

Borne the Battle

Episode # 244

Army Veteran Gavin McIlvenna, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/89551/borne-battle-244-army-veteran-gavin-mcilverna-tomb-unknown-soldier/>

(Text Transcript Follows)

[00:00:00] PSA:

Man: I served in Vietnam.

Woman: I served in Iraq.

Narrator: No matter where you served or when—

Man: VA has benefits for Veterans of every generation.

Narrator: To learn what benefits you may be eligible for, visit www.va.gov
[Link: va.gov].

[00:00:15] Music

[00:00:18] Opening Monologue:

Tanner Iskra: Oh, let's get it. Monday, May 31st, 2021, Borne the Battle brought to you by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, the podcast that focuses on inspiring veteran stories and puts a highlight on important resources, offices, and benefits for our Veterans. I am your host, Marine Corps Veteran Tanner Iskra. Apple Podcasts, iTunes, Spotify, iHeartRadio, or any one of the hundreds of podcast apps out there. I appreciate you taking the time out of your day and hearing what we got for you this week. As a reminder, Borne the Battle interviews are on VA's YouTube as well. You just don't get the intro with all the news releases, and you don't get the back end with the Veteran of the Week, just the interview if that's what you're looking for. I hope you're having a good, reflective Memorial Day weekend as well and pausing even if it's just for a little bit, and even if it is, you know, personal form or fashion, but I hope you're remembering a hero in your life or honoring a hero that has long since passed as that's the reason we have the extra day this week. I hope you had a good week outside of Podcast Land. Here I got a new government issued computer from VA, which means about three days worth of heartache. And, you know, I've upgraded from 2010 to about 2017. So, there's progress. A couple of ratings, one new review on Apple Podcasts. This one is from Memo0977. Memo

says “A comprehensive podcast highlighting the Veteran experience. Tanner and company at Borne the Battle podcast have a unique talent in delivering insightful interviews about Veteran services, careers, and personal experiences, which help audiences appear into the mindset of a Veteran's life after active service. The podcast offers informative content for listeners, both civilian and military alike, which makes it an ideal resource for anyone who is or might have a loved one in need of any of the programs or guidance provided in the content have Borne the Battle. This podcast without a doubt holds up to the moniker derived from the motto of the VA stemming from President Abraham. Lincoln's second inaugural address of 1865, ‘To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.’” Thank you so much for the review, Memo. I know by that handle that it is my former intern, Guillermo. Thank you, Guillermo, for the kind words. My interns are my force multiplier. Before then, this podcast was just a one man band. They're my blog writers, my transcriptionists, my video producers. They do my booking and outreach for Borne the Battle partners. Many of my interns just recently graduated. If you're listening, thank you so much for the time that you contributed and dedicated into making this podcast what it is. And as much as I already miss you—and I do I miss your help—as the crew gets pretty thin over the summer, I do look forward to seeing and supporting you and all of you in your future endeavors. A couple of news releases this week. First one says, “For immediate release:” —and this is some good news—“Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration will allow mass flag placements across the US to commemorate Memorial Day. This is one of the many events and ceremony scheduled this year and consistent with the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. Secretary McDonough will preside over the wreath laying at Quantico National Cemetery in Virginia on Friday, May 28,” which has already passed. Yes, it has, as of this recording. Sorry, guys. “Live streaming and recorded video and photographs for this and other ceremonies will be shared on the National Cemetery Administration's Facebook and Twitter pages.” So, you could probably see a replay on their Facebook. “All 155 VA national cemeteries will be open Memorial Day weekend from dawn to dusk cemeteries with full staff. We'll also hold wreath-laying ceremonies followed by a moment of silence and taps over Memorial Day weekend, but these will not be open to the public.” But you can probably see them on the Facebook and Twitter. Today's Memorial Day. As of this post, it's open right now. If you want to go on

Memorial Day, if you want to go to the cemeteries, they're open. That's good news. "VA will also debut new features on the Veterans Legacy Memorial site in time for Memorial Day. Originally launched in 2019, VLM contained a memorial page for each of the nearly four million Veterans and service members interred in a VA national cemetery where visitors can leave written tributes. VLM will permit online visitors to submit photos and biographical summaries of a Veteran's life, along with historical documents, such as awards, citations, letters, and newspaper clippings." All very cool. "Another feature will allow visitors to follow their Veteran's page and receive email alerts when new content is posted." It's pretty cool. You can also find more about VLM in last week's Borne the Battle where we did a full benefits breakdown on it. "VA will also continue as partnership with Carry the Load this Memorial Day to honor the sacrifices made by the military Veterans, first responders, and their families. Throughout the month of May, organization volunteers will march four routes across the country, visiting 42 VA national cemeteries along the way. To learn more about Carry the Load and register to march a relay leg, visit www.carrytheload.org [Link: www.carrytheload.org]." It's probably a little bit late this year. We've done a few episodes in previous years on Carry the Load. Check them out. But they start that in early May, so this is getting to me a little late. I apologize. But it's good to plan for next year because it's a great program. And again, to learn more about it, we have the CEO from Carry the Load, board members. Check them out there in our archives. "For more information about VA Memorial Day commemorations, contact your local national cemetery," it's today, "or NCA's chief of public affairs, Les' Melnyk at Les.Melnyk@VA.gov." I'm going to write them an email and say, "Next year get me an earlier news release." All right. Next one says, "For immediate release: The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding COVID-19 vaccinations for some 12- to 17-year-olds as part of the SAVE LIVES Act. Certain VA medical centers across the country will prepare this week to offer the Pfizer vaccine. As they are expanding the COVID 19 vaccinations for some 12- to 17-year-olds as part of the SAVE LIVES Act, it will be available to Veteran caregivers and those who qualify as beneficiaries on VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program. The expansion is in line with recent recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration. Previously, the VA was only vaccinating adults ages 18 and older. Veterans can contact their local VA medical facility for more information." And you can find contact info for your local VA medical center

