

Godby, Garland Interview pt 2 8-22-95

[Speaker 2]

I'm talking about how you drop a lot of weight in combat.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, because you're, first place, you're not overheating. And next place, in the line company, you're getting good, tough exercise all the time. Because everywhere you go, you can walk and run.

So, I used to go on the 30-mile hike. If you want something sweet, you try a couple of 30-mile hikes. And then when I was in the ranger training, I used to run them.

I ran 10 miles. I mean, you don't go there. You go.

Otherwise, you're out. Out. But it only hurts for a while.

It's still a big drain on the back. You can still eat all you want, and you never get fat.

[Speaker 2]

Which is great. Generally, what did you eat up on the line? Did you just get K rations?

[Speaker 1]

Well, C rations and K rations. And B bars. Chocolate.

Concentrated chocolate. They call them B bars. It was very nutritious, but I didn't compare it to ratchet.

[Speaker 2]

It didn't taste too good. No. Did you like any of the ration selections, or did they really get to be a drag to eat?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. In a sense. You had to eat them cold.

Some were better than others. I used to eat beans and wheat. That was favorite.

I loved beans and wheat. And that stew. And macaroons.

It kept you going, but it wasn't going that fast. That's why I loved to have the kitchen come up and lay a spread on it.

[Speaker 2]

Generally, if the kitchen did catch up with you, what kind of food would it be?

[Speaker 1]

Everything.

[Speaker 2]

Really? Real meat.

[Speaker 1]

Real meat and real veggies. Depends on where we were. Out in the desert, we had goat.

[Speaker 2]

Wild goat?

[Speaker 1]

Goats in my stew.

[Speaker 2]

Really?

[Speaker 1]

Uh-huh. That was cold. Like being in the shoes.

Nobody liked that. But that's all there is.

[Speaker 2]

Did you ever come across any German rations? Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. First thing they took away from us was their cheese. They had all kinds of cheese.

Smirkoffs. What are they called? Smirkoffs.

[Speaker 2]

Did you ever find that you lost your appetite while you were in combat? Just didn't even think about eating yourself?

[Speaker 1]

Well, a lot of times you get too busy to eat. I got the flu one time. I was off my feed for a couple of days.

But this wasn't in combat. This was on the 10th and 7th of November. Up in the mountains.

And I was sick. I fell into the grease pit. I don't remember.

I remember I had tonsillitis. I had two of these. I was a hooker.

And then I had to promise a surgeon that as soon as we got back to Camp Forest, I'd go have my tonsils taken care of. And I did. And that was an experience.

Well, I'll tell you. You go down, and they take you to the hospital, and they put you in a nice bed. And they kind of get you.

And they take you on a gurney. And they take you in there, and they drop the gurney and push you in. And you're a great climber.

Open up. And you're bleeding like a pig. Get finished with you.

Get you out of the chair and say, Okay, go on back to your ward.

[Speaker 2]

Just walk on back? Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Go back to the ward. And the nurses were life-saving. They teach you how to take care of yourself.

I remember there was something else. Especially us. Those old nurses.

[Speaker 2]

Get a healthy respect for the medical corps.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

We did.

[Speaker 1]

Well, we didn't like the medical administrative corps particularly, because they were men, and they weren't fighting. We used to call them ballbacks. But they said, Perfect.

[Speaker 2]

Do you feel that way about most of your echelon?

[Speaker 1]

Mm-hmm. Yeah, usually. In a combat outfit, you do.

When you consider it takes 14 to 17 people, back there, there's one guy up there. And you're looking at a bunch of logistics. And I admired the AI, the black soldiers and truck drivers.

There was a black truck driver down at Red Hall.

[Speaker 2]

Mm-hmm.

[Speaker 1]

They were...

[Speaker 2]

Really?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah. And they'd go through there together.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

I did a lot of miles with them. And they weren't lynching us.

[Speaker 2]

Mines.

[Speaker 1]

And artillery. Good morning. I say it's break time for lunch.

[Speaker 2]

There was a school of thought that emerged after the war, mainly due to the efforts of S.L.A. Marshall. You ever heard of him, Sly Marshall? He came up with this theory that only about one out of every six or seven American infantry soldiers in combat ever fired their weapon.

What do you think about that?

