

*Note: This show periodically replaces their ad breaks with new promotional clips. Because of this, both the transcription for the clips and the timestamps after them may be inaccurate at the time of viewing this transcript.*

00:00:00	Music	Music	"Waking Up" by Explosions in the Sky, from the <i>Lone Survivor</i> original motion picture soundtrack. Moody, reverberating, slow guitar music strums in background.
00:00:03	John Roderick	Host	We all presumably know what "stolen valor" means. It's a common enough occurrence for some Firestone security guard with 15 credits toward a criminal justice major from Pomona City College to ask for a military discount at the Fuddruckers in Ontario, only to have an Army vet that did two years active duty as a fueler during the Panama invasion call him out for wearing an Air Force command chief master sergeant chevron sewn upside-down on a marching band jacket with nine rows of service ribbons, including ones for the Berlin Airlift and the Victoria Cross.

These sad cosplayers enrage people by heisting some of that precious valor. Goddammit, man! How dare you disgrace the sacred ground of 50% off of Fuddruckers' curly fries? Did my son-in-law spend three years in the typing pool in Camp Pendleton before being given an other-than-honorable discharge for smelling like weed in formation just so you can board first on a Southwest flight to Farmington, New Mexico, under the false pretense of having a tactical flag patch on your T.H.E. pack? That honor must be earned, sir!

You never used to hear about stolen valor because—well, it's not how people used to be. I don't mean that there weren't fakers. There were always guys parading around their neighborhood taverns claiming to have been with Napoleon in Moscow or to have landed in Normandy with General Discharge or whatever. But everyone knew they were harmless cranks. No, the difference is that people weren't quite so liberal with the use of the word "valor" back in the day. So it wasn't quite so easy to steal. "Valor" was a word weighted with meaning. It still is, in fact; but like so many words in our modern world, it's changed a bunch just recently.

And now, rather than meaning "great courage in battle" it means "having enlisted once in the military." Or police, or fire department, or Coast Guard, Border Patrol, Homeland Security—or any other uniformed service—and having presumably fulfilled that enlistment for the most part. But enough to be able to convincingly stare into a drink when someone asks you if you were ever in the shit, and at least get the name of your unit correct so that you don't get punched by a guy pretending to be a Navy SEAL.

See, there's been an incredible valor inflation in the last 20 years and it's part of the hangover that started over 40 years ago when we abolished the draft and gradually the expectation that youth might be called upon to perform some national service fell out of fashion among the privileged classes and the military became mostly a jobs program for the poor.

00:02:36	John	Host	Middle-class kids lost any sense that they should contribute materially to their nation until 9/11 happened, and a whole new generation suddenly felt moved to defend their nation from attack. Well, that spell wore off pretty quick for most kids who—for better or
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for worse—realized their nation wasn't really under attack but rather had been attacked, once, by some Middle Eastern religious nuts cranky about some bullshit who got away with it, mostly as the result of some lax motherfucking work on the part of our intelligence services that, frankly, still hasn't been atoned for and fat chance will it ever be now.

The point is that the ones who poured into the service after that hangover wore off either enlisted on 9/12 and the hangover didn't wear off until they were in their jump boots checking their webbing, or the hangover never wore off because they were locked and loaded by their pastors and loving-but-shrill and kind-of-lying-to-themselves-about-being-happy mothers, and by the Pledge of Allegiance they recited before every Future Farmers of America meeting a long time before 9/11 ever happened.

Honestly, we don't talk about this enough. There used to be so many jobs. Good jobs. That rednecks could do with pride. Like herp-derping around the fields and hunting hogs and all that other shit rednecks do like—who knows. And all those jobs have mostly been taken by robots and white-coated Monsanto eggheads and we've got a whole nation of people that think God wants the world to go back to being a music video from John Mellencamp's "Little Pink Houses," and there's not a damn other thing they can do to scratch that itch to be regular and bend the shit out of their hat brims besides get in fights and join the Army. Even the ones with college degrees went to aggie schools and their degrees are in breech-birthing calves and increasing corn yield, but that work is being done by robots, too. So they also have to choose between joining the ROTC and becoming a captain with no chance of ever getting promoted to major, or of managing the local Fuddruckers where their employees were all Specialists First Class and none of them could ever make the payments on their Mustangs.

So all this valor talk has nothing to do with valor. It's exactly virtue signaling, just like the snowflake libs do when they angry-beg people on Twitter to support the Green New Deal instead of hosting gender reveal parties. Except in this case, it's valorizing what was formerly—and would be in any functioning society—just the stuff of basic citizenship. Getting a job where you wear a uniform and are very, very occasionally in harm's way as a component of trying to help your fellow citizens. There're plenty of people in uniform who serve their country, like the Postal Service and the Park Service and the Public Health Service and plenty of others with essential functions, like the civil service and the Foreign Service and the Customs Service. And thousands of jobs that serve the nation otherwise.

00:05:17 John Host

The idea that being a cop or a soldier is some kind of sacred work because the risk of death is present is both jingoistic and condescending. Cops had an on-the-job death rate last year about half that of truckers, and about a third that of garbagemen. It can be argued which of these three occupations provides the greatest good to a functioning civil society, although my money is on the garbagemen. Active duty soldiers have a higher risk of death—twice that of garbagemen—slightly more than commercial fishermen, but way, way under the rate for loggers.

All of these jobs are necessary. Crucial, even, to promote and protect this free society we're in the process of denigrating and destroying by abandoning every first principle in favor of graft, xenophobia, and revenge. But I would challenge the assertion that a soldier who dies in service of our country's wars of adventure in the Korangal Valley dies with more nobility than a lumberjack felling trees in Lewis County to build homes for all those returning veterans. Yes, there are valorous people, some truly worthy of our awe, who sacrificed themselves for others in ways that take our breath away. Let us reserve the word "valor" for them, and for them alone.

I think we're about fixing to get into a pretty good gunfight. Today on *Friendly Fire: Lone Survivor*.

00:06:38	Music	Music	<p><i>[Music finishes.]</i> "War" off the album <i>War &amp; Peace</i> by Edwin Starr. Impassioned, intense funk.</p> <p><i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i> <i>What is it good for?!</i> <i>Absolutely—</i> <i>—nothing!</i> <i>Uh-huh!</i></p> <p><i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i> <i>What is it good for?!</i> <i>Absolutely—</i> <i>—nothing!</i></p> <p><i>Say it again, y'all!</i></p> <p><i>War!</i></p>
00:06:59	Ben Harrison	Host	<p><i>[Song fades down and plays quietly as the hosts speak.]</i> There's a storm inside of us. I've heard many war movie podcasters speak of this—a burning. A river. A drive.</p>
00:07:07	John	Host	<p>It's true.</p>
00:07:08	Ben	Host	<p>An unrelenting desire to review more of these movies than anyone could think possible. I'm Ben Harrison.</p>
00:07:14	Adam Pranica	Host	<p>I'm Adam Pranica.</p>
00:07:17	John	Host	<p>And I am Medal of Honor Winner John Roderick.</p>
00:07:22	Adam	Host	<p><i>[Ben laughs.]</i> You shouldn't come to this show for medical advice, but if you've been experiencing a burning river inside you? I think you need to see a doctor.</p>
00:07:32	Ben	Host	<p><i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i> If your burning river lasts for more than four hours...</p>

00:07:33 Adam Host Right.

00:07:37 Ben Host *[Multiple people laugh.]*  
I don't know why they made us do all those sit-ups in the surf in order to become the hosts of *Friendly Fire*, but, y'know, it's the kind of perseverance that they train into you, I suppose, that we need.

00:07:50 John Host Think about all the potential hosts that we considered that ended up ringing the bell three times!

00:07:55 Adam Host That's why Rob's the producer and not one of the hosts.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:08:00 John Host Couldn't do it.  
That's right.

00:08:01 Adam Host Where is the Hell Week at BUD/S movie?

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:08:12 John Host Because the first five minutes of this film is that documentary footage of the training montage. Riveting.

00:08:15 Adam Host Wait, are you kidding me? Are you kidding me right now?

00:08:18 John Host I fucking loved it. Yeah, no! Why would I be kidding about this?

00:08:29 Adam Host Because there are probably seven Hell Week at BUD/S full-length features? As well as, like, 14 documentaries. 14 television shows... If *Friendly Fire* hasn't watched and reviewed them, did they really happen?

00:08:33 John Host Oh, I guess not. I guess not. We're definitely gonna watch—

00:08:37 Adam Host *G.I. Jane* was one of 'em.

00:08:38 John Host *G.I. Jane*, yeah. We're gonna watch the shit out of *G.I. Jane* one of these days.

