



#10 - Kevin Miller | Creating a Culture of Excellence: Personal Accountability, Living with Purpose, & Writing Novels

[00:00:00] **David Pasqualone, Host:** [00:00:00] Hello friends. This is Dave Pasqualone with The Remarkable People Podcast. Season 1, Episode 10, the Kevin Miller story.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:00:29] Kevin. Thanks for being here today.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:00:31] Thanks Dave. Great to be here.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:00:32] Yeah, man. I'm super excited. just so the listeners know, you and I met in town at some networking meetings, and we've had a few interactions, but the more I get to know you, the more remarkable your story unfolds and becomes.

So I'm excited to share this with the audience today, so thank you very much for being here.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:00:48] Thanks for having me.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:00:49] Oh, absolutely.

Just to give you a quick background. I don't want to steal a Kevin stunner, but Kevin is a 24 year veteran of the U S Navy. He was not only a Naval aviator, he's also a defense consultant and the author of several books.

Raven, one being the biggest of the trilogy. So at this time, Kevin, to start by talking about your past. So many people. Especially during the 80s who are growing up, washed, you know, top gun, and they want to be a Naval aviator. And it's like a dream of so many, but you actually got to do this in my life. I remember wanting to be a pilot and wanting to learn, and I had the circumstances, just how God had my life had a tumor.

I was 18 so I was damaged goods. So. No more pilot for me, but the requirements, I remember there is height requirements. Back then, there was weight requirements. Back then. There was, you could not have broken an arm or any bone in your life back then. So you're truly the elite of the elite. So what first, before we go into your maybe childhood and backstory, what drew you to be an aviator?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:01:54] Well, I think, you know, with that, with that list of, of, of the physical requirements, I think number one is his eyesight. And, and that's, that's just a, a blessing and a gift. And, but, but yes, I was drawn to, to Naval aviation as a small child. My father was in the Navy. My grandfather was in the Navy, but they were not aviators.

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But I have a memory. One of my earliest memories of my father took me to Quonset point, Rhode Island, where he had a friend on an aircraft carrier, USS Lake Champlain. And I'm five years old. And, so I don't understand any of this. I'm just going to go on a, on a trip with dad. And so we, we drove over to Quonset point where and then walk to the pier and this massive gray ship, and we go aboard it.

And, memories of airplanes on the flight deck. And you can see Narragansett Bay. I didn't know what it was. But, just, you know, looking down to the water from, from the bridge far away and the, and, and Hey, there was ice cream in the wardroom so, you know, this is, this is for me. So, so at that age, I was, I was like, wow.

And then by the time I was nine, I think I, I verbalize when I grow up, people would ask, you know, what do you want to be when you grow up? I want to be a Navy carrier pilot. From a nine year old and, and I, okay, fine. Whatever, you know, but

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:03:10] it seems still

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:03:10] stuck at the age of, it's all I ever wanted to do.

And then, so I, I came here to Pensacola and, and started my journey. I got it. My, my, my commission as an officer first through the ROTC program at the university of Mississippi. Then came down here. And, went to flight school started obviously where everyone does that, a NAS Pensacola, which sadly is in the news recently.

And then over the Whiting field and, first learned to, to fly. And then from there to Meridian, Mississippi, where I received my wings in August of 1983.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:03:42] Wow. Okay. And where did you start out? You, like you said you were in Rhode Island. Are you from around or

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:03:48] no, military, military. And I, I think I counted once, I think, 11 schools in 12 years of, you know, you know, wow.

before college, maybe 10 schools, but, but yes. And, and moving sometimes a year to year to year and, everywhere from, from Maine to Hawaii. Spent a lot of years in Southern California. and then graduated from high school and, in Mississippi on the Gulf coast. And so the university of Mississippi had a Navy ROTC and that kind of made sense.

And so that was where I got my commission

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:04:19] and you fit in. Yeah. Great. So, okay, so talk to us about your childhood, like when you were growing up, your background, did that prepare you for the structure and the discipline or is a structure and discipline something you learned on your own or a little of both?

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Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:04:36] I think a little of both. I mean, sure. A, a military family and, and, and dad would be gone for extended periods of time. the Vietnam war was going on. And so one deployment, nine months, you know, he was in Vietnam, deployed a few times to Antarctica. He did in his corral. And, was

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:04:54] that a blessing or a punishment?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:04:55] It was, it was, it was good. He, you know, it was a, operation deep freeze. It was [00:05:00] called. And. No, but that, but that's what a, that's what he did. But no, it was a, it was a great childhood. And yes, we, we moved around sometimes a year to year to year in the middle of the school. And, you know, you're, you're eight, nine, 10 years old, and, and you're the, you know, suddenly the new kid, sometimes we moved to a, a, a base and there's, you know, and there's, there's Navy kids everywhere and everyone's, everyone gets it.

And, and those, those are some pretty idyllic years and other times into a community where there's very little military and, and you kinda, you kinda stand out. But, I think that, that, those experiences, you know, helped me to. You know, to, to be, what is outgoing, friendly? I mean, not that I really am all that much, but you, you have to, you know, meet new people and new experiences and, and adapt and I wouldn't trade it.

It was a, it was a great childhood.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:05:50] That's all know. Do you have brothers and sisters?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:05:52] Yes, I'm the oldest of five.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:05:53] Oh, okay. Oh, this a five. So you got a little more responsibility. Oldest, the male military. All right. So you go through your childhood, you move around a lot, but you're learning these life skills and you go into the officer program and you,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:06:10] you know, the ROTC program is a, is a pretty nice way to get a commission.

I mean, there, there's the service academies, obviously, and today, as we, as we, as we record this army, Navy game will be later on today. And, and I applied to the Naval Academy and was not accepted. And it's a good thing that I wasn't, because I probably would have struggled, quite frankly, I wasn't.

you know, the, the, the greatest student. I was a good student, but, you know, we're, we're talking to some, some really, you know, obviously it's an elite institution. And so, the other way to get a commission is officer candidate school. And that was, that was something that, that was always there.

But, but, the ROTC program where you go to college. And you're a regular college student, except one day a week you're wear a uniform and you do your military thing, and then in the summers you would,

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you'd go on a, on a cruise and kinda kind of learn stuff. one of those experiences was here to Whiting fields when I was at, when I was a midshipman at, at, university of Mississippi and kind of got a taste of, of aviation, which I already knew that I wanted to do.

So it was a, that was a nice way to, to show up here. I was already a, an officer. when I showed up in November of 1981 and began my journey. Now that's

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:07:23] interesting. Again, because there's some of us and some of our, you know, some of our listeners. Where we're 42 62 22 and we still don't know what we want to be when we

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:07:33] grow up.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:07:34] And then there's some people like you who are listening, who knew an early age exactly what they wanted to be by having that vision and focus at a young age, would you say that helped influence your decisions along the way as a child?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:07:52] it probably did. I was, I was unusual in that sense that, again, at an early age, I knew specifically, I mean, precisely what I wanted to do.