[Speaker 1]

It's probably true. I don't think it was too true of anybody to serve under Patton.

[Speaker 2]

So you think if Patton's army would have been different?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. He had a good pattern. Dead on that target and fired the gun.

We got plenty of ammunition.

[Speaker 2]

So in your unit, if you could come up with some sort of percentage, would you ever even think about it?

[Speaker 1]

No. A lot of times guys were too frightened temporarily to fire, but once you get into it, it's comforting. It gets you into it.

I've seen them burn out barrels, machine guns. And B.A.R. too. Fearsome weapon.

[Speaker 2]

That was a pretty effective weapon.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

Typically, how did you utilize it?

[Speaker 1]

We used it in marching fire. That's what you call marching fire. Put it in a swing.

You don't fire from the shoulder, but from the swing. Very effective.

[Speaker 2]

You can give it to your best man?

[Speaker 1]

You had to have about a three-man group, because it burned up a lot of ammunition. One guy couldn't carry it. They had to move right for it.

So you had to have like a three-man team.

[Speaker 2]

You yourself carried a Thompson submachine gun, is that right? And I had a .45. What were your opinions of those weapons?

[Speaker 1]

Well, the Thompson was the most effective. We had what they call a grease gun that was brought out. It was metal.

Metal canisters. And you couldn't get turned on in that thing.

[Speaker 2]

Why not?

[Speaker 1]

It had such a slow cyclic rate. You just couldn't feel comfortable. It was too mechanical.

But it took us a long time to get used to the M1. Yeah, because we used to use the O-30s. That was a honeyed flight.

[Speaker 2]

The O-30 was heavy, but it was accurate.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. It used to be one of the biggest things before the war was earning a marksmanship expert badge, because you got \$25 a month for that. But it took hours and hours and hours of practice.

And you'd try the 500 yards sometimes to get a 10-inch bullseye.

[Speaker 2]

Difficult. The M1 came along, and then what was your opinion of that eventually?

[Speaker 1]

Once we got used to it, yeah, it was not standing much. But if you'd never had an O-3, then the problem was getting your damn thumb out of there before that slide came pulling.

[Speaker 2]

Did you ever get your thumb caught in there?

[Speaker 1]

Always.

[Speaker 2]

Really?

[Speaker 1]

Always, yeah. It was a snap now, and it's good now. I used to be doing those things, and everybody liked those things.

[Speaker 2]

They called it M1 thumb.

[Speaker 1]

Mm-hmm.

[Speaker 2]

And as far as the tanks, the United States tanks, in your opinion, which was the best one?

[Speaker 1]

The German tank.

[Speaker 2]

No U.S. tank would even be up there with any of the German tanks.

[Speaker 1]

Well, the heavy tank came in and tore them in. No, but that Tiger and Panzer were superior, too. They had a head in them, but we didn't.

The combat ones were Germans, M6s. But the German tank was engineered better, and more heavily armored. You see them with Libya and al-Alamein and stuff.

They lost an awful lot of our tanks. And the British tanks weren't any better.

[Speaker 2]

They just went in in the same category. Did you ever have any contact with British soldiers or Canadians?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

What was that like?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I didn't have much use for the officers in this command in the United States.

[Speaker 2]

How come you didn't like the officers?

[Speaker 1]

It didn't matter. Like it or not, the men were different lifestyles, because they were so far removed from the troops. They were classed by itself.

But the soldier on the line was undue, and the Australians were unstoppable. Really? Yes.

They'd give them everything. Nobody could discipline a man, you know, the way you think. Teutonic discipline, you know.

They had free spirits.

[Speaker 2]

Do you have any theories about why that is?

[Speaker 1]

Well, it's just the culture. The culture.

[Speaker 2]

Any contact with Canadians at all?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah. How was the Canadians?

[Speaker 2]

Did they make any kind of impression on you, one way or the other?

[Speaker 1]

They were very positive.

[Speaker 2]

Really?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. They were just so much like us that it was very difficult to adjust to them.

[Speaker 2]

I imagine there was constant fear. There was probably a fear always with you. How did you keep a rein on that your entire time in combat?

How did you overcome fear?

[Speaker 1]

You know, you kind of can't. You just corral it, you know. Manage it.

That's what I'm saying about stress. It's stress. Because you want to get the hell out of it.