00:08:42 Ben Host We've got over 200 movies on the list. We'll get to them all eventually.

00:08:47 John Host I have lived through BUD/S training so many times in my imagination, and every time, my imagination has to wrestle with the fact that, A, I know I would not make it through BUD/S. And B, I know that I would never ring that bell. And so the only solution to this problem is that I would die. Right? 'Cause I am never gonna quit a thing. I would die rather than quit. But I *[through laughter]* would never make it through BUD/S.

00:09:17 Adam Host I would most certainly spite-die. That's what would happen.

*[John laughs.]*

00:09:21 Ben Host You have to have, like, two levels of commitment to the thing. You have to have commitment to think that, like, you could make it through the training, but also so much respect for the training that even when you clearly can't, you like, are continuing to participate in the mythology of it.

00:09:38 John Host Do you know anyone, Ben, in your liberal cuck life—

*[Ben laughs.]*

—who actually has that kind of, like, just orneriness? Like, stubborn... like, there's a reason that a lot of people in Special Forces are like... angry dudes. It's because they have it in their heart and soul to never be dominated. Y'know, it's like they're all Scots-Irish that come down out of the hills and they're like, "I'll eat a

00:10:16 Ben Host rock before I submit to British domination” or whatever. Do you know anyone like that, personally?  
I will say—this won’t come as a surprise to you guys—but the closest I’ve ever gotten to anything even approaching this was when I went to scuba diving camp in my high school years. And there was like a pretty high threshold that you needed to pass in terms of demonstrating your ability as a swimmer, to like be allowed to participate in scuba training. And that involved like a pretty long, pretty harrowing swim that was like right at the edge of my swimming ability. And then a underwater, like, hold-your-breath swim? Like, I feared it all year long in anticipation of going to summer camp. And it was, like, one day where you just like—if you can get through this day, summer camp is gonna be great. And it’s, I think, a tiny, tiny fraction of what these guys go through. But—

00:11:12 Adam Host Ben, did you end up ringing the bell when they didn’t have gluten-free granola bars back on the boat?

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:11:21 Ben Host After? *[Laughs.]* That was when it went too far?  
I actually learned a lot about what I know about cooking at that summer camp, because I took a seafood cookery class in addition to getting certified as a dive videographer.

00:11:34 Adam Host Where is the cooking class footage from BUD/S?

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:11:38 John Host I’m talking about this summer camp. Ben’s like, “Y’know, it was actually a tennis camp, but we also had scuba diving and cooking. Seafood cooking classes, specifically.”

00:11:47 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Wow.

00:11:49 John Host **Ben:** Yeah. Seafood cookery.  
“It was after French class but before interpretative dance.”

00:11:52 Ben Host It’s obviously a bit to like compare the two things, but the intensity of that underwater swim—that, like, that thing where you feel like you are dying and you know you have to keep going in order to get the thing that you want? Is... fucking intense. And, like, what I understand about this training is that they do that, too, like, all day, every day, for the entire time.

00:12:15 Adam Host To suppress the instinct to live! To—the instinct to live above all other choices. It’s incredible.

00:12:25 John Host One of the things I’ve always noted about BUD/S is that the instructors are guys that have made it through BUD/S.

00:12:32 Clip Clip *[Bell rings.]*

**SEAL Instructor (Lone Survivor):** Put your helmet on the ground. You’re done.

00:12:35 John Host And then for whatever reason, because of this SEAL mentality, they decided the way they wanna spend their lives is to go through BUD/S over and over again. I mean, they might not be carrying the log? But they’re standing knee-deep in the surf, screaming at dudes that are carrying a log. It’s like, wow, you never retire, do you? Like, you don’t go onto the teams and then just sit around sharpening your knife at Bagram Air Force Base. This is your life. From now on. You’re eating rocks for the rest of your life.

00:13:07 Ben Host Wow. I'm looking at the BUD/S—oh, I guess it's the Navy SEAL Selection and Training Wikipedia entry. And Michael Murphy is in the photo on this Wikipedia entry.

00:13:18 John Host Michael Murphy and a couple of these guys were members of a SEAL delivery vehicle team. And these are the guys that go in the little underwater, four-man sub that's bolted to the outside of an actual sub.

00:13:37 Ben Host Like in *Hunt for Red October!*

00:13:38 John Host They run the real sub up to as far as you can get and then they—the SEALs get into this thing. They flood the compartment. They back this little mini sub out, and then they go up the—whatever, the Mekong River or whatever. And in reading about those SEAL delivery vehicles, it said that only 10% of SEALs qualify to go in those because they're so freaking claustrophobic that even SEALs are like, "No thanks. I don't wanna go in this, like, windowless tube." And that's the point where I—I mean, it's not like I would ever make it through BUD/S, but the idea that my job would be in a scuba—in a—basically an oil tank flooded with water—it's just like, kill me now. Pin me under a rock, underwater.

00:14:34 Ben Host Where do I need to put my helmet?

00:14:37 John Host *[Multiple people laugh.]*  
Just like—fuck you.

00:14:38 Ben Host It does not feel like a "War is Hell;" it does not feel like a... a criticism of anything, really. Like, in some ways it's got some stuff in common with *Black Hawk Down*, which is that it's about some elite soldiers that failed in their mission.

00:14:58 John Host Got in over their heads, yeah.

00:15:00 Ben Host And yet feels like a celebration of their skills in spite of that.

00:15:06 Adam Host I don't wanna get into a semantic argument with you, but I almost feel like it's that they were failed by stuff like their gear, and flying the Apaches away when they should've been ready to go in immediately. I don't feel like the soldiers failed here! They were in an awful situation and they couldn't get a fucking radio to work!

00:15:26 Ben Host The mission is a failure. So.

00:15:28 Adam Host Right. I just don't want you to get the emails, Ben.

00:15:32 Ben Host I want 'em. Send 'em to me. It's the only way I feel alive, y'know?

00:15:36 Adam Host *[John laughs.]*  
I've actually wrapped a yellow ribbon around my email address, so—

00:15:42 Ben Host *[John laughs.]*  
—everyone should know not to send me email.  
I mean, if we're gonna talk about the things to send emails about, one thing that I think is worth talking about is how... much of a fabrication the story here is. Because the book that this movie is based on sets the number of insurgents that they were fighting at 200. Like, basically nobody agrees with that number. And some people are saying it's, like, five guys that they were fighting.

00:16:10 John Host The official number was that there were eight to 10 Taliban. And the immediate after-action report written by the colonel that was on the ground searching the battlefield for the bodies of the dead SEALs was that there were no dead insurgents. An official report that they actually didn't kill a single Taliban. And even if you consider that

they carried away their dead, or whatever, there was, y'know, initial and kind of confirmed reports were that there were like eight Taliban, not 80 or 200. Pretty devastating.

00:16:48 Adam Host The forest does a really good job at obscuring the numbers. I don't feel like the film makes a super-strong case about showing you what numbers it believes were there.

00:17:01 John Host Really? Well, just think about the number of kill shots you see in this movie.

00:17:06 Adam Host Hey, you get a lot of those.

00:17:07 John Host Kills—and went through every kill shot. Every, like, head shot that we see, they clearly kill 50 dudes at least.

00:17:15 Ben Host Either they kill 50 dudes or the Taliban all keep ketchup packets in their hats.

00:17:21 Adam Host *[John laughs.]* Do you wanna watch the movie where there's zero people on the ridgeline and they're shooting at nothing? We gotta make a movie here!

00:17:28 John Host I think that's what we're talking about. There's the movie, and then there's what happened. And from my experience, watching the movie not knowing what happened, I was like, "This is the warriest war movie I ever warred!"

00:17:42 Music Music Short reprise of theme song "War."

00:17:43 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* It's really unbelievable!

00:17:45 John Host It's harrowing. It's gripping. It's—it's completely immersive. In just really, like, personal, involving violence. Where you see wounds that you hardly ever get to see, where every main character's just got their face ripped open. There's like so much, just, fighting. It's really thrilling. And then when you look into the story... like, your hearts—at least, my heart started to sink. Where it was like, "Oh no. Oh, shit. Like, please don't tell me that there are conflicting reports. Oh, fuck! There's really conflicting reports!" And then you boil it down and it's like, "Oh, this whole story is one guy's—it's Luttrell's account." There's no confirmation, and the people that were there... are telling us that this isn't what happened at all. The other people that aren't Luttrell. And that was like suuuch a letdown. Like, a major, major, major bummer.

00:18:48 Ben Host I think the biggest bummer for me was reading that this happened early enough in Afghanistan that only five American servicemen had been killed, period, in Afghanistan before Operation Red Wings. So the badness of the bad guy was extremely overstated.