locations [Link: va.gov/find-locations]. “Or you can sign up your adolescent to receive the vaccination by visiting www.va.gov/COVID-19-vaccine [Link: va.gov/covid-19-vaccine].” All right. At the time of the release of this episode, it will be the observed day for Memorial Day weekend. As you know, it's a day that many Veterans and Veteran family members visit their friends, mentors, heroes, and family members that are no longer with us. It's important to remember that some may not have any place to visit or may only have a marker. That is the reason that we have the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery where many of those friends and family members will visit. Today our guest is the president of the Society of the Honor Guard or The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This society is similar to a fraternity for any soldier that has guarded the Tomb at Arlington National Cemetery. The mission of the Society is to honor the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, recognize past and present tomb guards who demonstrate exemplary service at the tomb to protect, uphold, and preserve, and keep safe from exploitation of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier identification badge to maintain and conduct an organization that will further develop the camaraderie and common bond existing between honor guards to preserve and maintain records and publish the history of the Tomb. And there's some interesting stories in there to authenticate and recognize achievements of tomb guards. to educate the citizenry of the United States of America of the service and sacrifice of the Unknown Soldiers and the duty performed by the active tomb guards while perpetuating the memory of former tomb guards and to maintain a close liaison with the Tomb Guard Platoon at Arlington National Cemetery and with the Old Guard out in Fort Myer, Virginia. This is the centennial year for the Tomb's existence, and they have a lot of events literally planned around the world that you're going to hear about. And you're going to hear about them from the Society's president, Army Veteran Gavin McIlvenna. Enjoy.

[00:09:31] Music

[00:09:37] Interview:

Tanner Iskra (TI): And we're live. Gavin, how do you say your last name, man?

Gavin McIlvenna (GM): McIlvenna.

(TI): McIlvenna. What is that? Is that Irish? Scottish?

(GM): Scots-Irish.

(TI): Scots-Irish, McIlvenna. Very good. Well, Gavin, one of the first things we ask here on Borne the Battle is, first of all, welcome. I appreciate the time that you're spending with us. Well, when did you know that military service was going to be the next step in your life?

(GM): Well, that's a good question. I don't think I really did. You know, my time in the service started out with me being in college. And I got tired of teachers telling me what to do and what courses to take. So, I went to the nearest army recruiter.

Both: [Laughter]

(TI): So, instead you went and found a drill sergeant to tell you the same thing.

(GM): Right, pretty much. Well, they offered me a great opportunity. I first I wanted to come in as an Aero scout, I think it was, but I'm six foot four. So, the recruiter noticed that I probably was not going to fit in a helicopter, "But I've got this great thing called infantry. Have you ever thought of that?" And I said, "Yeah, sure. As long as I can go to Italy." And they said, "Italy? Absolutely. Do you like jumping out of airplanes?" It's like, "Never flown in one." "Have we got the job for you. Sign here." So, I signed up and went to Italy for my first assignment to jump out of airplanes as an infantry man. And that's one of the best assignments I think I've ever had in the military.

(TI): Sure, absolutely. I bet, especially being a first timer being in Italy, you know. You get to be in a new, different country, experience some things, young and dumb, good stuff. Now, so you were infantry prior to going into service for the Town of the Unknown. How long were you active?

(GM): A grand total of about 17 and a half years of active duty. The rest of it was the National Guard timeframes. So, a total of just under 23 years.

(TI): Roger. What year did you arrive to serve at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery?

(GM): I got there about August of 2000—I'm sorry, 1997. August of 1997 I came. I was coming from my second tour in Italy and got posted there and promptly assigned to the First Presidential Marching Platoon out of Honor Guard Company.

(TI): Okay. Prestigious honor. What's the selection process for those that don't know for being a guard at the tomb?

(GM): Well, to be a Guard of the tomb, first, you have to get assigned to the regiment. And that was a challenge in and of itself because as an E-6 I had to send my packet directly to the Regimental Sergeant Major who had to look it over and approve just coming into the regiment. After that, when you get to the Regiment, you're supposed to do about six months in a line company or wherever they assign you, and then you can try out for any of the specialty platoons. So, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is one. You've got Caisson Platoon. You've got the Drill Team and things such as that. So, I made it known to my Platoon Sergeant right off the bat when I got there that my goal was eventually to get to the Tomb. And he just kind of laughed at me and said, "That's not going to happen for a long time because you're six foot four. You're an E-6. There's only one position you can go to, and it's filled." So, I was a little chest fallen and did my time, you know. I was going through learning how to do the saber and everything like that in the marching platoon and doing missions. About three months later, they came back and said they couldn't find any E-6s that wanted to volunteer to replace the First Relief Commander and start the training. And I said, "Absolutely. That's why I came to the regimen." That's why I came off a jump status was to do that.

(TI): Why the Tomb over the other ones? What drew you to the Tomb as a duty you wanted to serve in?

(GM): Well, you know, I didn't know much about the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier prior to meeting a couple of Tomb Guards, actually. So, again, I was on my second tour in Italy, and I remember distinctly when I was in basic training they show that that large poster that lists all the awards and badges and things that you can get in the military. And I remember them pointing out the Tomb Guard Identification Badge and saying, "You'll never see that on a living person." So, I didn't think much of it. And the next thing I know, here two E-6 Tomb Guards show up at my duty assignment in Italy. So, I was assisting with the jump master course at the time and got to talking to them, and they were the ones that gave me more information about what the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is and what the guards do. And I thought that that kind of fits right in with something that I wanted to do because in my first tour I'd lost some friends in combat and found it a good way to honor them. So, that's what got my interest in the Tomb. And I'd never been there in person. So, I'd never even seen it.

(TI): Got you. I think when you're here in Arlington or you're here in the DC area and you've been to the Tomb, you kind of take it for granted that a lot of people haven't seen it. You said you lost friends in combat. Now your first tour was early nineties. Was that Desert Storm?

(GM): It was after the Gulf War. We did an operation up in northern Iraq in the Syria-Turkey region to provide protection for the Kurds. So, it was Operation Provide Comfort, and a friend of mine from basic training was killed by landmine while on patrol he was with the scout platoon and lost his life. Not right away, unfortunately. A Marine that was also wounded and that was part of the recon element ended up picking him up and carrying him to the nearest road and then commandeering a vehicle to get him to the nearest American outpost that we had set up at Sirsenk Air Base where unfortunately Lars passed away. But Lars-Petter Chew is a big motivator in my life. His death was—he was a good friend coming into the military and on our first assignment. But definitely his death motivated me into a lot of the things that I do today. And I don't think if it wasn't for going through that experience, I probably would have gotten out of the military and gone into a, I don't know, a normal life.