And I'm so blessed that I. I was able to live my dream. But, but yes, you know, if you K if you want to do this, Kevin, then you had better do your homework. you'd better study and apply yourself and, and, you know, and take the right classes, you know, in high school to prepare for, for college entry.

And. And, and then once you're there, obviously to, to go into the ROTC program, which is, it's harder. I mean, it's the, you know, instead of taking a, a typical 15 hour load, you're taking an 18, 19 hour load, and,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:08:34] which doesn't sound like much, but it's a huge difference. Sure.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:08:37] It's there. And then, you know, there's, there's other, there's other restrictions and there's, there's behavioral restrictions.

you know, you can't, you know, don't, you know, don't do something stupid or it's all over and your dreams are done. And, and so, so, so yes, in that sense, yes.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:08:52] Yeah. It was kind of a guide for you into, while other kids were going maybe to a party, like, ah, I'm not going to, that police could show up. I could change my career.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:08:58] Another, another aspect of this. is, is, my religion and God and, and growing up, my family, went to mass every Sunday, and I was, I was, you know, you're, you're going to mass. I mean, there was never a doubt. It wasn't a. Should we go this way? No, we're, we're going. And, and, it was never a doubt. So that carried with me into college.

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And, and when you're in college, of course, you're on your own. You can do whatever you want. And, but, but I was in with, with a group of guys and in summer with me and in the, in ROTC program, and, and we would go to church every Sunday and we'd, you know, we'd, we'd go to church and then, you know, stop by and have a bite to eat someplace or, you know, kind of make a nice, you know, social event of it.

And, when I was in the fleet deployed on aircraft carriers, I spent several years of my life on gray ships on the other side of the world. And, and mass has also offered. And it's offered on Saturday evening, Sunday morning and Sunday evening. And, and I would, I would go, and, let me talk [00:10:00] more about that in a minute.

I'd, I was always, thinking about, life and how fragile life is and how quickly it could end.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:10:10] Yeah. We can wait till later. We were talking now because a lot of people. Don't think about this, and it's really the most important topically. You always see or never talk about politics and religion.

Honestly, those are some of the two most important topics in the world because we're only here. You know, everybody's born, everybody dies. There's only two guarantees and what happens for the attorney after that, but nobody wants to talk about it, it seems anymore. And then the, how we live our lives individually and then our family, in our community, in the country, in the world.

That is politics, you know? So when you were going to these services and when you were staying in the faith, and what did that mean to you? Like inside the moving parts? What was the motivation to do that? Like what significance of that to you have to you?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:11:00] if you do not go to church, then you are going to be punished and attorney.

Okay. So, and that's, and that's, That that is the wrong way to look at it. That I've learned in recent years, that you go because you want to go. You need to, to be nourished to hear, to hear the word and, and, and, and live it and, and receive the graces. Through the sacraments. And, so I, I think it was, and maybe, you know, not, I had a wonderful childhood, but, okay, we're, we're going to mass and you better go and you're not going to miss.

And, okay. I'll go on. And again, that that is carried through. Now that the motivation is different, that motivation is more out of love. I want to be there. I don't have to be there. I want to be there.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:11:48] So to clarify, you should make sure before you had the mindset, I have to be there. I'm in trouble.

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God. Yeah. But now, you know, the truth is it's grace and love and going to church helps build us and strengthen us and grow us.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:12:00] Absolutely.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:12:01] Yes. And to glorify God to a host of praise and worship and not just seeing and clapping, but I mean praise to God and prayer. That was a prayer. Awesome. All right, so now you go to, you go through the ROTC program.

And you get your commission, where does your life go from there?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:12:19] Okay. Pensacola, Florida, and, and right away you're, you're in the auditorium there and there's, I dunno, a couple dozen other, ensigns and second lieutenants in the Marine Corps and coast guard instance. We all start our journey here. And, captain Bob Rasmussen, who may be a familiar name to you.

Yeah, actually, yes. And, or captain Rasmussen at the time was the commanding officer of schools command cat Rasmussen and welcomed us and said, all right guys, you know, you're, you're here in flight school and you better apply yourself. I mean, you know, he was, he was kinder than the head about it, but, very quickly in, in academics, realize, Hey, these, these grades really count.

No, I mean, you know, and so, so we were introduced to this culture where, alright, you're gonna, you're gonna have to read the material ahead of time. You get a lecture on the material, then you're going to be tested on the material, and you're competing against each other for, for what you want to do. If you have dreams of flying a particular aircraft, this is, this is where it starts.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:13:18] So you're, you're not telling me everybody wins and gets a trophy.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:13:22] No. And, but, but I will say this, that, the, the, the, there is an attrition rate in flight school. it, it's not as, as big as people may think it is. By the time you get there, you've been, you know, vetted or evaluated, you know, you're 21, 22 years old, and, okay.

We, we think that you have what it takes by your academic record and, and in your . You're, you as a person to get through this program. and, so if you, if you apply yourself, then you cannot. And, and, and in the course of flight school, you know, some, some guys, you know, didn't apply themselves and, okay, it's good to find that out now, instead of, you know, being in an airplane, you know, down the road and, and, and not knowing what to do.

but it, it's a very competitive program. And it was a, again, the introduced to this culture of continual excellence. We'll talk about that later on.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:14:17] I was going to ask you, I want you to find the culture, like the mentality and the culture, what you're doing. Like, we'll pick up on that then. Okay.

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So keep going.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:14:25] so January in 1982, I finished, you know what we call ground school, all the survival training. And I go out to Whiting field and, start flying to T 34. Which like the other planes have flown in. My careers is no longer used, but it's a primary trainers at a tandem to seat a single engine prop.

Today they fly the T six it'll look very similar. And so the instructor, again, this, this culture, all right, you come to the brief and some Miller, what is the emergency of the day? And I had to spit that out verbatim. Okay, good. You pass that? all right, we're going to get into the airplane. This is how you get into the [00:15:00] airplane.

This is how you strap in and this is how you turn it on. All right. And, and, so the instructor would, would, would take off on the first flight and then then hand you the controls. You've got it, and then go through some maneuvers. You come back and then you would talk about it. You would debrief.

And every flight, every simulator throughout my entire career, even, you know, far away from school, you know, training never ended. But there was always a brief, this is what we're going to do. We'd go out and do it, and then we come back and we debrief it every time. And that is where the learning occurs and this is how you, that, that culture was introduced to me and all of us.