00:19:08 John Host Yeah. He didn't know Osama bin Laden. He was not a major terrorist. He hadn't killed 20 dudes.

00:19:14 Ben Host And I wonder like, why did they feel they have to do that? Like, that's in the book, too. And I think that you can tell this story without overstating who the target was. Y'know. Without undercutting it.

00:19:30 John Host The thing is, I—there are people listening to this show that are active duty.

00:19:34 Ben Host Let's hope Luttrell is not listening. I don't want him to kick our ass.

00:19:38 John Host *[Laughs.]* I don't think he is. But you have to call into question his... extremely self-aggrandizing account. And so the moviemakers are like, "Hey, this book is amazing!" And nobody had really, y'know, this whole business about... the fact that when they finally got Gulab here and through all the problems of getting an accurate translation—y'know, Gulab is sitting in Afghanistan going like, "Oh, my friend that I saved

is—has a book coming out! That’s really exciting!” And then he goes—y’know, presumably gets taken to the movie at some point and he’s like, “This is an amazing movie! When’s the movie about Luttrell gonna show?”

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:20:22 Ben Host “How much did you say he made from the licensing of the story?”

*[Laughs.]*

00:20:26 John Host So I guess what it boils down to, to me, is that this movie should have a title card that says, like, I don’t know. If this movie were a fiction—if it were just presented as a fiction—it’d be like—I’d be so psyched about this as a war movie. I thought the acting was great. The kinetic filmmaking was great. I mean, the jingoism even was great? I mean it was just like the classic *[through laughter]* sort of war movie. It’s just... I don’t believe it.

00:20:58 Ben Host Like, that conflict where they’ve got the three goatherds in zip ties and they’re debating what to do is so interesting. And you have to imagine that like a much higher percentage of the people you meet in the Navy SEALs are on Axe’s side of the argument, right? Like, “We can’t let the lives of these three goatherders affect the overall mission. Like, we have to kill them or tie them up and let them get eaten by wolves because this is a bad dude. We gotta go get him.” And like the responsibility of the training is to, like, correct for that, I imagine.

00:21:35 John Host Yeah. Well not just correct for it. I think part and parcel of being the kind of person that gets through BUD/S—right? That has that kind of indomitable spirit—it goes along with the kind of people that have like a super-strong personal ethic. And we have a tendency in our leftist ivory towers to kind of pooh-poooh all that duty and honor talk, because it gets trotted out so often in a way that feels performative and, y’know, aggrandizing. But in fact it’s real for those dudes! I could absolutely see five SEALs sitting on the side of a mountain saying, like, “There’s no way that we can kill these guys because it would be dishonorable.” I mean, they have their own Pashtunwali. The SEALs do. Right? They’re not all cowboys.

00:22:25 Ben Host When you read about, like, Eddie Gallagher and what the people in his team thought of him, like, they’re horrified by what he was about. It’s also like... hard not to think of Eddie Gallagher first when you think about Axe. Right? Or the character of Axe in this movie. Like, the case that he’s making.

00:22:44 John Host Right.

00:22:45 Adam Host His was the character that I thought of first when you were talking about the conflict of reality and presented film reality here. Like, Ben Foster went to hang out with the Axelson family. And like, that’s not a unique story having to do with this film. Like, the actors were very invested in the characters that they were playing and in their stories. And yet... how does the Axelson family feel watching this film, seeing this version of him on screen, going, like, “Yeah. Fucking kill the kids”? That’s what makes the semantics of, like, “Based on true acts of courage” versus “Based on a true story” versus, y’know, maybe not having a subtitle underneath a movie title. That stuff kinda matters!

00:23:33 John Host I mean, I think watching the movie, I did not recoil at Axe’s, like, hard take. Right?

00:23:40 Adam Host I didn’t either, but when these characters are based on real people, you have to know.



00:23:45	John	Host	Well, but the thing was—the decision got made when Michael Murphy was like, “We’re not gonna kill them. We’re gonna set them free.” And he looks at Axe. Axe is like, “Roger that.” Like, he doesn’t even in his face show... he doesn’t roll his eyes. He doesn’t say, “Oh, y’know, like...” and he never says “I told you so.” Like, he was advancing that position, but as soon as the decision was made he was 100%, like... on board. And that, I thought, was a very impressive moment to convey in film. That it seemed to me—you see a lot of war movies where there’s the dissenter guy, and he ends up being a real problem.
00:24:28	Adam	Host	Or an unbelievability to all of them seeing the trolley made of goats and—  <i>[John laughs.]</i>  —all voting in the same way. Like in a way that would feel saccharine and bad.
00:24:39	John	Host	Right.
00:24:40	Ben	Host	That scene is also amazing because like the subtext is just that, like, a mission failure is <u>so</u> hard for them to stomach? Like, the op is blown. Y’know. Like, they can’t really do the thing that they came to do at this point. It really takes like an emotional effort for them to get over that. Y’know. To almost mourn the mission failure.
00:25:01	John	Host	Yeah. And the mission failure is 100% a radio failure at that point. Right? ‘Cause the whole mission was—find the guy. Identify that the guy is there. And then camp there and basically guide us in—y’know, guide the Marines in as they come to actually take the guy out. This was not a sniper team. These guys were not meant to take him out. They were just there to spot. And they did it! They found him. They set up their little squad—y’know, their little perimeter. If that radio had worked, the whole thing would’ve probably gone down before the goatherders even arrived. I’m really surprised that Motorola allowed—  <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>  —their name to be on those radios. That seems like weird product placement.
00:25:48	Ben	Host	The Motorola was the satphone and then there was, like, a Raytheon logo on the radio itself. And both of those were like—God, it almost feels like product placement except for the product is not working as advertised! <i>[Laughs.]</i>  <i>[John laughs.]</i>
00:26:03	John	Host	I know. Kind of a diss.
00:26:05	Adam	Host	You knew it was a Raytheon product because it launched out of Murph’s hands.  <i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i>  With a rocket plume behind it and then exploded into a city.  <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:26:15	Clip	Clip	<b>Michael Murphy (Lone Survivor):</b> If I shave his head, I gotta focus on his face.

00:26:19	John	Host	Ever since we saw <i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> , the first time I saw <i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> —y’know, that movie obviously has a <u>lot</u> of controversy around its depiction of torture and its depiction of how important it was—primarily, that the historical argument for finding Osama bin Laden suggests that maybe that intel came from a guy walking in off the street at ISI and saying, “Hey, I know where Osama is.” And that whole business of like, “No, we tortured guys for a couple of years and then we spent a bunch of time driving around Islamabad with a cell phone, y’know, like all that. And we gave a guy a Lamborghini.”
00:26:59	Ben	Host	<i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> was more about retroactively justifying the expense reports, I think? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:27:03	John	Host	Yeah, right. But I loved <i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> as a movie. And... one of the things that has stuck with me the longest is the character of Maya. And her, like, CIA intel person’s total contempt for Special Forces. Not in terms of their ability as people to get stuff done, but just contempt for the culture. And at one point she says, like, “I didn’t wanna use you guys at all. I think you’re a bunch of tobacco-chewing hicks. You’re gonna—y’know, your presence in this is just gonna fuck this up.”
			And the way that the Special Forces are depicted in <i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> , it was the first time that—although, y’know, they’re depicted very heroically—the first time I ever really saw <u>explicitly</u> the, like, culture of SEALs as a bunch of white dudes from the desert South or Northern California—that really has colored my—colored everything I’ve thought about SEALs from that point forward. And we see it again in this movie. The kind of—one of the best parts of these guys up on that hillside is just the fact that they will not—it’s not that they don’t—they’ll never surrender to the Taliban. It’s that they don’t even surrender to their wounds. Y’know, they don’t surrender to inevitability. They don’t surrender to fate. Like, they keep fighting even after they get shot in the brain. And that is a— <i>[Sighs.]</i> That is like such a kind of profound... archetype of a person.
00:28:48	Clip	Clip	<b>Erik Kristensen (<i>Lone Survivor</i>):</b> When we hear “Schlitz Malt Liquor,” we’re heading back.
00:28:52	Adam	Host	I think this film does a really good job in forcing you to try to understand how it feels. To be that hurt. Those are the parts of this film that I like the most, and I don’t think that you’re far off, John, with bringing up a Kathryn Bigelow film in the same sentence as we talk about <i>Lone Survivor</i> . I think there are a lot of similarities to that film with this film. And I mean that as a compliment. I think Peter Berg’s movies look a lot like Kathryn Bigelow movies in the best way.
00:29:23	John	Host	What are Peter Berg’s other movies? I read quite a bit about how everybody was so psyched that Peter Berg was gonna do this movie because they felt like they could trust it in his hands, and then I looked at the list of Peter Berg movies—
00:29:36	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Well, he made <i>Battleship</i> the year before this. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:29:38	John	Host	Yeah! Right! I was like, <i>Battleship</i> and he made like a Lexus commercial.
00:29:43	Adam	Host	They’re not all hits, guys.
00:29:44	Ben	Host	I would say that <i>Lone Survivor</i> is part of like a trilogy that Peter Berg did. In 2013 he did <i>Lone Survivor</i> and then in 2016 he did

*Deepwater Horizon* and *Patriot's Day*, all starring Mark Wahlberg. So Mark Wahlberg is kind of his muse.

