to keep my mind away from what I had seen as a medic in Vietnam.

Lynch: So the elephant in the room. How did you deal with Vietnam coming back after you had stopped working?

McCloughan: I was a little--oh, after I stopped working finally and--

Lynch: Well, did you have any problems when you first got back or--

McCloughan: When I first got back, I was in a fog for-- I don't know if that's the way you were for about a month or so, but I was in a real fog 'cause I mean, when you go from that back into society--and I was older. And I actually was accepted at Western Michigan University, where I ended up getting my master's degree in a year and one class. I only had to take one more class after a year. And I was coaching three sports and teaching at the same time. I got my degree in psychology, which was counseling and personnel. And so I was able as a twenty-five year old to kind of evaluate through those classes and that what had just happened to me. Now you take a nineteen or twenty-year-old coming out of Vietnam who doesn't have that opportunity to go through those, that's where your PTSD comes in. and I still had PTSD, but I got busy working, so I didn't think about a lot of those things.

Lynch: What happened when you retired?

McCloughan: When I retired, that's when the ghosts started coming back. And it didn't change me really, other than I had to fight them off. And of course I did have a lot of bad dreams and things like that prior to my retirement, but they really came on strong after retirement, so I decided with a suggestion from my rep for VA, Kay VanDrunen, told me, "You know, maybe you should see one of our counselors here." I thought, "Not me." You know, I'm--nothing wrong with me.

Lynch: I fought that battle.

McCloughan: Yes, sir, and I'm one hell of a coach. You know, and yeah, but whatever. I'm just a real strong guy. Well, after a few weeks with Brian, I realized that there were

some things that he and I needed to talk about. Things that I haven't even shared with my wife. Things that I haven't even shared with the men I fought with, because when they call for a medic, I sometimes was the only man to go there. I was the only man to hold this eighteen, nineteen, and twenty-year-old in my arms and watch him take his last breath and hear him say his last words. So those faces started coming back. I didn't always have names with the faces, but they were coming back, too. So I went to the vet center, and Brian and I have been together--we go, every other week I go and see him, and sometimes we talk about something related to Vietnam, sometimes we don't. He was at the ceremony. He's paraplegic, and he was there in his wheelchair with his father, who is a marine veteran from Vietnam. So that was kinda neat. And I say that I saved ten lives on that forty-eight hours, and he saved one by helping Jim McCloughan.

Lynch: Well, Jim, this has been a phenomenal interview. It's been just great.

(Applause)

Clarke: Thank you to Medal of Honor Recipients Jim McCloughan and Al Lynch for an outstanding discussion, and to US Army Office of Public Affairs Midwest for their partnership on this program. To learn more about the US Army, visit Army.mil. To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.

Voiceover: Visit the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago. Explore original exhibits on military history, or be a part of a live studio audience. Watch other episodes of *Pritzker Military Presents*; find out What's On at PritzkerMilitary.org.

(Theme music)

Voiceover: *Pritzker Military Presents* is made possible by members of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library and its sponsors. The views and opinions expressed in this program are not necessarily those of the Museum and Library.

(Theme music)

Voiceover: The preceding program was produced by the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.