(TI): Gotcha. Well, let me know. Give me his bio. You know, every episode we have, you know, on the podcast app we have the Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week. Let me know, and we'll make that part of your episode when the time comes.

(GM): Yeah, okay. I'll try and I'll try and find something.

(TI): Okay, good. Good. Any—so you became a guard at the tomb. Any crazy guard stories? You know, I've seen videos of some folks try to get cute with the guards, and it doesn't happen for long. Do you have anything that happened on your watch? Something similar?

(GM): I did. I can't remember if I was already a Tomb Guard or still in training, but I distinctly remember it was a summer day and I was doing the guard change, and as you walk out after you've inspected the Sentinel and you begin to bring them onto the plaza itself and start the actual guard change there's a portion where they come together and they're facing each other and the surgeon or the relief commander in the middle is making some commands and telling them what to do and basically leading off to the point where they pass on their orders, which have been in place since 1926. And I remember turning to face the tomb as part of the sequence, saluted the tomb, turned back around, and instead of having two sentinels

on the plaza, I had three people on the plaza. Someone had decided to step over the chains, walk down the stairs, and stand between my two sentinels in the middle of the guard change to get a better picture. So, I'm pretty sure that I ceremoniously asked him to leave the plaza, which they promptly did. And then we can, you know, went on with the guard change. But sentinels, you know—

(TI): For those of you who haven't seen it, the ceremonial request is not as—it's a little more forceful than just a polite, "Hey, please leave."

(GM): Right. There was a little command voice involved in it. Yeah, he did. He promptly left the Plaza, which is a good thing. But, you know, stuff like that happens all the time down there. I hate to say it.

(TI): Yeah. Yeah. And that's why you got to use that command voice. Very good. So, you were also there when they disinterred a Veteran within the tomb. They were able to identify it and disinter a Veteran. Okay. Can you walk me through that process, and how did that affect your duties at the tomb at the time?

(GM): Well, that's an interesting one because when I started my training and prior to getting my badge, there were four unknown soldiers. So, in May of 1998, the family of Michael Blassie asked that the Vietnam unknown soldier be disinterred and sent for identification at the DNA lab. He was positively identified as Captain Michael Blassie who actually was shot down on my birthday in 1972. So, leading up to that day you have to prepare the plaza for removing, the stones from around the tomb and around the crypts. So, they blocked it off with some woods so that the public can't see the construction company doing that. Go ahead.

(TI): Was he—was that on your birthday as in like the day you were born?

(GM): Two years. I was two years old. So, he went down when I was two years old. I know, interesting connection.

(TI): Yeah.

Both: [Laughter]

(TI): Go ahead. I'm sorry.

(GM): No, that's fine. So, once they, you know, block it off, what we had to do was change our guard sequence to instead of being on the normal landing we had to remove it down to the lower landing. So, this lower landing guard change was something that hadn't been

done, obviously, since 1984, when they put the Vietnam unknown soldier in in the first place. So, we had to learn that sequence really quickly. And for my relief, it fell to our shoulders for most of those lower-level guard changes. And as a relief commander in training, it's just an added stressor because there's a lot of steps involved, walking up and down, and back in my day you couldn't wear your glasses if you're doing a wreath ceremony. So, if you go out for a wreath and you're walking down those stairs, you've got to keep your head in, you know, straightforward. You can't glance down at the steps. So, you just have to know where the steps are and hope to God you don't trip and fall in front of everybody. And then turning around and going back up the steps, you've got to make sure you're not hitting your shoes against the marble because that just ruins your day quickly. So, we went through that process. And then the actual night of the removal, they locked down the entire cemetery, posted MPS, and the whole platoon was brought in and was kept inside the Memorial Amphitheater Area. My relief, because we had the duty the next morning after the disinterment, we spent the night in the Memorial Chapel, which is underneath the Memorial Amphitheater sleeping on some Army cots in the chapel. And second and third relief got the duties of as soon as the Vietnam unknown soldier was removed from his crypt to immediately form the death watch and stand the guard over him as he was outside of his crypt. And then I went through the morning, you know, I had to close up the bricks and put the crypt cover back in place for the ceremonies. And, you know, watching the unknown soldier leave our care was hard. I'm not going to lie. It's something that has probably stuck with me ever since. I have an affinity to the Vietnam Veterans.

(TI): Why was it hard?

(GM): Well, they're standing watch over somebody for, you know, in my case, only a year, but in the case of the tomb guards, for 14 years we made sure that his rest was undisturbed. We provided honors continually to him. So, tomb guards will bond with the unknown soldiers at night and during the day. It's just natural. You start to wonder about the unknown soldiers and where they came from, how they died, and things such as that. And we hear a lot of the families talk about their soldier, whether it's their soldier that's buried in the plaza or not. But we hear the stories from the families, and that's why the tomb is so important for so many Gold Star families is it's the place they can come to be with their loved one. So, you bond with the unknown soldiers as a tomb guard. And it

was difficult to see someone that I stood the watch over be taken and sent away. You know, somebody else then had the responsibility of keeping an eye on him until he was identified as Captain Blassie, and then, you know, reburied under his own name in Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis.

(TI):

I've actually seen it. It was one of the first grave sites that I've saw when I started with the VA. Went out to Jefferson Barracks out in St. Louis. Beautiful national cemetery by the way, on this bluff, overlooking I think it's the Mississippi. Beautiful, VA cemetery. But he's there now. I can tell you it's very well-manicured. They take very good care of him. Um, But, yeah, Blassie is now in a VA cemetery.