And it's fear. It's turning it around. You want to get the hell out of there.

I think that one is still getting to me. I don't know. I don't know.

Because he was just a kid. As far as I'm concerned, he was the only thing he's ever good at.

[Speaker 2]

Really?

[Speaker 1]

That and tank fighting.

[Speaker 2]

But it was good enough to be an effective commander. Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

But they should have died the day they went in. Because I hated to see them get stuck in the hospital.

[Speaker 2]

Especially with what happened. Paralyzed. Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

And when he slapped that soldier, I made a big deal about nothing. I mean, that's that emotion. And emotion will reason a lot of times.

[Speaker 2]

Mm-hmm. Do you believe that every man had his breaking point?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Oh, every man did. But some were different, you know.

Sitting, crying. It's hard to understand it, but it's good.

[Speaker 2]

You're talking about the breaking point?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Huh. Yeah, nobody is, I think, can be still with it.

There's a point in every person that you grow up with. And fear is constant in him, and that's it. It's stupid to think about getting up and walking into death.

It's the toughest real estate in the world. But you don't dwell on it. That's why I'm like him.

You know what they say? A man can be married tomorrow and probably the day after.

[Speaker 2]

So you had that viewpoint then. Mm-hmm. What does it matter?

[Speaker 1]

Well, you had a duty. It amazes me, though, how well the average person, you know, dwells with the stress on that. And all the men I commanded in my unit, I lost one man because of the couch.

One man. The whole time. Wow.

And he just pulled out one day. And I don't know what happened to him. Because we were in a pretty tough fight.

He got up in front of the mirror and never heard from again. And he wasn't on the field every day. I assume somebody took care of him.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have psychiatric casualties?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, but extremely, extremely few. No, I don't. Outside of him and I, I think it was just pure terror.

Because I had the whole scope of humanity in those men. I had one guy who couldn't read or write. Sparks.

But he was a pet. Really? Well, yeah.

I'm trying to teach him interior guard. You have to get it right. I said, who's there?

He said, officer of the day. I said, advance and be reconciled. And we always carried his pack and everything on us.

So he provided us with a map. And as a lieutenant I had it. It's been up.

That's my vector. Because he was a clown. Clown.

But he was good. He got shot in the butt. Appropriately.

Hand in hand. He was always there. Yeah, I was more one way.

And had him cross the Jeep on his stomach. I was pointing it. And he'd go home.

[Speaker 2]

He made the men laugh. That's how he led.

[Speaker 1]

And he was a confident lieutenant. He was just irreverent. Everybody has something that you can use.

Miss Tiffin. I hope you can go see him. It'd be worth it.

It'd be worth your time. To go down and see him. Because you'd see it from the misted side.

[Speaker 2]

What do you think was the biggest single factor in how effective your men were? Your company was very effective. You were just saying that you were amazed at how well the average person stood up under the rigors.

What do you think was the biggest single factor that caused that?

[Speaker 1]

Brotherhood. You know, everybody sharing the same majors. Same joy and the same silence.

And I just remember, because nobody's deeply religious. No, if he was, he'd laugh at him. So, that's why I think about the Vietnam experience.

Remind the soldiers and the soldiers on the plane from that. Because we had a purpose for moving them to combat. But they were just shipped over there.

And just came and gone. And I can see where the problem is.

[Speaker 2]

To make them grateful you fought in the war that you did? Even though it was probably a more terrible war to be a part of.

[Speaker 1]

Well, it wasn't that terrible. Well, you know, I never thought it was particularly terrible. And I was in Okinawa, too, right after the war.

And we had thousands of insurgents, Japanese insurgents there. And I had a military police battalion. And we did a lot of work beating up Japanese.

One of the biggest things I had there was these big 6x6 trucks. I had a depot, an ordinance depot. And it was all black.

And the Okinawans hated it. And they hated the Okinawans. Why?

I don't know. Asiatics just aren't friendly to blacks. It's a cultural thing.

And they used to raid the compounds. And we had plenty of trouble in Okinawa. Officers were not deprived.

That's when they were reducing the army. What they call reduction. And they had officers with nothing to do.

They used to have an enemy club. I'd have to patrol down there and close the club. And they didn't want to fight me off.