00:30:02 Adam Host

The "Say hi to your mother" trilogy?

[Ben laughs.]

I think one thing to wrap up the point I was trying to make was that, like, in so many war films you get the shot to the chest; shot to the head; flesh wound to the shoulder thing? But the quality to this film that really made me feel something physically and I think this is a film that wants you to feel this viscerally—is that we're talking about, like, fingers. And feet. And a butt. Y'know? Like, wounds that—on some instinctual level, you know what that feels like for some reason! Like, a human being knows what it's like—how much more painful it's gotta be in some ways to be shot in the fingers.

00:30:45 Ben Host

Right.

00:30:46 Adam Host

Than to take a flesh wound to the shoulder.

00:30:48 Ben Host

And to keep fighting!

00:30:49 Adam Host

Right. Right.

00:30:50 John Host

To just have one of those cuts on your face—if you got one of those cuts on your face right now—

00:30:57 Ben Host

It would be a day-ruiner for me. [Laughs.]

00:31:00 John Host

Everybody in your family would be freaking out. Racing you to the hospital. Y'know, like, "We need stitches! Look! He's got a cut like all across his face!" And all of them had 50 of those cuts and it's just—y'know, and also their back is broken and there's a sword sticking out of their leg.

00:31:20 Adam Host

I think there's a fine line between how this film does it and, like, sort of a, like, pornographically jingoistic, blood-and-guts type of depiction of a war wound that this film specifically does not depict. I think it's well done.

00:31:35 Music Music

Short reprise of theme song "War."

00:31:39 John Host

Let's assume that Luttrell—coming back to the United States—did not come from a personal culture where he felt like he needed to exaggerate what had happened. Assuming that we are gonna go with the accounts that everyone else gave, that there were not 200 Taliban. That he did not personally headshot 50 of them. Y'know, because there's video taken by the Taliban of this battle from their perspective. They had a video camera with them. And their own self-aggrandizing video of themselves being, like, fighting these SEALs—there's only seven of them. In their own video! So if Luttrell had not done that—if he had actually told the story about how four SEALs fought eight Taliban, and the eight Taliban had mortars or whatever or they had better gear, maybe? Or were just—were just, like—to give the Taliban the hat tip of saying, like, "These guys are really good fighters! Y'know, they live in the mountains of the Hindu Kush? Y'know, they had breakfast that morning probably? But they're just, like, an indomitable group of people that aren't gonna roll over." Why wouldn't Luttrell write that book, but a better question is, like, would that be a better movie?

00:33:17 Adam Host

This was not *Lone Survivor* based on the book "*Push*" by Sapphire, though.

[Ben laughs.]

Like—it doesn't say explicitly that it's based on that book! Right?

00:33:29 John Host Hm.

00:33:30 Ben Host I mean, it's got the same title as the book.

00:33:32 John Host It's certainly presented as a true story.

00:33:35 Adam Host I think that distinction is important.

00:33:37 John Host It was promoted as a true story. During the promotion campaign. Luttrell went around with it and appeared on CNN and—

00:33:46 Adam Host I am especially forgiving of a person who is telling a story and it feels to him that it was a certain way. Like, I just don't—I don't get that this was a—and I haven't read the book! This is another thing. Like, I wish I had, to be able to have a stronger take about it, but I just don't get the sense that, like... you survive something like this and then make the book that makes you look like you kick all kinds of ass because you were outnumbered a hundred to four. What do you need to do that for? You're already a hero!

00:34:17 John Host Well that's the thing. I mean...

00:34:19 Ben Host That's the thing that I think is so confusing about this. And it's hard having read a few articles about it to feel like we're in a position to pass any specific judgment about it. But I think John's question still stands. That like, it seems that there is still an interesting story to be told if it was somewhat truer to what we think probably actually happened.

00:34:48 John Host Although—yeah. I mean, that movie's not going to get made by this team about this book. But I have a couple of anecdotes. Can you guys believe that?

00:34:58 Adam Host Mm.

00:34:59 Ben Host Knock me over with a feather.

00:35:00 John Host In 2015, I went on a tour of Air Force bases in Africa. As a guest of friend of our program—

00:35:11 Adam Host John, you're gonna need Ben's permission to tell an Africa story. That's the one source for Africa stories on all podcasts.

00:35:18 Ben Host Adam, you've been to Africa, too! Shut the fuck up!

*[All laugh.]*

00:35:28 Adam Host We've all been to Africa. John and I have done cool things in Africa and you bought a carpet. Right. Right.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:35:30 Ben Host And had it shipped to your house.

00:35:33 John Host Robs, I want to keep this Africa banter in.

*[Adam laughs.]*

Well anyway, you guys, it's true that Ben and I have had cool times in Africa and Adam bought a carpet.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:35:45 Adam Host But when I was there—

00:35:47 John Host To be clear, I didn't buy a carpet. My wife did. When I went to Africa as a guest of friend of the show, Lieutenant Colonel Matt Martin, at one point at the joint base in Djibouti, we were being given a tour of the flight line. And we were taken out and shown—y'know, people were walking us around. They showed us some of the C-130s that they had there that were, y'know, that had

been kind of part of the whole—‘cause Djibouti was like, y’know, a big base that was right off of the Horn—or on the Horn of Africa and right off of Arabia and a lot of the stuff that happened in Iraq and Afghanistan. Y’know, that Djibouti was the rear area. Anyway, they’re giving us a tour and we go out and look at these helicopters that were Pave Hawks? And the crew of one of them said, “Did you guy see *Lone Survivor*?” And I was there with David Rees and Jonathan Coulton and none of the three of us had seen it. And we were like, “No.” And he was like, “Oh, dude. This was the helicopter that rescued Luttrell.” And we didn’t know what he was talking about and we were like, “Oh, cool. Cool.” And he was like, “No, you guys have gotta see *Lone Survivor*! Like, we’re the—”

00:37:05 Adam Host

Wow.

00:37:07 John Host

“We’re the crew. This is the—y’know, this—our squadron and this very helicopter were part of that—”

00:37:14 D Host

No way.

00:37:16 John Host

“Part of that operation.” And we just sort of shrugged it off, like, “Oh, well, good for you. I mean, I’m glad. I bet that was really something.” And they were like, “Yeah, man! It was! It was amazing!” And they were like, really, really, really—that was their claim to fame and they were really proud of it. So when we got back to the States we all forgot to watch *Lone Survivor*. None of us had.

[Ben laughs.]

But when I was King Neptune a couple years later here in Seattle for the Seafair Celebration, I was, y’know, often kind of the guest of various Navy people at one point. And met a lot of my now great friends, the various admirals and admirals, retired. Admiral Nora Tyson, Retired. Close personal friend. But one of the things that happened was we were given a tour—I and my daughter—given a tour of the *USS Michael Murphy*. And I spent an entire afternoon onboard the *Michael Murphy* with the captain of the boat. Walking me around. Took us to the bridge. Took us—showed us all the weaponry. Took us to his personal cabin, where we sat in the captain’s quarters and, y’know, and sat and talked about the ship and whatnot. And then he took us to a shrine on the boat to Michael Murphy. Where his uniform and his Medal of Honor and his—like—

00:38:50 Adam Host

Wow.

00:38:51 John Host

Ephemera from his life! Like, memorabilia of his personal... like, his—high school diploma and his—the boots he was wearing when he died. I mean, it was like a museum to Michael Murphy. And again, I didn’t know who we were talking about. I had not made the connection to the fact that I had been in the helicopter that had rescued Luttrell. Did not connect the two at all. And again, I was like, “Oh, so the ship was named after a Navy SEAL?” And the captain was so proud. Everyone on the boat was so proud that their boat was named the *Michael Murphy* and that he was their, y’know, like, he was their namesake and they kinda—they—y’know, walked past this, like, memorial to him every day and like, y’know, like touched the feet of the statue until the bronze was worn down. Y’know? And he gave—the captain gave me a hat of the *USS Michael Murphy*, which I wear all the time when I’m in the garden!