(GM):

Yeah. And tomb guards make regular trips out there to be with him. Yeah. I get pictures all the time from guys and gals that have made the trip and still paid homage to him. You know, like I said, it's tough. We stood the watch. At the same time, we understand the need for the family to have closure, obviously. And then you have the third element of that whole process where you've got the Vietnam Veterans now who don't have a body that's laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. And someone asked me this the other day about, you know, what would I tell a Vietnam Veteran who wants to go to the tomb, but you know, knows the story that there's no more Vietnam soldier buried there. And I would say you need to go the tomb, whether there's a body in that crypt or not, because obviously the crypt remains empty and has been rededicated to honoring and keeping faith with our missing American service members. You need to go because that is a place where you can bond with your buddies that didn't come home. You know, I'm lucky enough that all of the people that I've lost in the military I can go to their individual graves, and I can spend my time with them and bond with them and reminisce. But there's plenty of people that don't have that opportunity, whether they were lost at sea or they're like Michael. You know, his plane crashes and they don't discover his body till later, or soldiers just simply disappear from the battlefield. When I was at the tomb, even though I knew where my friends were buried in other states, the tomb was a place where I could commune with each one of them at any one time. So, I would tell the Vietnam Veterans you need to go to the tomb. You need that closure. You need to feel the bond with your brothers and sisters because the tomb doesn't just represent one conflict, it represents all. Granted, there's three bodies that are representing three individual Wars and they're buried in their own individual graves,

but the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the whole captures a different meaning. And for any Veteran or Gold Star Family, it is a place that you should go to be closer to your loved one.

(TI): Very good. Gavin, what was more impactful to you, the first time that you guarded at the tomb or the last time?

(GM): I think the overall service was more impactful. There's so many different aspects to what we do down there, whether it's nighttime guarding the tomb, night hours, or when the public's around. So, everyone brings its own unique experience. And I wouldn't say that any one day stood out any more than the next, other than the disinterment, which is a big, big day in itself. Yeah, I don't—well, I remember the first time I stepped onto the plaza, and it was unsuccessful. And I got stuck in the quarters for three months until they determined that I could go out in public again. But, you know, it's just an interesting environment to work and live in. And I think if you talk to any of the tomb guards, they may have a date or two that is impactful, especially the guys that really spent a long time down there. I know that I was speaking with a young staff sergeant by the name of Craig Hudson who's moved on to his service in Fort Carson, Colorado. He walked for four years. So, his last walk was overwhelming for him to finally realize that he no longer has the duty. He no longer will be on the plaza at any one time and be able to spend his time with the Unknown Soldier. So, yeah, I think just my entire tour was very impactful and made an impression upon me for the rest of my career.

(TI): What made it impactful for you?

(GM): Being able to see Americans understand why the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—when most people go down there, they look at the changing of the guard, and they see that and that's the big draw. And we understand that, but that's not the point of what we're doing. It's an active-duty guard post. It's an active mission as it has been since 1926. And when you stand in the press pit and you look back into the crowd, you can see when people begin to understand why we do what we do. You know, you're always going to have the ones that just don't get it, and they're just there to take a picture or they're joking around or whatever they do. But more often than not, you're going to see a young teenager all of a sudden begin to understand the commitment of our nation to honor and respect and protect those that serve and sacrifice on behalf of everyone. So, that I took away. The discipline of the unit definitely has stuck with

me the rest of my career and even into civilian life. You just can't put on a uniform or even get dressed up without checking gig lines and looking at your shoes and making sure the shoelaces are tucked in. You know, I didn't go as crazy as some of the older tomb guards back in the fifties and sixties of ironing my t-shirts and underwear and socks. But, you know, when you see something wrinkled—yeah, you know, you can't step out in public with something wrinkled. I walk by a mirror, If I see a smudge, I have to clean it. You know, those little things that were beat into your head during training certainly lasted.

(TI): Sounds like it. Yeah, definitely a little lasting impression there. Now, Gavin, if everything goes to plan, we'll be posting this episode on Memorial Day Weekend. I've been to Arlington myself for both the Easter sunrise service and on Memorial Day and then visited the Tomb shortly after cause it's like right there. Both extremely busy days for the cemetery. Is there any extra weight for you as you reflect during those times at the Tomb at Arlington?

(GM): On those specific dates?

(TI): As we're coming up on those days, is there any—like is there a special emphasis in your life when you look at Memorial Day, when you look at Veterans Day, when you look at Easter, you know, is, is there more reflection on those days when those days come up?

(GM): For me right now because we're in our centennial year, probably not because I'm so involved in the history of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. There's so much that goes on in the month of May that most people don't understand when it comes to the double interment in 1958 as well as the Vietnam interment in 1984 and disinterment in 1998. There's a lot of history in that month alone. So, I know that as Memorial Day or even Veterans Day approaches and the nation tends to focus back on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I, as a guard, probably do what every other guard does and when we watch it, we will critique it. You know, and it's just natural. We always do because we know when something's a little off or what have you. So, yeah, I'll enjoy it, and I feel the pressure of the sentinels on the mat. And especially as the Sergeant of the Guard has to lay the big wreaths, having done that myself at one point, I know there's a lot of stress there and a lot of attention is being drawn. And, you know, I feel for them. And, of course, whenever it's all done, we text back and forth with each other and, you know, tell

them how good they did or if they screwed something up, we'll jokingly tell them to fix themselves and stuff like that.

(TI): That reminds—I mean, as a video editor, I did the Marine Corps birthday message for two years. So, it's probably the same thing. Every time a new birthday message comes out on November 10th, November 11th in there, that whole weekend, you know, Veterans Day, Marine Corps—Marine Corps birthday's always first. But we, you know, the birthday message comes out. The first thing I always do is critique it, and then everybody's ever did that message edited that message critiques it. Interesting. Very good. While you were in give me either a best friend that you had or your greatest mentor?

(GM): One or one of two? Huh? Okay.

(TI): One of the two or both, that's fine.

(GM): Well, I got lucky in my second assignment. I went to the Pathfinder Company with the 101 Airborne Division, and that's where I met my best friend. And that's also where I had my best mentors. And I'll start with my mentors. Preacher Keith is—one of them was Preacher Keith.

(TI): His name was Preacher Keith?

(GM): That was his nickname. Preacher Keith and Fat Daddy Benson were two staff sergeants at the time, both ranger regiment guys that had come over to the Pathfinders, and as a young and then a brand new sergeant, they took me under their wing and beat the crud out of me to get me to do the right things. So, having two staff sergeants constantly mentoring you and correcting you and keeping you on course was super valuable. And I love those guys to death.

(TI): Why was his nickname Preacher Keith?