Turn over, turn over. I'd say, okay, jacket's off, let's go.

[Speaker 2]

They got in a lot of fights that way.

[Speaker 1]

But I enjoyed it. Well, I was pretty well trained. I could kill you without making a sound.

And that's training. Then I went to that gig in Korea. In Korea, it was a bad, bad gig.

Bad, bad gig. There were some kids and homeless. Of course, they were just slaughtered there.

Especially when the Chinese came in. I'll tell you, I don't have much use for MacArthur.

[Speaker 2]

Why is that? Personally.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I think he's arrogant. Imperial. Dominating, dominating.

Autocrat, aristocrat. But he was a splendid, splendid man. Far beyond, far beyond normal ability to think.

But he got too big for himself. And that's when Truman said, get out of here. Because he didn't mess with old Harry Astor.

[Speaker 2]

Not the right thing to do.

[Speaker 1]

No. No. But he was fine, fine.

As much as Harry. And he did more for Japan than anything possible. And he did it by keeping the Emperor.

He didn't want to take away people's focus.

[Speaker 2]

I guess that was probably his finest hour, really.

[Speaker 1]

Yes. In Japan. It was.

He said soldiers never die. They just stay in Japan. But you couldn't like him.

[Speaker 2]

Is there anything else that comes to mind that you would like people to know about, that I can ask you about?

[Speaker 1]

I'd say war doesn't solve anything. Peace solves things. Peace.

Don't we shoot when we talk. And we've proved it in a couple of ways. You know, like that.

Temporary troops. You know. Stretched for a long, long time.

And no one's getting killed. Because it's a shame to waste the cream on the people. Because that's a crime.

On the cream. You know. Reasons when you kill some people.

Who leave their country to a better future. And you've got to kill them. And you're dominated by the, you know, the less apt.

I don't say peace of any kind. But when I say we've got to strive for peace. Because you realize we spend billions, billions of dollars.

On promoting peace. And they've stripped the budgets down, you know. And I say, rightfully so.

Take it away. Take away this military threat. And I go back to George Washington.

He says, don't get so tied up in others' affairs. Take care of your own affairs. Protect your own stuff.

But in the meantime, you've got to help people who are trying to get it. But we can't make everybody a Democrat. Being a solid, conservative Republican.

You can say, thank God, right? No, everybody lives differently. Just keep the culture.

And that's what McArthur did. They kept their culture strong. And they are strong.

They're tricky, but they're strong. But we're plenty tricky. Plenty.

Because our big business. Can't be beat. Major General Motors, Ford.

I don't want to name a few. But you'll never have peace. It will always be fragile.

Like what's going on in South Africa. I think that's a war of what? Independence.

[Speaker 2]

I think it's just human nature. We just fight.

[Speaker 1]

That's right. Like Mandela. He's trying to talk it.

Because he's pretty well put out in what do you call it? Inclus? What?

Inclus.

[Speaker 2]

The ANC?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Yeah, but there's a tribe there too. Well, anyway.

He's trying to tell them let's quit killing. And let's work together. See, Russia used to be a horrible threat.

You saw what happened to Russia real quick. Poof. Everybody says that proves that communism is dead.

Gone. Well, I mean it isn't. We're always going to have to.

It's just not going to be the dirty word. They used to say that Karl Marx wasn't right. Of course, they don't get it through his father, Karl Marx.

Now, we would flourish under a benign dictatorship. And you do. Except that power goes up to the top.

And you've got people moving in, pulling out a piece from you, a piece from you. So long as you have corruption that's in. The Presbyterian won't tell you what to do.

They would. I mean, Jesus wasn't that peaceful. You know.

He fought for his belief. Well, we're sorry. I don't know why.

It's just squalling and puking. In the same way.

[Speaker 2]

There is a sort of symmetry there.

[Speaker 1]

And you live a brief time. And you're barracks naked, shitting in the bed. And you're dead.

Clamps under. Puts your ashes in a hole. And you're scared of that.

[Speaker 2]

If you're lucky, you get all the way to that phase. You know, the first to the last.

[Speaker 1]

Otherwise, you're sticking around and rotting. And that's a good result.

[Speaker 2]

Disciple.

[Speaker 1]

So much for philosophy.

[Speaker 2]

I live for philosophy.