And it's, it's, it's a very high performing culture of teamwork and trust.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:15:44] Yeah. Talk about that teamwork cause a lot of people will think, okay, well you're competing for spots and so we can't help help each other. We can't collaborate. How did you guys

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:15:52] break the question? And we absolutely helped each other.

We would have a, you know, in our, in our, in our BOQ room is most of us lived in the BOQ, their wedding, it was like a fine BOQ. Bachelor officer's quarters. I'm sorry. So it was like a. A dorm for us, out at, at NES Whiting field and, and, there was a, a chow hall there, if you will. And so we, we spent a lot of time together as like a, as like, we're back in college, but, yeah, we would, OK.

what, you know, what flight do you have tomorrow? Okay. I have my first precision arrow fly. Okay. Okay. I flew that last week with Lieutenant and, and we did a loop over Navarre beach. And it's really important that you do a clearing term before that loop. Don't forget it because, you know, he, I forgot. And, and he, you know, he let me have it, so, okay.

Hey, thanks. No thanks for the gouge. And so that, that, that, that would be an example of, of we're always helping each other with, with the techniques and, and, and the procedures and, and guys that,

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that were struggling. We wanted them to succeed. We all wanted to go through this together and, and be successful.

And, so yeah, there was competition, but absolutely teamwork.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:57] Yeah. And that's on the, I don't care what business you're in or what profession you're in. There's a false, mentality that people live by, that they think everybody's a competitor. Everybody's an enemy. And I have to do my own

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:17:11] thing. Sadly.

It's true. Yeah. And, I, it does that occur in the military and the answer is yes, but not very much. it incur, it occurs outside the military more

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:17:24] absolutely. And yeah, I mean, for the listeners. I'm hearing this. If this is your mentality, think about it. You may have had experiences that brought you to this point, or maybe just assume this is how it is from television and false media, but the fact is, I know some of my greatest professional and personal success as well with people who were competitors, legit competitors, and we talk through things, Hey, how are you doing this?

Or what are you doing to have the success. And the, the fact is there's more than one pilot. There's more than one business that sells widgets, you know, so you can help each other. There's plenty of business, especially in our generation. We have the internet. The world is at our fingertips. Literally, you can make podcasts and videos and you can send a package as you send a package to Australia for \$7 and 35 cents seven days for \$7 I'm like, come on, I can't deliver this myself across town for that price.

So we live in an amazing generation. So I know the Bible talks about iron sharpening iron, and that's exactly what you guys did in the military, and we all need to do today.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:18:32] You bet. And, and, so you, in a squadron, everything is competition, everything. And, and, and it's, from your, okay. Yeah, there's obviously things like, okay, we're going to be dropping bombs today.

We're going to practice that. And so, let's see who gets the best at. Let's, let's bet before we even fly, you know, maybe a Coke bed or a quarter, you know, something like that, who gets the best first hit or the best total hits all day long. And then the carrier landings, Oh my gosh, that, you know, huge competition.

Every landing is graded and you compete, you know, over time on, on, on how well you do there. And absolutely iron sharpens iron and that, I mean, you, you do not want. To, to be found wanting and in any competitive area. So you do what it takes. that said, and I've written about this that. You've got all these,

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these type a superstars in a, in a squatter and, and so everyone can kind of stake a claim where we're Billy.

he, he, he bumps pretty well, or, or Susie, you know, she, she does a pretty good, air to air, engagement. and, and Mikey over there, you know, he's pretty good, with, with his landing so everyone can stake a claim. And it also, it, that also keeps the egos in check. Okay. You know, you may be good in this area, but you're not as good as your squatter may in another area, although that squatter may can help you get better and vice versa.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:19:56] Yeah, and that's such a good, so good. I, the first thing I thought of [00:20:00] when you were, were discussing this was, I love Sylvester Stallone, his movies, and I just think he's a talented, such a talented human, there's a lot of depth, like Rocky's not a movie about boxing. It's about the man's struggle. And, I remember watching several interviews with him and he always refers back to that healthy competition between him and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

He's like, you know. I come up with Rambo, he'd come out with commando, you know, he'd go back and forth and he was like, it would piss me off and push me. But it's not like, yeah, at some points I think they actually did. He said I hated them, but now they're like best friends because it was a healthy struggle

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:20:34] and

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:20:34] they weren't going around being, without integrity.

They weren't purposely trying to hurt each other. They weren't purposely cutting each other's legs. So you weren't having people give you false information. Just to set you up for failure. No, it's a complete teamwork and you all prosper.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:20:48] We all that's right. And, and, in, in my, in my community, I was in, in a, in a carrier squadron, tactical swatter, it's almost always flying in a formation.

Two of us, four of us. sometimes, the formations are pretty big in, in combat. Often they are, but, but, but, but typically there is a, a, a multiple of two or four, and then added two other multiples or two or four to make, you know, 16. 26 30, whatever is required. And so we all have to be working together, doing our jobs.

Again, this gets back to the preparation and the thorough preparation that the, the debriefing and then the debriefing at the end of it. I think, people, when they learn that. Our surprise because, you know, going back to top gun, you know, top gun is okay, we're going to, you know, kick the tires. Like the fire's going to jump in the jet, do an aileron roll off the cat, and then go, you know, and, it's not that way at all.

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It's, it's, there's a lot of preparation and oftentimes, Well, we'll brief a flight, we'll go out and fly it. It might take an hour and we'll come back and talk for a couple of hours about every aspect of that flight

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:21:55] and that, again, this is another huge life lesson that you're bringing out the debrief.

Okay. That's a military term, but that's something we should all be using in our life. Talk about that. That's something that I personally will reflect on daily. And weekly ending. We're coming upon new years. This is a new year episode. How to start the new year off, how to take that first step, how to those things we've been thinking.

Let's turn into doing, but talk about the importance of the debrief or the the reflection or nerve evaluation or however you want to call it. Let's, let's really talk about that.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:22:33] What we are talking about here is constructive criticism. , which we all want. And companies, you know, they have a, they have surveys, you know, how, how did we do?

And, and it's really valuable for companies to, to have customers phyllo surveys out so they can, they can get better constructive criticism. Now, there is a, there's a right way and a not so good way to deliver constructive criticism, finger-pointing. How could you have, I mean, you know, people shields go right up, you know, and that's, you know, they're, there are going to be defensive.

But a constructive criticism like in a, in the off target rendezvous. A good technique is to get inside of the turn and, and align fuselages and that's not personal. That's okay. I'm, I'm, I'm hearing from an instructor, a, someone qualified, and this is also important. a, a, a qualified instructor to teach.