(GM): Preacher Keith had quite the history. He's passed on now. So, I know that he had spent plenty of time between E-5 and E-6 and E-5 and E-6 in the regiment. He was a character and brought a lot of life experiences. Had some good combat experience too. So, I don't know why we called him preacher, but we just did. And he was one of the old crusty staff sergeants that was in the Army at the time. And you know, when he spoke we listened. So, we did what we Preacher Keith wanted us to do. Yeah, but that's where I also met my best friend. He's actually retired Major Salvador Bazzurro. But we were both young buck sergeants at the Pathfinder

Company, learning our ways going through schools together. And then that friendship has just continued ever since 1993. And I value his experience. He went a different path than the Army than I did because he stayed in active duty. And we both had—well, my wife and I were in Iraq 2009 to 2010 while he was in Afghanistan at the same timeframe. So, you know, being able to share those experiences with a brother, listening to what he had to go through as compared to what I was doing in a different theater of operation at the same time was nice. Yeah, and then we spent our "victory tour of coming back alive" by visiting his family in Australia. But, now Sal's also a great mentor, you know. And, again, different life experiences will teach you different things, and it's nice to be able to have somebody that you can joke with as brothers do in the military and poke fun at no matter what and yet still have that awesome respect for each other. Absolutely.

(TI): Absolutely. Now you made it to Sergeant Major, and you got out in 2012. You've also been an Oregon State Trooper since 2001. Was that the year that you left active duty and went to the guard?

(GM): Yeah, I left active duty and went into the guard, but I spent most of—most of my time in the guard was spent on active duty. So, getting recalled back to serve—yeah, got to work with the Air Force for a time guarding bases right after 9/11. And then I got pulled up to run the Air Assault course for the National Guard at the National Guard Warrior Training Center in Fort Benning, Georgia and then kind of bounced around before the deployment to Iraq in '09 and '10. And then I ended up with my career working with my best friend with US Army Africa teaching people indigenous forces in Western Africa. So, I couldn't have had a better career with starting in Italy and ending it in Italy. Well, maybe not assigned to the Airborne Battalion Combat Team there, but at least living in Italy with my best friend. You know, that's where we were based out of for our missions in Africa.

(TI): What base was that?

(GM): Vicenza.

(TI): Okay. Okay. I was in Sigonella for a time.

(GM): Oh nice. Great place too.

(TI): Oh man. You talk about duty stations. Now I couldn't leave the base for three weeks because we were looking at going into Libya. And so, you know, we—I'm here in the middle of Sicily, and I couldn't

drink wine. I had to be an hour away from my gear, and I couldn't leave the base. Yeah, but eventually I did get to sample a little bit of the local culture and the wine and stuff. It was great. Loved every second of it. Okay, so how did you transfer? Excuse me, I gotta sneeze. Okay. So how did you transfer into being a state trooper? When did that transformation go? How did you make that? Transitioned from active-duty military to state trooper?

(GM): Well, my best friend Sal and I were contemplating moving into law enforcement at about the same time. And we actually had gone down and tested for Virginia Beach Police Department where he passed. I failed because the first test was a stretching test and I'm six foot four. I'm not a Gumby. And so, I couldn't touch my toes, and that was that was my failure. That was the test.

(TI): That was it?

(GM): That was the test.

(TI): That was the test to be a Virginia Beach—you gotta touch your toes?

(GM): That was the first test. Then you went onto the obstacle course, which I would have crushed. And then the interview, I'm sure I would have done well, but I couldn't touch my toes so you're out. So I—yeah, interestingly I decided to look into the US Marshals. They had a fugitive warrant team that they were putting together at the time. And I put in my packet, went through the process there, and then they got into the firing or hiring freeze. So, you know, wanting to still do that, I decided I wanted to go back to Oregon. So, my backup plan was with the Oregon State Police and was lucky enough to get selected and make it through the training and go into that and have been doing that ever since.

(TI): Now you weren't active, but you were going and you were getting activated at the same time for many times over. So, was the job safe when you left? It was like, "Hey, okay, you're going after that. Awesome."

(GM): Yeah, no. They did a really good job. I, you know, I was able to give them orders, and they honored it. And so, when I came back I still have my same position. It would have been, you know, if I'd promoted from a recruit trooper to trooper, then, you know, I still got the promotion, that kind of a thing. So, it didn't impact me having to deploy militarily. It just added some more tools to my tool belt when

I actually came back and really spent full time after 2012 with the State Police.

(TI): Yeah. Yeah, you probably got some training that they couldn't pay for and then they were probably happy that you get in anyways. That's good stuff. Probably set you apart different from some of the different counterparts that you probably had to go up against. I'm guessing, as far—

(GM): We have a fair amount of military within the Oregon State Police. And the reason I think we do that is because we don't look for someone with a degree. You know, if you have a degree, that's great. But what we really want is that life experience, and you can't have, you know, LA young Lance Corporal from the Marines show up to the State Police without bringing a ton of life experience with them. It's just—that's what we're looking for to be able to be mature, to make sound decisions by yourself in stressful situations. And so, I think a lot of the troopers within Oregon fit that to a T whether they've had military service or not. That life experience is crucial for our troopers to be able to do their job.

(TI): Awesome. What's the best part about being a state trooper?

(GM): I get to see a lot of my state that I've never seen before. I, you know, I get the work in patrol. So, I work in a five-county area and have a lot of territory to cover. So, any one day I can come on shift and work in the rain in the Columbia River Gorge, or I can go up to the mountain or I can go to the wheat fields. Yeah. I've got a lot of flexibility because I don't have—you know, the jurisdiction is my state's borders.

(TI): So, your five county has crossed the cascades.

(GM): Not cross the cascades—we start in Multnomah Falls just outside of Portland. And then we head east about a hundred miles. And then for each of those counties, go about 70 miles in each of the counties south. So, it's a pretty big terrain where we're going from a rural area to really austere environments, especially out east, when you get the no cities, long distances, and major highways to going through about 90% of all of it.

(TI): Yeah. I think when it comes to the Pacific Northwest, everyone thinks of the rainy, you know, evergreen rainforest, and they don't understand that the rain shadow effect, that the cascades have, or the mountain ranges, it gets to look like Texas on the side east side of the sates. Good stuff. Okay. So, I want to pivot to the Society of

the Honor Guard Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It seems like you've been involved with it since you left the duty itself. The duty must've made, obviously, a very big impression on you. What is the mission of the society? Cause you're, you're now presidents, right? You're the president right now, right?