00:39:56 Ben Host

Wow!

00:39:57 John Host

And I didn’t know any of this until I started watching the movie—

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:40:10 Ben Host —and then I looked at—I was watching it and I was like, “Michael  
00:40:12 Adam Host Murphy?!” And I paused it and I went up to my hat, which—  
You reached up to your head? *[Laughs.]*  
The *USS Michael Murphy* mug slipped out of your hand—

*[John laughs.]*

—and fell in slow motion to the ground?

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:40:18 John Host And shattered? *[Laughs.]*  
00:40:20 Ben Host I was wearing it that morning!  
00:40:21 John Host Wow.  
And I was like, “Holy shit! Michael Murphy is all around me!” But  
the—I think the point of my extremely long and self-aggrandizing  
anecdote is that the people I met that had connections to this  
event—and that had connections to Michael Murphy that were  
active duty in the Navy and in the Air Force, this was—this guy and  
this mission were high points of their—not just their, like, service but  
their sense of their service.

And the Medal of Honor paperwork or the description of what  
Michael Murphy did to earn the Medal of Honor—all we know about  
it is what we got from Luttrell. So Luttrell’s story reverberates  
throughout—I mean, and Michael Murphy was the first Medal of—  
the first posthumous Medal of Honor awarded since Vietnam at the  
time. And this is early on in the Afghanistan-Iraq war cycle. This  
Medal of Honor had tremendous significance to the entire military.  
And it’s based on the account of Luttrell, who... ends up telling this,  
y’know, writing this book that’s like, *[in a raspy, urgent voice]* “There  
were 200 Taliban and I was shooting with both—”

00:41:41 Ben Host It seems like his testimony—“testimony” is the wrong word. But like  
his after-action report disagrees with his book, too. So like the—  
00:41:50 John Host *[Normal voice resumes.]* Yeah. And the things he says later  
disagree with his book!

00:41:53 Ben Host What the Medal of Honor citation says is, “Between 30 and 40  
enemy fighters.”

00:42:00 John Host Which is, y’know, a lot more reasonable. But like... Gulab—the guy  
that rescued him—who is a big part of this story—I mean, Gulab’s  
account is that when he saved Luttrell, Luttrell still had all 11  
magazines on his person and unemptied.

00:42:21 Ben Host Wow. That’s almost a year’s worth of issues! Which magazine was  
it?

*[Adam laughs.]*

00:42:26 John Host But—how hard to hear Gulab come forward and say—not come  
forward to like debunk him, but in the process of this movie coming  
out they were like, “Let’s get Gulab over here! We wanna hear his  
story!” And Gulab can’t read or write. Comes to the United States  
and he’s like, “I will tell my story. I rescued this guy. He still had all  
his bullets on him.” *[Laughs.]* “The Taliban knew where they were  
the whole time.” Y’know, it’s just like—it hurts my heart.

00:42:58 Clip Clip **Gulab (Lone Survivor):** *[With thick accent]* America?

00:43:00 Ben Host **Marcus Luttrell (*Lone Survivor*):** Texas. The firefight between the village and the Taliban also apparently a bit of cinematic license. That didn't really—that's not really how it went down. 'Cause they're—I mean, in the movie, their town gets fucking destroyed. Like, they defend this guy at the expense of their entire village.

00:43:17 John Host I read this terrible account of Gulab's life, and a lot of it feels self-inflicted. Like, in the immediate aftermath, he got lost in the shuffle. But when Luttrell finally found him? Luttrell made several attempts to bring him to America. Set him up. Buy him a ranch. Give him a bunch of money. And Gulab refused multiple times because I don't think he fully understood what was being offered. And... there's just a lot of—I think—confusion in the man's life and part of it was, at first he felt like he shouldn't be rewarded because Pashtunwali obligated him to help a stranger. And then as time went on, it was like, "Well, I don't wanna come to America because I'm—y'know, I believe in Afghanistan" and then later on he was like, "I don't believe in Afghanistan anymore. The Taliban keeps blowing up my house." And by the time he did decide fully to come to America, he'd burned a lot of bridges, Gulab had. And, like, came out with this account that basically contradicted everything Luttrell said, so Luttrell—after several years of trying to help the guy?—Luttrell was like, "I don't wanna help you anymore. I don't wanna promote your story. Like, you're calling me a liar."

00:44:35 Ben Host Ooh.

00:44:36 John Host And so now Gulab and his family are living in, y'know, some Section 8 housing in Fort Worth, Texas, and Gulab doesn't speak English or read or write. No one in his family does except his oldest son, who's trying to support the family with a job at—

00:44:52 Ben Host Fuck!

00:44:53 John Host —Electronics Warehouse or something.

00:44:56 Adam Host I don't know what makes me sadder, is like... y'know, you get that scene at the end of the film where Luttrell is like, "He's coming with me!" And the guy dragging him to chopper is like, "No, he's not." And then you expect the story to be, like, "Well, Gulab—like so many other people who helped—is going to be murdered as soon as these helicopters lift off."

00:45:16 Ben Host Right. There's gonna be a reprisal.

00:45:19 Adam Host I went through many stages of grief during your story, John, because I was like, "Oh, cool! Well, he's safe! He's here!" And then it's just... Gulab being put in the ball-kicking machine—

*[Sound effect of machine kicking something.]*

00:45:34 John Host —for the last decade. It sucks. Well, and it's really hard, 'cause, y'know, when you think about—when you wanna talk about an immigrant experience or certainly someone that's helped the US military in Vietnam or Iraq or—y'know, so many different theatres of war—where at the end of the war the US pulls out and there's—y'know, there's always some guy that was like, "Wait a minute, I worked as a translator for you guys for eight years and now everyone in my own country wants me dead."

00:46:00 Adam Host There's never enough room on the chopper.

00:46:01	John	Host	Right. Exactly. And it's like, "Oh, thanks for your service! Y'know, well, here's like five bucks." So the idea that they <u>did</u> get him out is amazing and they resettled him. But, y'know, from the perspective of the Americans trying to help him, they were like, "We tried to get you out for eight years and you said no. And now you want out. And we're gonna pull it off, but, like... the window where you could get out and be a hero is kind of closed now." And the sad part is that without that hero narrative from the standpoint of the United States, you're just another Afghani who is, y'know, basically on food stamps now. And this article I read said, like, Gulab's favorite thing to do is to go to the supermarket and walk up and down the aisles and just look at all the canned fruit. <i>[Laughs.]</i> It is pretty amazing. I mean, don't get me wrong. I like to go look at the canned fruit, too.
00:46:58	Adam	Host	This is the part of our conversation that has now pulled me over to the side of the discomfort about the relative truthiness of Luttrell's story versus what the movie says. And how unnecessary it is to couple the movie to that story as strongly as it is. This is an <u>amazing</u> story and a movie—as a movie—is rad.
00:47:26	Ben	Host	Just change the names, change a couple of details, and it's a very good action movie. Like, it's one of those movies that like, it feels kinda small in scale? And yet it's like... <u>incredibly</u> compelling to watch. I mean, like, I think that Peter Berg put like a million of his own dollars into the production budget of this movie. And like, very unusual. Like, directors don't usually contribute their own funds to the production of films.
00:47:53	Adam	Host	He also worked for scale!
00:47:54	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:47:55	John	Host	Didn't Wahlberg also put money in?
00:47:58	Ben	Host	A lot of the above-the-line people had their own money in this thing. And it means something really significant in terms of like how much they believed in the project and I don't know if that belief is an entirely financial one. I guess like if you put up a million bucks for something you wanna get it back eventually. So. You have to believe in the marketability of it to some extent. Like, they didn't do this for charity. But also, I think, believing in the, y'know, in the significance of the story that they were telling.
00:48:32	John	Host	And believing in the script, right? I mean, that's...
00:48:34	Ben	Host	Right.
00:48:35	John	Host	You read the script and you're like, "I can play this role. This is gonna be kickass." But there are—y'know, there are a lot of stories that come out of wars where later on you're forced to kind of appraise the veracity of the story and it's not just the fog of war. It's... I mean, bad things happen, right? I mean, you don't— <i>Born on the Fourth of July</i> tells a story of a guy that's, like, "I shot my friend accidentally and everybody in the—" We haven't watched that movie yet, but, y'know, all of his commanding officers are like, "No, you didn't." Just, like, "No, you didn't."
00:49:14	Ben	Host	I'd be very curious to hear reactions to this film by people that were, like, closer to the real events. What do you make of a retelling that retells in this particular way?
00:49:27	Adam	Host	Michael Murphy's dad claimed that the book and the movie dishonored his son's memory.
00:49:32	Ben	Host	Wow.
00:49:33	John	Host	So the Marine colonel who dropped in on the scene to do the search and recovery—like, <u>immediately</u> after the battle—is the one that says there were <u>no</u> — <u>no</u> enemy casualties. His quote was, "I've