And there can be qualified salesman and qualified, you know, all kinds of civilian positions to do that.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:23:29] So what's your vision you saying is just whoever you're speaking with for advice, you don't want to ask a homeless person on how to invest.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:23:34] Exactly. So you've got someone with that, and again, we're, we're good about quality, you know, written qualifications.

You know, this guy is an instructor. And has gone through the wickets so you can, you can trust that, that he or she is going to do a good job, has his Metta Metta standard. So that is where the learning occurs. And this is where the culture of excellence is just magnified. It is found in aviation, in the military.

It's a, it is found in special forces. In the military. my understanding is, other, other communities of the military, not so much. and, and to their detriment, it's, it's a cultural thing. It can be learned. and I've, I've talked civilian companies. This culture changed their culture. It can be learned.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:24:19] Yeah. And that's something you do, which we'll get into, is you do consulting and you do, also a defense consultant, but you also do individual speaking and

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:24:28] corporate engagements. Organizational,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:24:31] yes. Yes. But for the listeners, the debrief can be on your own. What went well today? What went badly today? How can I fix this tomorrow?

Or once a week. I mean, this isn't something you need. It's great and better to have a group to have a qualified feedback. But would you agree that this is something we can do on our own? Just in reflection?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:24:51] yes. If a, and again, in, in the culture I was in, we're, we're so hard on ourselves

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:24:58] cause you, you

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:24:58] don't want to be perfect and you [00:25:00] want to be right on altitude, right on airspeed and, and, you know, you're.

When you land on the ship, you don't want to miss, you know, there, there, there's mrs and mrs, you know? but, so, so there is that aspect, but, but there was always a debrief and sometimes Dave, it might be from a junior Lieutenant, I was a squadron commanding officer, and this is very typical. And I would land on the ship and I go back to the ready room and a Lieutenant would evaluate my landing.

Now, I did this when I was a Lieutenant. I did this too, and, and I would, I would debrief senior officers on, on their landing. But, so, you know, here I am, and I'm, I'm a, you know, the old squadron CEO and I've been landing on carriers since this Lieutenant was playing with matchbox cars and, and, but I, but I would listen to, and everyone in their bedroom was watching you.

Okay, here's, here's the, the CEO getting debriefed by this Lieutenant. And, And I would say. Okay, good. Well, thank you very much. You know, thanks for, thanks for evaluating me and I, yeah, that's your evaluation. I agree with, or if maybe I didn't agree with. Well, I, I, this is what I saw in the cockpit, but, but again, thanks for coming by and we'll see you tomorrow.

And, and, so when, when the organization sees the boss. Take constructive criticism in public, that that's a good thing. And then, okay, well, you know, if he's the boss and he can take constructive criticism in public, and it's not always perfect, then, and so can I, and, and so the, the ability to, to take.

and deliver constructive, delivering constructive criticism is not easy. And there's a, again, there's a right way in a, in a not so good way to do it.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:26:39] If you were to summarize from your experience, you've worked with thousands of people, how do you approach constructive criticism? Like what do you feel is a good approach?

Especially if someone who doesn't accept it? Well?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:26:51] Well, okay, let's get back to the movie top gun. And here's Maverick Mitchell. Yeah. And, and he

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:26:56] smashed, scream at him, and he throws stuff.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:26:59] He's magic. So, so, yeah. So there's the initial scene, you know, the movie opens up and, and they get back to the ship, and he, and he's yelled at by the commander.

And, you know, that's, that's, you know, that, that, that's Hollywood. 18 coffees

later

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:27:10] spilling. Right.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:27:11] Yeah. And, and, you know, T tell me about the MIG some other times. I get outta here. You know, I, I, I, I'll tell you when I was, I was newly married. And, we went to see that, with, with my, with my wife at the theater.

And, I think that we'd been married six, seven months, and I think my first elbow to the ribs was when I laughed at that scene in the movie theater. Oh, okay. I'm sorry to hear. I'll control myself the rest of this movie.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:27:33] But going back to that, how would you, if you were over Maverick, how would you get constructive criticism?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:27:38] again, not personal, you know, third person. And, but you, you can tell if someone is buying it and, and if they're, you know, let's say, you know, arms crossed, you know, solid Neo scowling at you as you're, as you're, you know, delivering this criticism, then, and then, and this, this is where, but it does happen.

Okay? Now it's, it's the Iman, the instructor, and you're the student, and this is the way it is, and you better get on board with the program. And, and in my career, I got that. There were times when I, you know, my senior officers need to say that you had better get on board. And, and I'm lifelong friends with those guys today.

They, they did me a favor. Tough, love, tough love. And you sure, you know, parents do this. parents that you know, you know, good parents do good, good parents,

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:28:23] eat,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:28:23] eat your vegetables. You know, when I, you know, mind your manners, you know, she with your mouth close, all those little things. And, and you, you harp on, on little kids and it's going to pay dividends down the road.

Yes.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:28:38] Yup. All right. Well then let's keep continuing with your story. So you're actively now finishing up the program.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:28:47] I got my wings in August of 1983. Okay. And, in Meridian, Mississippi, and I was chosen to fly the Corsair too. In Jacksonville, Florida. And this is a, a, a single seat dive bomber, you know, Vietnam era.

again, it's a, it's a dive bomber could do Jack of all trades. it did a lot of stuff. It was a, but it was, it was a difficult airplane. It was a challenging airplane. It was a, it was, unforgiving. The, the engine power response, you know, just there, there's some other aspects of the way it flew.

the cockpit layout was, was not great. Not like today's cockpits where everything is on your, your, your throttle and stick. You've got, you know, all kinds of, of, buttons and controls there that, that are going to help you. You are, everything you need that's important is in front of you on the instrument panel and not by your, your left or right hip or you have to be head down.

And so, So it was a handful for me. And, I was in Jacksonville, Florida, and, and, and, and going through the program and, and, had, had a slow start, but again, kept at it. And, and, the light bulb came on is, as far as, as far as bombing with it. You know, at first I wasn't very good, but then toward the end I got better [00:30:00] able to deliver, you know, the practice ordinance that we use.

But then. Came the ship and now for, for all of us this, we're talking day and night carrier landings and night carrier LINACs and this is a,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:30:17] before you go on, because you're assuming some listeners have no concept other than TV. Describe the size of your care, the size we were playing, and how you only got one shot at this.

I mean, this is pretty serious.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:30:29] Today's carriers are a, roughly 1100 feet long. The, they're the displays roughly a hundred thousand tons. they're, they're, they're, they're huge shifts. Although I've seen some cruise ships that are, that are bigger. The cruise ships are, they're making today, but, big ships, but then, but then, yes, you fly out to them and it's a little ship and there's, your landing area is a 725 feet long, 700 from, from ramp to, to the end of the angle.