(GM):

Yeah, I got lucky enough to be the president and have been for about the past four years. I'll end my term this year. I was one of the four founders in the beginning. I was the youngest of the four. They wanted to bring on a youngster that could speak in relative terms at the time and tell them when their ideas were a little old. So, we relate to the young kids, right? And we still do that on our Board of Directors today. I always keep a young, current Tomb Guard on our Board because we've got to know, you know, I've been out 20 plus years, you know? And so, what I remember is not what is exactly going on today. But our basic mission, our primary mission is to educate America on the history of the unknown soldiers, each of the unknowns, and the process behind that as well as talking about the sentinels that stand the eternal vigil. We also support the active-duty platoon and provide scholarships and mentoring to those young men and women that are serving the watch right now. And we also—I think the best part of the Society besides just being able to talk about it is the family feel because just because we've left as our duty at the Tomb doesn't mean that we need to go our separate ways. And so, it was a very tight family. A small group of people including their families, we always try and get together every other year and have a reunion and bond in that way. And even when a Tomb Guard passes, their family still remains a member of the society. And because the families go through just as much ordeal in the training process as the Sentinel does, and more likely than not, they know the knowledge better than we do because they're quizzing us a lot of the times and making sure that we're squared away before we go up to our test. So, you know, it's a big family, right? And that's the fun part is, especially in the centennial year, I've been doing a lot of education, learning a lot myself as a Tomb Guard, especially about the Navy's involvement and the Marine Corps involvement in the transportation home of the unknown soldiers. That was kind of an eye opener to me. And, you know, when we're given our book of knowledge, it's 17 pages. We have to memorize it front and back, and it just has the dates, the book ends kind of thing. So, learning about the history behind each of the Unknown's transportation home and every time an unknown soldier has returned to the United States to the mainland. And It's been by

the US Navy, and Marines have stood the watch during that transit, sailors as well. But that's predominantly what's happened. And I don't think that a lot of our sister services know of their history of their participation in all of this. So, that's been fun doing the history and teaching it.

(TI):

I think, maybe not they don't know the history of the Unknown. That's very interesting. That is very interesting. But I think, you know, from a Marine Corps perspective, we had that movie Taking Chance that did, you know, kind of go into guarding one of your brothers when they came home from war, you know, before they got buried. And I think—is that something similar that they do with all the Unknowns?

(GM):

Well, yes and no. Let me give you a good example. So, in 1921 when the World War I Unknown Soldier was selected in France, he was taken to the coast where he met the USS Olympia. So, the Olympia is still around. It's a steel war ship of its era. It's in Philadelphia at the Independence Seaport Museum. You can go on the ship and stand where the Unknown Soldier was strapped to the deck. So, that's the story. When the Unknown Soldier came aboard, the casket was too big to go through the holes. And the captain of the ship said, "I'm not turning it on its side, and I'm not putting this guy in a cargo hold." And the Marine detachment commander at the time when, when the unknown soldier first came on, he was placed on the fantail of the ship. And the Marine captain said, "That's not a good place. That that's just, you know, that's a recipe for disaster. Let's move him to better ground." And the Marine captain, who's Graves Erskine. So, if you know any Marine out there knows their history, that's World War II era General Erskine, quite the man himself. But he was a young captain and had the duty. And so, he moved the casket to higher ground. And because the Marines were providing the 24-hour watch, they strapped the unknown soldier to the ship. And then they strap themselves to the ship. So, they tied off knowing that if the ship were to go down there's no way the unknown soldiers coming off the ship, they're going down with it. And so, through driving rain and the remnants of two hurricanes, as they're making this transit across the Atlantic from France to Washington, DC, you've got young Marines that are standing up. They're taking an absolute beating in horrible weather, standing the watch, and maintaining the vigil. And that really starts a lot of what Tomb Guards do. And we—and that's, I think, is a part of the Marine Corps history that they don't know that story. And we're, we're bringing it to light and we're telling it.

(TI): So, I mean, you know, Marine Corps history is a big part of even boot camp through the Marine Corps. You know, you learn about—I mean, I've never heard that story. Never. That's incredible. I can't wait to share this part of the encounter of the conversation to some of my Marine friends and people that are still in and things like that. That's awesome. That's awesome. And you know, the Marines were a big part of that.

(GM): The 1958 mission for the double interment is pretty interesting as well. We're just about to release a document on it that goes into a lot of detail because a lot of those guys are still around and are able to tell us that personal story of what they experienced when you're transferring caskets at sea between large warships on a rope and hoping to God that you got it right and don't drop the unknown soldier in the middle of the ocean. So, again, you know, I think that a lot of our services don't know their own history when it comes to this specific area. We've talked to guys that were on that '58 mission and they were on ship and they didn't know the big story. They didn't know the backstory to it, you know, with candidates coming from Hawaii and France and meeting, you know, off the Virginia capes. So, that's been a lot of fun learning that history. It's also been a good time when we're engaging vast majorities of the American population that maybe don't have an affinity to the military by asking them to place Never Forget Gardens in their communities or in their homes.

(TI): I read that in your newsletter that you're doing that.

(GM): Yeah, it did well. The VA has got one that's going to go in July 17th, I think at the Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center in White City, which is going to be the first VA facility that will have a Never Forget Garden placed on their grounds. And, you know, working with the daughters of the American revolution and the VA staff, at the facility that they've come up with a beautiful design and a great place to be able to go and do what the Never Forget Garden is designed for, which is just to be able to have a space where you can pause and remember and reflect on the people that mean so much to you and have meant a lot to your development in the military. So, looking forward to that, and it's been fun to see those crop up all over the U S as well as in France. I got lucky being the president. There's a lot of work in the centennial, but it's been very rewarding in reaching a lot of different organizations and talking to different Americans about this and seeing the light turn on.

(TI): Sounds like it's been a, you said—it sounds like you've been very busy as far as the Society is concerned. Did not know that this was a thing at all before you reached out. What I like about your society is that it sounds like you guys are very tight knit. You know, when Veterans talk about transition, they talk about leaving and losing like a sense of camaraderie. It's good for societies like this. It's good to be part of societies. Like this is good to be part of organizations like this because this kind of holds that camaraderie that people seem to feel like they lose when they transition out of service.