			been to that location multiple times.” He says, “I’ve been in enough firefights to know that when the shit hits the fan it’s hard to know how many people are shooting at you, but there weren’t 35 enemy fighters in all of the Korangal Valley that day.” That’s a Marine colonel, y’know? Like, that’s <u>bold</u> of that guy to go on record to step forward and... put himself at odds with the military narrative. Y’know. This isn’t, like, a reporter for the <i>Washington Post</i> . This is the guy that—and we’ve seen this in a lot of movies, where there’s all this internal pressure, like, within the military, to just keep your mouth shut. It’s not uncommon! The one thing that we do know is that an entire chopper full of SEALs got shot down and got—died. Yeah. That is an amazing moment in this movie, because the film <u>really</u> takes you through the emotion of, “The day is saved. The cavalry is here!” to “We’re totally fucked. Nothing is going to work. Forever.” Like, that really hits hard.
00:50:44	Ben	Host	
00:51:01	Adam	Host	The depiction of that crash is one of the best I’ve ever seen in a movie, also. The way that it’s cut in half and the way that it falls and explodes? It’s so scary. It’s so scary to cut from inside the chopper and see the rocket coming in. And to—and to see it go straight through the back door the way it does. It’s so awful.
00:51:24	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>Ben and John:</b> Yeah.
00:51:25	Adam	Host	This is not a film that leans very hard into character development, but, I mean, those are familiar people on that Chinook that go down with it.
00:51:35	Ben	Host	I mean, I think that you make a mistake getting onboard a helicopter with the guy that is super-eager for the fray. He’s the <a href="#">Blackburn</a> of the movie.
00:51:45	Adam	Host	There is a strange self-awareness that this film has about the Shane character in that way. Right?
00:51:50	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:51:52	Adam	Host	Like... foreshadowing his death in showing his excitement for the mission is a way that films like this often depict a character of that kind.
00:52:04	Ben	Host	He just seems doomed. Like, from the second he asks if he can go on the mission. Right? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:52:09	Adam	Host	Yeah. It sure feels that way. It feels that way but when he <u>is</u> killed... I don’t—I don’t feel the additive manipulation of the scenes we’re given with him before. Like, I <u>grieve</u> his death because I like him, not because the film used film math in order to make me feel a certain way by the time we got there, y’know?
00:52:36	Ben	Host	Yeah. I think it’s just that he’s, like, he and Eric Bana are the two characters that we really know anything about on that helicopter, and what we know about them is primarily that they’re really worried about their teammates and they wanna go rescue them. An internet pedant noticed something wrong with those helicopters, though.
00:52:54	John	Host	Uh-ohhhh!
00:52:56	Ben	Host	They noticed:

“The Chinook helicopters in the actual events were Special Operations variants known as MH-47s. These models have many visual differences from regular Army Chinooks, including their overall dark aviation green color, refueling probe, and radar. They were also flown only by the elite 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR. The Chinooks in this film, however, are regular Army CH-47s without the above-mentioned features—”

*[Sound of telegraph begins playing in background.]*

“—and are painted light green and also have First Cavalry division insignia painted on the nose, which wouldn't have been on the 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR helicopters.”

*[Telegraph sound ceases.]*

00:53:34 John Host  
00:53:35 Ben Host  
00:53:37 John Host  
00:53:38 Adam Host

That's really infuriating.  
So put that in your pipe and smoke it!  
Ugh.  
I worked briefly in a factory that made these helicopters in Philadelphia. And one of the big takeaways about being on that production line—I wanna be clear. I didn't build them. I was shooting video there.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:54:04 John Host  
00:54:05 Adam Host  
00:54:08 John Host  
00:54:09 Adam Host  
  
00:54:14 Ben Host  
00:54:15 Adam Host  
  
00:54:20 John Host  
00:54:23 Adam Host  
  
00:54:34 John Host  
  
00:54:41 Adam Host  
00:54:42 John Host

But one of the big takeaways about these helicopters is how small they are! Like, this is depicted in movies as a big, big, big rotorcraft. The Chinook?  
And that was not the feeling that I got when I was right next to one. Really?  
And these were MH models that they often made on the production line, along with everything else.  
Wow.  
A good buddy of mine in high school flew them quite a bit and then flew Black Hawks.  
You can put 15 guys in it, right? Is that the capacity?  
Yeah. Those that are close to this particular helicopter call them “hooks.” So you're a “hook driver” if you are a pilot of a Chinook. And that's what he called himself.  
I mean, you can put 15 guys in a 1973 Dodge Dart if you've got enough motivation.  
Yeah.  
If you've eaten enough mushrooms.

*[Adam laughs.]*

00:54:44 Adam Host  
  
00:54:52 Ben Host  
00:54:57 Adam Host  
  
00:55:04 Ben Host  
00:55:07 John Host  
  
00:55:25 Adam Host  
00:55:25 John Host  
00:55:30 Adam Host  
  
00:55:49 Ben Host  
00:55:51 John Host  
00:55:55 Adam Host

Kinda wild. So I guess my point is—like, this is not a giant Russian... Hind helicopter—sized helicopter.  
Yeah. What would you compare it to? Like, a panel van? Or—  
No, it's—it's definitely bigger than a van. And it's like the size of a bus. But it's not the size of a city bus.  
Huh.  
I've been in a C-130 when I was on a tour. And it seems really small. But I've also flown in a C-130 with a bunch of—y'know, every seat filled. And a C-130 with every seat filled is full of things.  
Yeah.  
Like, it's just astonishing how much will fit in one of those planes. Y'know, that's probably the difference, right? Like, I was in a production environment where there were ten of these on a line. I think the effect is that these craft maybe aren't as big as you would assume, but if you were to be out in one, flying one, I think you get a greater sense for its true size.  
Yeah.  
There are a lot of places that seem small until you get in 'em.  
Yeah.

00:55:57 John Host And especially you get in 'em and have to stay there for a while. It's like, "Well, I'll put the closet over here. Move things around—"

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:56:07 Adam Host "—maybe if the kitchen had an island."  
It's amazing this is a over 60-year design that's still flying. This is a lot like the B-52, y'know? It's just gonna keep going forever. They're gonna keep doing block updates to it and fly it for another 50 years. It's incredible.

00:56:24 Ben Host I mean, the scene at the end where the cavalry does, in fact, show up, is pretty amazing. Like, when the Apaches swoop in and the gunship is up in the air just, like, shredding the hillside.

00:56:37 John Host Y'know, Adam and I always thrill to see Puff the Magic Dragon arrive.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:56:43 Adam Host Yeah. It's often my favorite part of a war film. You never cut to the inside of that plane to see the revelry that has gotta be going on in there. *[Laughs.]*

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:56:58 John Host It's nice to be in an airplane and also have a cannon.  
00:57:02 Adam Host Yeah.  
00:57:03 John Host Y'know, it's not—that's not just like a big machine gun. They're firing a freaking cannon out the side of that plane.

00:57:09 Adam Host I wonder to what extent you feel the cannon shot as you're flying. Like, is it like hitting a speed bump in a car? Like, do you feel the recoil on the aircraft?

00:57:21 John Host Oh, you must. You must.  
00:57:22 Adam Host You have to! Yeah! That's wild.  
00:57:25 John Host You know, when the Blue Angels come, they have their C-130 that's like their support vehicle and their command vehicle, which they call—

00:57:34 Adam Host You're talking about Fat Albert with the ramjets.  
00:57:37 John Host That plane is specially reinforced. And y'know, my house used to be right in the flight pattern for Boeing Field, and I would watch that plane do, y'know, multiple, multiple bits of flying in the course of Seafair every year. And it can do incredible things.

00:57:59 Adam Host Most planes can do incredible things when they have rockets strapped to them.

00:58:02 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** *[Through laughter]* Right? But you know, it's been—

00:58:05 John Host **Adam:** In the way this one does.  
It's been reinforced for short takeoff and landing; for, like, aerobatics and it's such a cool plane. And I have to imagine those Puff the Magic Dragons also are, y'know, like, pretty battle-hardened. But still, if you're firing a cannon? Sure, you're gonna feel that in your bones. Your teeth are gonna rattle.

00:58:27 Ben Host It's orthogonal to the path of flight, so it's gotta just be—it's gotta knock you on your butt!