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And, The, the distance for takeoff is, 330 feet, your cattle. So your catapulted OfficeTeam catapult and a boom, you know, from, from a zero to 180 miles an hour in, in, in two seconds. And boom, off you go and landing, you'll touch down in an area, 40 feet by 10 feet left or right as far as line of roughly, and you'll pick up a wire and you'll stop.

And 375 feet. So basically going from 140 miles an hour to stopped in the length of a football field plus end zones. Yeah. And so, you know, you're there. There's no doubt you're a board. I had carrier landings in, in training, before I got my wings, aboard USS Lexington, that for many years was, was here in Pensacola.

I'm flying that the T two, and the four more museum pieces that I flew in training. but all daytime and now flying this, this , this, this actual warplane, which could be unforgiving in some areas, day and night. Aboard Lexington, and, which was, the smallest carriers. It was a world war II carrier, veteran of world war II, and, had it had been modified, but, Lexington recall was, only 900 feet long compared to today's carriers, which are 1100 feet.

But the landing area is still basically the same. Fear. There was always the fear of throughout flight school and in training, fear of failure. Fear of, okay. Not keeping up and fear of looking bad, you know, and, and, and, you know, you know, failing of phase or, or getting it, what we used to call it down, today, they call them unsats.

And so you, you would get that and then, okay, you're going to try this again and send Miller. You, you need more work in this area and, and you do it. It's humbling and, you know, but, but this. Was a, was a night, and this separates the adults from the children, if you will. And, so for me it was,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:32:47] now I've read part of your book and you're amazing with description and details when you're seeing the drastic difference between day and night.

Give picture of visual, make a mental picture for our audience right now, what it's like to come upon the black hole in a gray carrier and have to land in a football field.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:33:07] for me. we had flown out enabler station Pensacola and I flew out to Lexington and I did my, my day work, if you will. And I think I maybe half a dozen day carrier landings with the, is talking to me and, and as I was, as I was, you know, you know, doing the best I could.

So I, I land a board ship shutdown on the ship. The first time I did. Well, I take that back, I guess I had no experience but a shut down on the ship and go below. And I got a debrief from the landing signal officers on how I was doing. And then a briefing to go that night, got some food in the wardroom.

So we briefed on what to do and, and again, this is my last area of training. Once I've finished this, I go to the fleet and, and flight school essentially is over. I go out on the carrier deck that night. And I could not believe how black it was inside of a basketball black. I can't see a thing. I've got my flashlight.

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I can just, you know, help me across. I needed help to get to my airplane, which was parked on the, behind the Island on the elevator. The tail of the airplane is out over the water, and it was. Just something I had never experienced. And you can smell your own fear. You know, this, this is adrenaline, or whatever it is.

And I had never smelled it on me before, but I could smell it. I was, I was afraid. I'm not sure scared, but, but I think certainly there was fear. So I, I climb up in the cockpit. And I'm strapping in and I'm 24 years old and I'm strapping it, and there is a sailor next mayonnaise. He's helped me strap in as they do.

And I, I muttered too. I'm like, I can't believe I'm doing this. And, and he was younger than me, so, sir, you're going to be fine, you know? And so, you know, that moment, you know, he was, he was a lot more mature than I was. And so I don't know how I started, but I started up taxied on a deck. Everything is foreign.

All the, you know, the, I'm being directed by these yellow ones. You know, I, I can't see the person that's, I see these yellow [00:35:00] ones moving and they want me to do something.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:35:03] And that's pretty much all you can see

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:35:04] her. That's all you can see. And, so, so on the catapults and. Just shot into an ink bottle of blackness, then you can't see it.

Then there's no horizon and, and the fear is, you know what? If you have a total electrical failure, now everything's dark outside. Everything's dark inside, or you have an engine failure and, and you have to, you have to eject. Now you have an ejection seat. That's an insurance policy. which is a nice insurance policy.

But, so if you were to have to eject, and this happens, it happened one of my friends once, and now you have this carrier bearing down on you. and so, so there's, there's all kinds of things that can happen. the, the weather that night was one mile and fog. So as soon as I got airborne, I was supposed to climb to 1200 feet and turned down when I think I went to 3000 feet, I just so behind the airplane and find guy, control myself and got down to the right out to.

And I flew out of cyclical course to the ship, and then I was a, as we call, hooked back in, they'd want me to turn back in to do my landing. So all of this is inside five minutes and I'm just behind the airplane. you know, I mean, I've never experienced blackness like this and I can't say a thing. I couldn't see the ship.

And then I finally come down on a, on glide slope and, about 20 seconds before landing, I could finally see the ship for the first time. There it is.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:36:22] Wow.

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Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:36:24] that was a wave off. That was not a good pass on my part. So that was, they'll say, you need to, you know, we're not even going to give you a chance.

I know I was a, I was way too high. so I was able to come back around and kind of calm myself down. And then, then you get a board, and it took me a couple of nights as it, which is typical for most students. A couple of nights, you know, the then

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:36:45] way you're finding the ship and the navigation. Is that instruments, do you have audio?

All sorts of great. It's a great

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:36:52] question. It is a mixture of instruments and voice. Okay. So, so off the cat, I think, I would, I would, you know, airborne, and, they'd say he's okay. Four zero four take was 1.2, when level turned down, when hitting a three, six, or, you know, some, something like that.

And it spit it out. And I, I'd, I'd say, I'd say Roger and, and do that, but then also I have instruments in the cockpit. a needle that'll be pointing at the ship. Give me a range to the ship at all times. It's called that. It's called attacking into jargon that we all know and love. but, but also listening to the voice commands, this is a ground controlled approach.

Very common in aviation. although today, quite frankly, in aviation, much of it is automated, but, but still, you know, you, you're, you're, there's air traffic control that vector airplanes around. So that happens at the carrier as well.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:37:38] Okay. All right. Well, so that is the blackness as a listener, he's, Kevin is describing that he had to land in, and that was his first

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:37:48] time.

So the worst weather I ever recovered at night was my first time, one mile and fog. Wow,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:37:55] man. You're like describing one of my worst nightmares to be in the black ocean, like in the middle of the night with animal like beast surrounding me. That would be pretty much a terrifying way to die.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:38:07] The, the second night, I went, yeah.

Let's see. I think I went back to back to Pensacola and then came back out the next day, did more day carrier landings and shut down on the ship again. And then they said, okay, you know, you need three more passes to qual. And so you know, you need to work on this. And so they told me what I needed to work on.

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So I did my three passes and then I was taken to the catapult and I wasn't sure, but you know, I, I didn't have really enough fuel to get back to NAS Pensacola, but I was taken to the Capitol. They were giving me one more pass. and so I was on the edge as far as my performance. So if I did good on this, on the seventh night pass, then I would, I would call and, and no one told me that, but I, but I knew it into and I made it.