(GM): Well, I certainly agree with that. I know that working in some of the specialty assignments within state police has kept that bond, that brotherhood feeling there, working with some great men and women in the state police for the society. Yeah. Some of my best friends walked in 1958. And granted I was born in '70. So, you know, it's interesting to be able to have that shared common bond with someone. You know, at the same service, different areas. So yeah, we talk all the time. I think my wife has more tomb guard friends on her Facebook page than her normal friends just because of the family environment. And we all—we all get to know each other and have a good time. So, it's been helpful when someone's down they can turn to us, and we have a really close group that can support them in their time of need.

(TI): That's great. That's great to hear. And it's—I said it twice before. It's so important. So, you're talking, we've already talked about the events that you got planned, things you got going up for the hundredth anniversary. What's the significance behind these events? Why are you doing it? Why are you planning these gardens? Why are you planning these things in to do these events in France and here in the States and doing this documentary? What is the point, basically, of doing all these events?

(GM): Well, it ties in with our bigger mission of education. And, again, you know, most people that know about the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are seeing something on TV or on the internet where they see the changing of the guard and that's what they know. They don't know the why behind the reason, you know, why we're there. As we looked at the centennial, we didn't want to have just the mother of all wreath ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery. I mean, that is going to happen. The president is going to lay his wreath on November 11th marking the hundredth anniversary of the burial of the World War I Unknown Soldier. But as we looked at the

broader spectrum of why is the tomb important to the nation, we had to reach out and engage all of those different organizations and people that have a tie to it. So, we're working with the Crow Indian Nation and the Chief Plenty Coups State Park in Montana to highlight Chief Plenty Coups' participation in November 11th, 1921 and his honoring our unknown soldier of the World War I unknown soldier with his war bonnet and coup stick. At the same time, we're trying to make sure that the mission and history of the US—

(TI): You're spitting out so much information that I have no idea what you're talking about. This is great. No, this, I mean, I can't wait to learn more about this stuff. Chief, who? From Montana?

(GM): Chief Plenty Coups was a Crow was a leader, and during 1921 he was selected to represent all of the Native American Tribes at the ceremony in the interment in Arlington. And, I, you know, I distinctly remember reading that they were told no speeches other than the President's. Well, the chief as he's presenting his coup stick and his war bonnet actually says this prayer, and it's basically a speech but he talks about the bond between the red man and the white man as warriors. And it's really moving. And I strongly suggest you go to Chief Plenty Coups State Park website and find out more about his history because he was an amazing man and a visionary leader for his nation. And he saw the need to intermingle with the white man as the nations was regrowing and work together in a common way, which was for his time, you know, pretty revolutionary. So, you know, things like that, talking with the Olympia. Go ahead. I know you got questions.

(TI): Yeah, no. I know. Yeah, no. With the, you know, with the whole push for inclusion nowadays, it's good to hear stories like that to know that, yeah, inclusion was a thing. Even back, it was a thing back then, especially cause they were doing there with the whole convoluted history with native Americans and military service and the fact that the per capita, the highest to serve, in our services as far as a group. And then to hear that story that they were included in something like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in presenting, you know, for their own. That's incredible. It's incredible.

(GM): No, it's been great. You know, the other big, fun portion of this has been working with France. You know, you think about our history with France, and, you know, we've gone over there World War I, World War II, but most people tend to forget that they saved our bacon when it came time to the American revolution. They were the

first nation to support us. They sent troops to support us. So, the bond from our two nations has been there for a long time. And when I reached out to the cities where the selection was made in Châlons-en-Champagne, as well as where the soldier left the nation in the port of Le Havre. They enthusiastically have jumped onto this and said, “No, no. We will do something on that day.” And at first I said, “Okay, let's just do a wreath ceremony.” You know, keeping it relatively simple, but like the city of Chalons has already invited the president.

(TI): No, no, they do ceremonies very well.

(GM): Yeah. They said, “We're inviting President Biden. We're inviting president Macron. We're—” and then just go down the list of senior dignitaries. We're going to have a wreath ceremony and a military parade and a fly over. I mean, they have embraced it because they just, as a culture, they understand the significance of this unknown American who came from BFE wherever in the States, having never probably been overseas or been on a ship suddenly fighting for their freedom. And not only does he lose his life, but he loses his identity, so that there's no family that can claim him other than at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The French get it. And they wish to again, express their deep appreciation for the service and sacrifice of so many Americans. So that's been a lot of fun. And while it may not fall under the official category of an event, you know, we're working with the French government. We're working with the State Department and American Legion Paris Post One has been amazing to make this event available to remember and honor those critical dates in our history. So, we've been—we're taking a tour group back from our society of about 51-53 people, and about half of them are tomb guards. So, this is kind of like that D-Day or that Iwo Jima, you know, you got to go to those places when you're in those services. You've got to be there. And that's where tomb guards are going to be on November. Oh, I'm sorry, October 24th, when that selection was made a hundred years ago.

(TI): It sounds like that France is making it into a D-Day type of ceremony. It's good stuff. It's good stuff. Where can people find like these lists of events that you're doing and these projects that you're doing? Where can people go to find some of this stuff?

(GM): Well, the easiest probably is going to be our main website at www.tombguard.org [Link: tombguard.org]. All one word. On there, just look for the Centennial or TUS-100 tab, and that's where you're

going to find information on the National Salute or the Never Forget Garden or the list of events we've been doing. Tidbits, Centennial tidbits that we post onto our YouTube channel where we talk with individual organizations or people that have that tie to the Unknown Soldier or doing a project leading up to the Centennial. And that's where we were up to about 28 of those episodes now. And then Facebook is probably our next biggest social media platform. Just look for Society of the Honor Guard on Facebook, and you'll find us. So, we post a lot of our presentations across the US because we do free educational presentations at a community's request where we tie in either an active or a former Tomb Guard to make a presentation. And if we can't do it in person because of COVID right now, then we'll do a virtual or work with an organization so that we can have an opportunity to talk to about the unknown soldiers. So, those are our social media platforms. And they're a lot of fun to manage.