00:58:31 John Host Yeah. I really do agree, though, that when the cavalry comes in at the end of a movie like that, where it's like, "Okay, finally the Cobras have arrived or whatever and they're gonna lay down some—not just suppressive fire, but like, when that voice says 'You're cleared

to engage!' and they're just like *[makes "kapow" noises]*, I don't understand what it is about me that that is where I tear up?

*[Ben laughs.]*

You know what I mean? I'm all—I don't know it's whether it's the soundtrack that swells at that moment or whether it's the American flag that I have in my TV-watching room with a fan blowing on it?

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:59:10	Ben	Host	Whatever it is, I—
00:59:12	John	Host	You're filled with a patriotic fervor!
00:59:14	Ben	Host	I lose it!
			No, I think that's, like, an extremely effective element of this movie and there's a lot that is super-effective of it. I mean, I think we've pretty relentlessly criticized it over the course of this episode, but I wanna say, like, I—I think that, like, as a movie, this movie kicks a lot of ass!
00:59:34	John	Host	It really does.
00:59:35	Adam	Host	How much ass does it kick, though?
00:59:37	Music	Music	Short reprise of theme song "War."
00:59:40	Adam	Host	It's not gonna be a scale of one to five asses, because of course the rating system needs to come from the film that we've been talking about. I think there are two scenes in this film that are as brutal as any other, and no one fires a shot during them. Those are the two cliff falls. Our troops are pushed to the edge of two cliffs and there's only one way to go and that's down. And so they do a couple of yard sales down the cliff and these are sequences that are shocking to a viewer for their brutality, but also if you're interested in film production, are kind of miracles of their own. I read a little bit about how these scenes were done, and they just burned up stuntmen on them. They were instructed not to look down during the rolls and looking down is how you survive a fall like this. So you're telling professionals to act against their own life-saving instinct for the sake of making this stunt look real. And I found them terrifying both times. And you get that moment of the tension of the fall and then the fucked-up version of relief and release at the end. Because we've survived the fall, but it's just pain. It's so much pain at the end. It's gasping and taking an account of what's broken on you and what you've lost as a soldier and this is a film I think that has a terrific grasp of how to transmit that feeling. So on a scale of one to five cliffs—

*[John laughs.]*

—we will storm in like the cavalry.

*[Ben laughs.]*

And rate *Lone Survivor*. The war films that I like the best are the ones that have such a great control over that tension and release. Because that's, like, ultimately the feeling that I wanna have after a film is like exhilaration. For having seen something incredible. And I think that's like the math of these types of movies. Like, it's tension. It's release. Over and over again, into exhilaration, and I definitely

felt that so many times in this movie. We talked a lot about how truthful the Luttrell story is as source material for the film, and I am hyperfocused on reviewing this film as a film. I think it's unfortunate how nonspecific this film is about what is real and what isn't, but what is real in this film is how you feel. I was totally locked into it throughout.

01:02:36 Adam Host

The parts of the film that I maybe liked least were—it felt like every time the film took a breath to talk about its own circumstances, or... or the politics of things, or the hopelessness of a mission or whatever? Like, boom goes the building. Y'know, boom goes the rock behind someone asking such a question. Like, we're right back into a firefight. And that repeated exhaustion is the motor of this thing. And I think if the film's point was to make you feel what these guys felt, the exhaustion and the pain and the fear of it, I can't think of many other films that do it as well!

It is so much of that Column A, that feeling, at the expense of Column B, which is like any other character development or any other brand of tension, that, if you believe Column A is enough to make a good war film—and I do!—then this is gonna be a movie that you really love. I think by the end you're just so tired and wrung out. At least I was. That by the time you get that realization—y'know, 19 people died during this mission. And the one guy that you see that survived is technically alive. Like, medically alive.

*[Ben laughs.]*

But in few other ways. I just found the movie incredible. And rewatchable. This is not the first time I've seen this movie. So I knew what I was going to get this time. It did not disappoint the second time. I think a lot of middling war films I would say, y'know, you could watch once and forget it, but I think there's—I think if what you want to do is get in the simulator—like, the Navy SEAL simulator? This is it. And I think for that reason I'm gonna give it four and a half cliffs.

01:04:33 Ben Host

It's an amazing movie. I think that it really makes the case for what a competent storyteller Peter Berg is. I think it's really beautiful. I have never been to Afghanistan, but the way it is depicted in film is not often super-different from the way Iraq is depicted or North Africa is depicted. It's just kind of like, dusty, desert-y place?

01:05:00 Adam Host

With, like, the bullshit sepia filter or whatever.

01:05:02 Ben Host

Right! And I think that this movie, like— *[Laughs.]* I mean, it's shot in like New Mexico or something. But it does posit an Afghanistan that is beautiful and I can only imagine that there must be parts of Afghanistan that look like this or they wouldn't have made the movie like this. And I think that—I dunno. That's just such a surprising choice given everything about the movie.

I think it is worth seeing, and I think that my, like, threshold on this show often is that I'll say, "Four things is my, like, Ben Harrison stamp of approval; go see this movie." In the world where this isn't signposted as "based on a true story," where it is not attempting to retell a real thing that happened, it is that. But I have to knock it a cliff because of the choices it makes about how it engaged with the subject matter. I feel weird about it. I feel weird that, like... Luttrell is in this movie. He's an extra in several scenes. As one of the SEALs

in, like, the Chinook I think and a couple other places? And that... telling your own story of heroism and fibbing about some of the details thing just leaves a weird feeling surrounding this movie to me. So I think I'm gonna give it three cliffs.

01:06:36 John Host I also am torn, and torn between the two—torn between two lovers and feeling like a fool.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

Because I think the movie is high adventure and a great depiction of warfighting. I think from the very start of this episode you can feel, like, my hurt feelings and disappointment that it turned out to be so profoundly... questioned. That no—that basically no one can confirm Luttrell's story. And there are quite a few stories pitted against it by reliable sources. It just hurts my feelings because I liked the movie! If the movie was garbage, I mean, that Ben Affleck movie made me question whether Pearl Harbor happened, I hated that movie so much.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

But this movie, I want to like it and I do agree with Adam that from the standpoint of it being a movie? Like, throw some popcorn in the thing and go downstairs and watch a movie where some dudes get shot up. It's a movie that's absolutely worth watching. And if this was a John Wayne movie where it was just like, "Here's a movie set in Afghanistan." I mean, this would be way up there in the points! But like Ben says, it's gotta get dinged. Luttrell dies in this movie because he's on the helicopter that gets shot down. Like, Luttrell is really playing summer camp here. "We're making a movieeee! Mark Wahlberg is playing me, but I'm gonna be there, too!" It just doesn't feel right. It feels too... fun. Considering that we watch real SEALs die. So I'm coming in between you guys. I'm gonna say three and a half cliffs, and I don't know what else to say 'cause this has been a long episode and I've talked a lot. I've said a lot of stupid shit already.

01:08:43 Adam Host Hey, there's been a lot of dead air, too, John. Don't sell yourself short.

01:08:47 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah. Yeah. There's been a lot of dead air, too.

01:08:54 Ben Host Yeah. And leave all the dead air in, Rob, so that by the time we get to this part it makes sense that we're talking about it.

*[John laughs.]*

01:09:03 John Host I hope Rob makes this into a 40-minute episode.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

01:09:07 Ben Host Adam, did you have a guy in the film?

01:09:10 Adam Host Yeah. I mean—*[sighs]*. I really wanted my guy to be Shane. But it's not gonna be Shane. I'm gonna go a little bit outside of the guy rules here and not make it a character but an actor. I think my guy's gonna be Mark Wahlberg. And I mean, he was one of the actors who threw in his own money. He was one of those actors that went through the training. He has—much to your consternation—been one of my favorite actors for a long time.

01:09:43 John Host That is concerning.

01:09:45 Adam Host His career is bizarre and interesting to me. I would say the back half of his career, far less interesting than the early part. But when I look at this—

01:09:56 John Host You mean his underwear ads? Is that where you got on board?

01:09:59 Adam Host Yeah. That was exactly where. Yeah. First stop, for me. But that brings up an interesting point, John. Like, underwear model Mark Wahlberg has turned himself into—over the course of his career—a face on a movie poster that is almost unrecognizable. He’s throwing *Come and See* face by the end of this movie in a way that does not preserve any vanity on his part. He is uglified and weakened and crying at the end of this movie in a way that I appreciated the entire way. He—Mark Wahlberg carries this movie in a movie filled with very strong performances.

I mean, you’re never gonna put him in a movie where he doesn’t make the crazy Mark Wahlberg face and start spazzing out with a grenade in his hand. But I love that scene, too! I like his choices in this movie and I think they’re choices that were responsible for making me feel as deeply as I did the kind of pain that I felt in many of the scenes. I think his abilities here are... are as strong as we’re likely to get in a war film. So I wanna recognize that. Mark Wahlberg’s my guy.