And, they said, you know, you know, four one zero, you're a qual. What an incredible feeling of relief. So I went to the catapult again, they pumped me up with gas and. They, blasted me off again, another black Knight, but I'm now, I'm climbing, climbing, climbing 10, 15,000 feet. And I think I got about 15,000 feet and then broke out of the clouds into a beautiful moonlit night.

And it was such an exhilarating feeling. I mean, okay. I've, I've called, I've made it, I've gone past this and, and and this beautiful moon, all the stars, I'm away from that awful weather and that awful shit down there. And this is in Pensacola, in Pensacola. So flew back to Pensacola and landed. And, just what, wow.

Yeah.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:39:29] And then that's a perfect time. We're going to take a quick break. Introduce the audience to our sponsor and we'll be right back. Hello, ladies and gentlemen, this is Dave Paskal, lone hosted the remarkable people podcast, and I am excited to introduce you to today's sponsor. The episode you're about to listen to is brought to us by Pam Heinold,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:39:50] realtor

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:39:51] and broker associate with better homes and gardens real estate, Pensacola, Florida.

When my wife and I moved to Pensacola years ago. [00:40:00] We were looking for a qualified real estate professional to help us find our new home. We had two kids, a new career, and not a lot of time. And having moved eight times in 10 years, all over the country, we've experienced many, many realtors buying and selling homes at this point.

So after moving to Pensacola and interviewing several agents. It was clear to both of us, the Pam was the right choice. Her experience, credentials, knowledge, and skills truly are remarkable. And because of that, she's a top producer in the area year after year. Now I understand that you only care about your home and what makes your life special and great, but that's just it.

What makes Pam special is her ability to listen to you, understand what you want and find you exactly what you're looking for, so you have that greatness. If you're somewhere in the world right now looking for a primary residence of a vacation home or rental investment or anything else, call Pam. She can help you.

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She's easy to work with and she'll help you find your dream home, or even just a cool place to come and visit a couple times a year. You can surf paddleboard, kayak, swim with the dolphins, parasail whatever you can think of. We have it down here in the beautiful Pensacola Bay area. So check out Pam hahnel.com that's P a M H E I N O L d.com or call her office at (850) 232-2332 and when you call, make sure you tell her, Dave said, hi.

Now let's get back to the show. All right, so you finish your qualification. Now what?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:41:51] I went to a tax squatter in 82 aboard USS and Nimitz. And, so I'm in, I'm in Jacksonville, Florida, and, I have a pretty blonde girlfriend that I met at the scenic Hills country club, and she also lived in Jacksonville.

So we're, we're dating and, But I, I get to the squadron. And, so now UK, you're in the fleet and, we're gonna, we're gonna get ready to go on a deployment and next year for seven months. And, so we, we had a series of training detachments, and I'm, I'm being introduced to again, to day night carrier aviation.

And, but now I have a job in the squadron, and I'm a division officer. I've got sailors that I'm responsible for, and I don't know anything, but, but I'm, I'm warning is it's as all lieutenants do and, and, just being a wingman, making mistakes, having close calls and, and by the grace of God. still here.

Something I didn't throughout my career is I is, I would taxi to the catapult, or, or to the whole chore on the runway. I'd say a little prayer. I'm always mindful of, of what could happen in my prayers were always answered throughout my career. I never was on a flight where one of us. We're lost.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:43:07] Wow. That's, and you were in the military for 24 years.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:43:10] 24 years.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:43:11] And how many were mission oriented.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:43:14] Well. Okay. That's a great question. I, I got a taste of combat, toward the end of my career over Iraq. but, the vast majority of my flights were not combat flights.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:43:25] It's, every mission is dangerous, but I'm not demeaning that in any way, shape or form.

But I'm saying, but. You had over a thousand flights, you said

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:43:33] over a thousand carrier landing leanings and you know, 3,600 3,600 career hours at that's typical. For, for, for, a guy with a career like mine, a thousand carrier landings though, is a little bit more than most. And, just the way my career worked out and, and someone say, wow, you, you know, I had five extended deployments and a couple of mini deployments.

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and then, but I always made the full workup training cycle for every deployment. And on each of those, you know, you're gone for a couple of weeks at a time, three weeks at a time. And then, you know, and that would be over a period of months and they would add up.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:44:11] Yeah. And through all of that, you're at a hundred percent success rate.

Zero loss.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:44:16] Yes. That's as far as the guys, that formations that I was in, the hops I was on with, with my, with my friends, all made it back. Now that is not to say that death was, was not part of, of, Of my, experience existence, as a, as a military aviator. I mean, it's, there, it happens. And, and I was introduced to it quite frankly, at Whiting field in primary, we all, we all, you know, live down there, as I said, and, and I remember a guy, and this guy was older.

He was a, as I recall, he was a physician. And so he's going through and getting some, some taste of a flight training. And, And, and one day he wasn't there, there was a misshapen, and he was gone.

[00:45:00] Just like the end. And you know, again, I'm now 22 years old and, wow, this, you know, this, this is serious. And I knew that it was, but when, when someone that you, you, I don't really know him, but I remembered him.

And again, he's, he's 27. He's an old guy, you know? Yeah. And, but then, then gone. And, and that happened, throughout my career from time to time that an airplane wouldn't show up. It would be, a guy that I knew or a very, very close friend gone and, and, in, in, in my career over 20, that were, I can think of.

that, and, and not counting nine 11, which was, obviously, a dark day, at the Pentagon. but, but anyway, yeah, it, it was, it was there. And so again, I mean, as far as the fragility of life, maybe that's the wrong word, but, but, but life can end when, you know, we know, not the day, nor the hour.

and, it was always, always thinking, okay, I better be paying attention. I better not be doing stupid stuff. And, and in going to church regularly in, in, in, in saying my little prayer and thank again for the grace of God. And I had, I did dumb stuff and I had close calls, but was, but was by the grace of God, I'm here.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:46:19] Amen. Amen. Let me ask you a question. Let's go back to that before you move forward. Okay. Let's talk about a failure if you don't mind. Like, yeah. During this period of life you said you had failures and you're learning, and we all are. If we're not learning and failing, we're not doing something right, but what's a failure that set you up with a life lesson that you carried through to this day?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:46:40] Absolutely. 1985, USS Nimitz were off Puerto Rico. And, and I've been in the squatter and for a four or five months. And, and, we're, we're, we're on our deployment now. We're

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doing a little bit of training before we go over to the Mediterranean. And, it was pretty, pretty difficult training.