(TI): I bet. Yeah, no. That's the group I'm in. It's a lot. Yeah, but what's one thing that you learned during your time in the military that you applied to what you do today?

(GM): Integrity. I think integrity is probably one of the biggest things I took away from not only my time in at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but just overall dedication to duty. It's amazing how a good work ethic that is trained into you in the military easily translates to the civilian community. And I think sometimes it scares our civilian counterparts about the work ethic that we will bring to a job because we're able to learn our mission, know our mission, execute it, and do it well and with passion. And, you know, it's just like the Veterans today. You know, we've left the service, but we still want to serve. We still want to do something, and whether they get engaged in, you know, any one of the Veteran service organizations at the local level or national level, they want to be relevant to the mission and the mission is the defense of our nation still, even when we put that uniform away. So, I really credit the Army and the military for beating that into my skull and giving me a stronger work ethic and pride in what I do.

(TI): Very good. Very good. Gavin, is there a Veteran non-profit or a Veteran in the community in the veteran community whom you've worked with or you've had experience with that you'd like to mention?

(GM): You know, I worked with a gentleman who was a Vietnam Veteran and he's a former Lieutenant Commander Jerry Frazier. He flew in Vietnam, and, you know, as an Army guy partnering up with the Navy guy. Not something that you see every day. But Jerry has been one of those inspirations in my life. Having met him probably the past 15 years or so where his sense of pride in his devotion to duty and especially to his brothers and sisters that fought in Vietnam is impressive. He and I link up regularly on Army Navy Day. We do something in our community too. Bring that good spirited comradery and rivalry together. But Jerry is one of those guys that I truly appreciate having the opportunity to meet and learn a different side of the different services.

(TI): Good stuff. Shout out to Jerry. Okay. Gavin, is there anything that I've missed or haven't asked that you think is important to share with someone that's listened to this—maybe a parting shot?

(GM): Well, I think that the opportunity for a community to get involved in the centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is just as much as their imagination will let them go. And we can certainly provide some guidance on whether it's the simple things, like the Never Forget Gardener or setting up a National Salute on November 11th. But by engaging with your community, however it's defined, this is the opportunity to learn about a unique part of our history and why the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is so important to so many Gold Star Families and Veterans across this nation.

[01:03:18] Music

[01:03:22] PSA:

Man: I was a Gunner's Mate, Tonkin Gulf.

Woman: Logistics, Ramstein.

Woman: Medic, Kandahar

Narrator: As a Veteran, it doesn't matter when or where you served—

Man: Infantry, Camp Pendleton.

Narrator: —or what you did. The VA has benefits that may be useful to you right now. See what VA can do for you. To learn what benefits you may be eligible for, visit www.va.gov [Link: www.va.gov]. That's www.va.gov.

[01:03:50] Music

[01:03:55] Closing Monologue:

(TI):

I want to thank Gavin for spending time with us here on Borne the Battle. For more information on Gavin you can go to tombguard.org/society/staff and find his name [Link: tombguard.org/society/staff]. This week's Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week—it's Memorial Day—this week's Veteran of the Week is the Veteran in your life that is no longer with you. May we never forget them. That's it for this week's episode. If you yourself would like to nominate your Veteran as a future Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week so we can learn more about their story, you can just send an email to podcast@va.gov. Include a short writeup and let us know why you'd like to see him or her as the Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week. And if you liked this podcast episode, hit the subscribe button on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcast, iHeartRadio, pretty much any podcasting app, notebook, phone, computer, tablet known to man, even those little echoes and dots and all that stuff. For more stories on Veterans and Veteran benefits, check out our website blogs.va.gov [Link: blogs.va.gov]. And follow the VA on social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube—which there is a whole playlist of Borne the Battle on there—RallyPoint, LinkedIn, Pinterest. DPTVetAffairs, US Department of Veterans Affairs, no matter the social media, you can always find us with that blue check mark. And, as always, I'm reminded by people smarter than me to remind you that the Department of Veterans Affairs does not endorse or officially sanction any entities that may be discussed in this podcast nor any media products or services they may provide. I say that because the song you're hearing now is called “Machine gunner,” which is courtesy of the non-profit Operations Song. And it was written by Marine Veteran Mick McElhenny, Nashville songwriter Jason Sever, and Mykal Duncan. Have a great day. Thank you again for listening, and we'll see you right here next week. Take care.

[01:06:05] Music

[01:07:04] Bonus

(TI):

So, we have what's called a saved round on the podcast app if you listen to all the music, the news releases, the interview, the music on the back end, Veteran of the Day. If you do all that, sometimes I reward the listener with a little piece of bonus content, and I call it saved round. It could be either an inspirational story or a funny story about your time in service or your time in transition, your time after service, but something that's a little bonus.

(GM):

Hmm.

(TI):

Kind of like a little extra credit scene at the end of the Avengers movies. Do you have a saved round story for anybody that's listening?

(GM):

Well, I'll keep it to the Tomb. Yeah. So, you know how we're trained to not respond to a lot of the things we see on the plaza. I mean, I've seen guys that have gone up there and they've had a bee land on their cheek and crawl behind their glasses, sting them, and fly off and the sentinel doesn't even move. And nobody's supposed to violate our plaza. During the daytime you see those little squirrels that get out on the plaza and run around and everyone's like, "Oh my God, what's he going to do?" Late at night one night I had the opportunity to be doing night hours. There's red foxes that live in the cemetery. And as I'm standing on the side of the Tomb, I'm looking out over the grass that's down below the steps. I see this red fox come out of the woods, go into the middle of the grass, stop and look at me. And then it makes a beeline for me. I'm not moving because I just wanted to see where it was going to go. And this fox comes up the stairs next to the Tomb, sits down just outside of the little red bricks so it wasn't in violation of anything other than just being in the chains. It looks at me, and I look at it, and it turns around and goes back out into the grass and into the woods like it was just continuing its—like, "I'm walking along. Oh, I'll go check and see if the sentinel's doing his job." Comes up, "Oh, he's there."

(TI):

[Laughter]

(GM):

That was one of the weirdest nights because, you know, I couldn't say anything. I just had to sit there and watch this interaction with this little animal. But it certainly felt like he was checking in to make sure that I was doing what I was supposed to be doing.

(Text Transcript Ends)