01:11:17 Ben Host Yeah, I mean, one thing that I read was that Luttrell was like personally involved with designing the training that Wahlberg and the other actors did to act correctly like SEALs. And I think that is to all of their credit ‘cause I mean, I haven’t spent a ton of time around SEALs, but like the—there’s like something very... subtle about just, like, the way they hold the objects that they interact with, even. That feels like it’s different and considered but also like second nature at this point.

01:11:52 Adam Host There was a different kind of sacrifice that Emile Hirsch made. Did you read about this? That he wanted into this movie so badly and he did all the training on his own before being cast, and he actually like turned down roles.

01:12:05 Ben Host Whoa!

01:12:06 Adam Host On the prospect of getting this one! Like, he was not—he was intentionally not answering his phone so that he would have more time to work out and train in order to be Danny Dietz in this movie.

01:12:20 Ben Host Wow. Yeah. I don’t think of him as action movie/war movie guy, necessarily, but I thought he was great in that role. My guy, of course, is the duck.

*[Adam laughs.]*

Very few moments of levity in this film? But that was certainly one, and boy! What a well-cast duck! That just was such a—

*[John laughs.]*

—such a weird, specific duck! I loved it!

01:12:45 Adam Host Who’s your guy, John?

01:12:46 John Host My guy has to be the uncomprehending old man that is given a note from Mark Wahlberg and asked to spend all night and the next day running over the mountains to take it to an Army base. Imagining him showing up at some, y’know, US forward operating base—

01:13:09 Ben Host Oh man. I wanted that scene! *[Laughs.]*

01:13:11 John Host With his note. *[Laughs.]* That's like, "I'm Mark Wahlberg! Help!" And the—y'know, the guy can't read the note. At least as far as we saw in the movie, he doesn't even know what's happening. He just, y'know, Gulab is like, "Take this note to the Army base." When I read the account—when I read Gulab's account, Mark Wahlberg, y'know, said "Take this to—" he named the base and pointed at it on a map, and Gulab told the guy, "Take it to this other base 'cause I know a guy there."

*[Ben laughs.]*

So the guy actually went to a completely different base and then the—that commander had to get on the horn and make it all happen. But I was just imagining him over the course of that night, y'know, pulling up under a bush. Eating a little bit of hardtack and then carrying on with this mission. And the way *[through laughter]* he must've gotten treated when he arrived, y'know, hands up at the base, like, "I have a note! I have a special note for you!" I really admired him. I admired that whooole vibe.

01:14:16 Ben Host Good guys, dudes.

01:14:19 Adam Host Good guys and good vibes!

01:14:20 Ben Host Good conversation! I think that this was, y'know, like a pretty complicated one and I feel like I learned a lot and I feel like I understand the movie a little bit better having talked it over with you guys. And I wonder if that will be true of the movie we pick for next week's episode!

01:14:38 Music Music Short reprise of theme song "War."

01:14:39 Promo Clip **Music:** A few music notes play in the background, then cease.

**Graham Clark:** Hi! My name's Graham Clark and I'm one half of the podcast *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, a show that we've recorded for many, many years and at the moment instead of being in person we're recording remotely and you wouldn't even notice. You don't even notice the lag.

*[Lengthy pause.]*

**Dave Shumka:** That's right, Graham! And the great thing about this—

**Graham:** The—

**Dave:** Go ahead?

**Graham:** No, you go ahead.

**Dave:** Okay. And—

**Graham:** Okay. Go ahead—

**Dave:** And you can listen to us every week on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

**Graham:** Or wherever you get your podcasts!

**Dave:** —your podcasts!



01:15:22	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[A few notes play, then cease.]</i>  <b>Music:</b> Fun, upbeat music.</p> <p><b>Dave Hill:</b> Hi! I'm Dave Hill. From before. And I'm very excited to bring <a href="#">Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident</a> back to Maximum Fun, where it belongs! You can get brand new episodes every Friday on <a href="#">MaximumFun.org</a>. Or, you know, wherever.</p> <p>And what my partner Chris Gersbeck and I might lack in specific subject matter on our podcast, we make up for in special effects! Chris, add something cool. Right here!</p> <p><i>[Gunshot or whip snap.]</i></p> <p>Also, we have explosions!</p> <p><i>[Explosion.]</i></p> <p>Animal noises.</p> <p><i>[A goat braying]</i></p> <p>And sometimes, even this!</p> <p><i>[Two comedic timpani "boings," a springier "sproing" sound, and what sounds like a human scream.]</i></p> <p><i>Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident!</i> Every Friday on Maximum Fun. Chris, do another explosion right here.</p>
01:16:07	Music	Music	<i>[Another explosion, right here.]</i>
01:16:09	Adam	Host	Short reprise of theme song "War." Only the 120-sided die can tell us what that movie's gonna be, and John's got it!
01:16:14	John	Host	Here it is!
01:16:16	Adam	Host	John has not thrown that die off of a cliff.
01:16:20	John	Host	<i>[Ben laughs.]</i> I'm not gonna nominate this die for a Medal of Honor, but I will say—  <i>[Adam laughs.]</i>  —that I appreciate its sacrifice. Here we go! Into the die cup!  <i>[Sound of die clinking inside a glass.]</i>
01:16:45	Ben	Host	Sixty-four! When I'm 64! Will you still need me? Sixty-four is a World War Two film set in a Polish ghetto. This film was made in 1999 by Peter Kassovitz and starring Robin Williams.  <b>[Music:</b> Soundtrack music from Jakob the Liar by Edward Shearmur plays in background. Terse, staccato strings with clarinet.]  It is <i>Jakob the Liar!</i>

01:17:00	Adam	Host	Whoa!
01:17:01	John	Host	I haven't ever seen this movie.
01:17:03	Adam	Host	I always confuse this one with <i>Life is Beautiful</i> as a type of movie, right?
01:17:09	John	Host	Came off right at the same time, pretty much, right?
01:17:12	Ben	Host	Yeah. They were kind of the two volcano movies of their— <i>[laughs]</i> of their day.
01:17:18	Adam	Host	But Robin Williams never won an Oscar for his role in <i>Jakob the Liar</i> , right?
01:17:24	Ben	Host	Well, they couldn't risk him walking across the top of all those seats. Y'know. They couldn't take it a second time.
01:17:29	Adam	Host	Right.
01:17:30	John	Host	This is the era of hilarious Holocaust comedies.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
01:17:36	Ben	Host	<i>[Through laughter]</i> Yes. Yeah. Precisely that. And that will be the film we cover next week on <i>Friendly Fire</i> !
01:17:43	Adam	Host	If you go to a video store, there's an entire section dedicated to them, John!
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
			They're Hil-olocaust movies!
			<i>[Multiple people laugh. Theme song "War" begins playing faintly in background.]</i>
01:17:51	Ben	Host	Yeah. I mean, Robin Williams made a comedy about Vietnam. Let's see if he can make one about... Jews in a ghetto in World War Two.
01:18:00	John	Host	Geez.
01:18:01	Ben	Host	So that'll be next week. In the meantime, we're gonna leave it with RobsRobsRobsRobs. So for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor... go the spoiler alerts.
			<i>[Theme song plays briefly at full volume before receding into background as Rob Schulte begins speaking.]</i>
01:18:15	Rob Schulte	Producer	<i>Friendly Fire</i> is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Adam Pranica, Ben Harrison, and John Roderick. The show is produced by me, Rob Schulte. Our theme music is "War" by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music, and our podcast art is by Nick Ditmore.
			If you'd like to check out more <i>Friendly Fire</i> , or relisten to a classic episode, check out our review on <i>Forrest Gump</i> , which aired last year around this time. It's in <u>my</u> top five of <i>Friendly Fire</i> episodes, if that tells you anything. You can also gain access to our bonus Pork Chop episodes by heading to <a href="http://MaximumFun.org/join">MaximumFun.org/join</a> . For as little as \$5 a month, not only will you receive <u>those</u> episodes; you'll also gain access to the entire Maximum Fun bonus content catalog. Don't forget: you can now follow us on Twitter and Instagram under the handles <a href="https://twitter.com/FriendlyFireRSS">FriendlyFireRSS</a> . Thanks for listening! We'll see you next week with another episode of <i>Friendly Fire</i> !
			<i>[Theme song plays briefly at full volume before fading out entirely.]</i>
01:19:33	Music	Music	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:19:34	Speaker 1	Guest	<a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .
01:19:36	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.

01:19:38	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:19:39	Speaker 4	Guest	—Audience supported.