It was a, It was like the ship's final exam and a, there wasn't a whole lot of, sleep involved and just work, work, work, fly, fly, fly. And, so I, I went flying once and I was pretty rundown and tired and, mismanaged my fuel, a long story. and I'm, I'm flying as a wingman. so, but, but I'm responsible for the airplane and I'm flying and, so I can't, I can't blame anyone else but me for not managing it better.

But we got back to the ship personal accountability person. Yeah. At the end of the day,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:47:31] you're responsible for you. I'm responsible for me. And for all the listeners out there, what Kevin just said is crucial. Yes. There's a team that should have been monitoring that. But Kevin didn't blame anybody. That's an excellent leadership

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:47:44] skill.

Well, I'll tell you, we got back to the ship and, and the recovery was taken a long time and fuel was dwindling. And so I was, I was giving my lead hand signals about my field state and the, okay. Got it. And then, so the fuel is really going down. And then I did a, a serious sin. Which is, I went on the, the auxiliary radio frequency and spoke on the radio and I'm a wingman, but I, I spoke, Hey, I am low on fuel.

Yeah, I know. So we, we, we, we came in for our landings and I dropped my landing gear and I had an unsafe nose gear indication. Oh no, no. And I've got minutes of fuel left cause I was pulling a fast one on, you know, I'll, I'll be good. I, I mean, I've got 60 traps on the chef. I'm good. I can land on, I'd die.

I broken the code and, so, Oh my gosh. So I'm, I'm, I'm doing, you know, very quickly trying to do some procedures to get that nose gear indication to show, but it's not, it's a bad indication. So I fess up and I tell the chef I'm right next to it. Okay, here I am. I've got minutes of fuel left. And I've got an unsafe nose indication.

And so now the ship is, a general quarters. We got this, this nugget Lieutenant here, nugget new guy, with this indication. So they had me fly by the ship, which I do. Okay. Your nose gear appears to be down and appears to be

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:49:00] not locked into place

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:49:02] as far as we're concerned, but it looks like it's okay.

Good. And I just turned, I just turned back to the ship and I cut everyone out of the pattern. I'd rolled back in and there was a. An airplane that was still in the landing area wasn't out. It was an out of the way yet wave off. I turned down again and now I, now I'm flying my own airplane and I'm making my own decisions.

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And so they say, we're not ready for you. Extend. So, you know, fly away from the ship and we'll tell you when you come back in. And so I'm in the cockpit and I've taken off my kneeboard thinking that I'm going to have to inject in a few minutes. and a light comes on in the cockpit that tells me that I've got.

Three minutes of fuel left. I turned back into the ship. I didn't even wait for them to call me. This is now or never. So I'm, I'm making my approach and I, I cry, I crossed the ramp and I go to idle, a Cardinal sin, but I'm so light and I, I've got to get aboard. So I go to idle and then to go back to military, wham, out, I touched down in lane.

[00:50:00] And my flight deck chief is there, and you know, he's, he's, you know, giving me a cheering, like, yay, Lieutenant Miller saved the airplane. But I knew a much different reception was waiting for me in the writing room. And, so, so I went down there and there was no one in the writing room, but my commanding officer, he's waiting

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:50:19] for me.

Oh, and before you go on, I'm feeling like anxiety from you. Tell him this story because it's so intense. But I think all of us have driven a car on the ground where we're safe and we're like, Oh man, I need to make it to the gas station. Yeah. And pitcher that time is what? 10,000. What you're doing? Life,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:50:37] death.

Your

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:50:38] \$2 million,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:50:39] you're gonna, you're gonna. H had I missed for rural, Ben waved off, I would've ejected next to the ship and there goes, you know, multimillion dollar warplane the chances are I would've survived is a beautiful, clear day and I would have been picked up by the helicopter right away.

And my life would have been absolutely changed. But,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:50:57] so you get to the room,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:50:59] get in the ready room, there's a CEO sit down. Yes sir. nice landing. Now, what the, any, the, what were you doing out there? And, you know, and, and I, I hadn't shaved in a couple of days. I'm bleary eyed and. That sounds like an excuse I guess, but, but, you know, come with me.

So I follow him. We go to the Airwon commander's office and then everyone is there. Everyone is in the air when commanders,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:51:21] officers, everywhere,

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Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:51:23] the whole, all the staff there, cause you know, this, this, this guy is going to get yelled at here. We want to watch this. And so I'm standing there in front of the wing commander and he said, any is he's holding his thumb and forefinger, you know, quarter inch apart.

He says, Kevin, you came this close to losing your airplane and maybe your life. And my CEO said he's grounded CAG, and I was sent to my room, essentially, I'm 25 years old now, sent to my room without any supper.

And, and I'm, I'm so, I'm like, Oh my gosh. And, it was bad. The next day I go into the ready room and, and, and people are kind of, kind of avoiding me, you know, this is, this is pretty serious, but, I, I see that, I'm on the flight schedule. So get back up on the horse. you learned your lesson. Yes, sir.

Okay. Don't do that again. And so I would tell that story throughout my career on every deployment I made, I told that story to, to the new guides come up, including when I was a commanding officer. I would tell what I did as a young Lieutenant. And yes, the personal responsibility. You're flying the airplane, do the right thing.

Fess up. Yes.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:52:36] So to the listener, you may not be a Naval aviator, but we can carry these same principles into our own life. Go through the checklist of what should be there. Make sure we're paying attention to what we need to do in our details and our personal responsibility and take responsibility for our own actions.

Is that correct? Am I

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:52:55] missing anything? You know, I, I, I pulled a fast one. I didn't, I didn't, I, I was in extremis and I, and I should have worn someone so they could have, a tanker could have been sent to me or any number of things that they could have cleared out the landing area. Okay. You got priority, didn't do that.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:53:11] Well, I'm glad it worked on your hair, J

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:53:14] and yours. Just last year, I saw the, that the museum here, I saw the, A man who was the air boss at the time, and I probably gave him several gray hairs that afternoon. but you know, we, I said, Hey, thank you so much. I hadn't seen him in all those years. And he said, Oh gosh, it's so good to see, and we can laugh about it now.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:53:31] Yeah. Well I'm glad. I'm glad. Sorry. So pick up with your story. So now you have. A career and your

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:53:39] career, and made a couple of deployments a transition to the FAA teen Hornet, which was a joy to fly. And gosh, it was, it was, you know,

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:53:48] briefly describe the differences in the aircraft.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:53:50] The FAA teen, the two after burning engines, it could turn on a dime.

It was equally at home, dropping bombs in the air. And so now I'm an instructor, in, in the FAA T. and so I learned how to fly it, and then I started instructing it. the, the, the cockpit was, was, was easy to manipulate and I've got all this information. It was just terrific. And, I'm a landing signal officer, so I'm teaching, day night carrier landings.

So again, through my experience now, I'm an instructor and I'm teaching guys how to land on the ship at night primarily, and, high standards. You gotta have high standards. And so, you know, we're, we're pushing you. And, you know, some guys, you know, struggled with it so they, they get extra time. And, and, you know, we wanted everyone to get through.

I mean, you know, these guys had their wings, millions had been spent on their training, and we don't want to wash them out. We want to get you through. and, and we did. And, This was right during the time of desert shield, which then became desert storm

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:54:47] and that was during the 90s, correct?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:54:49] Right. In the late nineties exactly.

The early nineties, early 1990 and then in 91. And, At that time, I was assigned to a carrier, so I left my, my shore duty instructor job and I was assigned to a [00:55:00] carrier, the only Atlantic fleet carrier that did not participate in desert storm also. So I've watched desert storm on, on TV, but, but many, many of my friends were, were there and, and served, in lost a couple and just, just shocking.

And you know, how, you know, gosh, the last guy. So good. It's such a, such a great guy. How, how can this happen? Again? It we can't explain it. How, how God, how God works that way. And, you, you struggle with it. And, and, we put on our blue uniforms and, and go and, you know, to the Memorial service. theirs, it's theirs.

It's very rare that there's a body in, in a, in military aviation and, we, you know, we'll, we'll, we'll never forget our, our fallen comrades. Yeah.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:55:56] All right, so that brings up another story. When you were at the Pentagon and it was nine 11. So kind of bridge your career between that point and nine 11 cause you were at the Pentagon on that horrific day.

Correct.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:56:16] And

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:56:16] luckily I'll let you tell a story. So bridges to that point,

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Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:56:20] throughout the nineties I flew Hornets in Jacksonville. And a B Rose through the ranks and, and a commanded a squatter. and this is in the late nineties, and a wonderful years, and just, had three children during this time. And.

And, it was, it was just a, you know, squadron life was wonderful. It was a, a very close knit, tight knit. Lifelong friendships wouldn't trade it. But, you know, the flying days end, it's a young, younger man's younger woman's game now. And, all roads lead to the Pentagon. And, I went to war college and, and, In Rhode Island and then went back to the Pentagon. And, so I was, I was there on nine 11 and I was, I was a Pentagon staffer. I'm pushing paper and you know, okay, gosh, I sure wish I was in a flight suit again, but you know, you, you, you adapt. Maybe I'll get to wear to flight suit again one day. But, September 11th, beautiful summer day and life was pretty good.

We had recently come back from a, from a family vacation with many of our, our squad and friends and, and, so, so one of the guys says, Hey, you see what's happening in New York? And so there, there's a TV on the office. I went to the TV and looked, and you could see the North tower burning. My first thought was, okay, this is an accident.

And, but it's such a, I don't get it. But to what's going on here. So I'm back to my desk, and then another guy said, Hey, they hit the second tower. And so you go in and you see this, the airplane going into the second tower, and there was no doubt. And I remember looking at my boss saying, this means war and we're next.

And 15 minutes later I'm at my desk again, just just thinking about this, thinking, what is going on. And simultaneously a shockwave came from my left to right, and a moved papers on my desk and inside an office building, and I kind of bounce in my seat from the vibration and you hear this

just like that. And we got up, looked at each other. Within a minute or two, we could start smelling jet fuel, the familiar smell . We turned off our, our machines and got our stuff, and it was like evacuating a sporting event. It was a, just a, you know, the Pentagon is like a, like spokes of a wheel. So we kinda went down this, this giant hallway, to, to the center of the building from where we could get on another spoke to go out of the building and, orderly evacuation and, and not, but just like, okay, what, what has happened here?

And we go outside and, and just a black plume. From, from the Southern part of the, of the, of the building. Again, something I've seen before from an aviation fuel fire. And, we found a three star Admiral who was not our Admiral, but you know, you'll work. We didn't know what to do. And, So we gather around him.

And at the same time we hear a boom and, and, and you've seen this, this is where we're part of the floors collapse in the burning part of the building. And so he, he just goes, disperse. Cause you know, again, he didn't know what to

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:59:27] do. There's no textbook on this at this point.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [00:59:30] It's just, you know, the South parking lot was just pandemonium at that time.

A cop says, get outta here. Another one's coming. And this I believe is flight 93 that we know that was, that was headed toward Washington. So, one of us had a car, most of us would commute to the building, to the bus or the Metro and up. One of us had a car. So we just kind of piled in and one of us had this new thing called a mobile phone.

and so we're, we're [01:00:00] heading on, on the surely highway South of the Pentagon and F sixteens are, are flying, does a couple of thousand feet over and we're listening to New York. We're listening to the radio and the world trade center is destroyed. We can't believe. And we're trying to call home, but we're like, Oh my gosh, gone collapsed.

Finally got through to, to my family and then finally got home about three hours after we left, just, just, you know, inching along on the traffic out of the building. the next day I put on my white uniform and went to the Navy annex, which was up on the Hill at the time. Pentagon is still on fire and,

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:00:37] most people don't understand that.

It wasn't like a. One and done. I took all, how long did it take for that fire went out?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:00:44] I would think 36 hours maybe. There was still smoke that morning as I, as I showed up.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:00:49] Yeah. It was a significant impact. It wasn't like, cause people have in their mind, Oh, a plane crashed and it's over and done. Oh yeah.

You know, like the rock, he can solve a whole mystery in two hours and save her the world. Yeah. It's not like that in real life.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:01:03] But that afternoon I drove to Alexandria to the family of, a guy that, that I worked with. and, I was with that family for, for the next several months to, to, to help them do whatever they needed, mr to be there.

you know, we'd, we take care of our own and, we, you know, through all the process, we were, we were burying our shipmates, into 2002. there's the, the identification process and then, you know, but, but going to funerals and, and worrying, wearing our, our, our blue uniforms to funerals was, pretty much the rest of 2001.

The country was so unified church that weekend, we had to park three blocks away. . It was just absolutely jammed hanging from the rafters the next week. Not so much the next week, not so much.

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Next week, probably normal but, but initially everyone went to church. Yeah. And it melted away. But, and then, the country was so unified, you know, in Washington.

But, and, and there was a overhead, Washington at night, you would hear fighters flying, you know, combat air patrol over Washington and New York. And they did this for many months. And, you know, I would wake up in the wee hours and you would hear a fighter engine and, and fighters have, you know, deep rumbling engines different than airliners and pick up on it.

It's like a mother hearing a baby, I'm sure. And, and that, that, that finally ended, we were unified as a country. I think. For six months and then it melted away.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:02:44] Yeah, and you bring up, like you said this a couple times and brings up a great point. You know, you're in service. And you saw combat, and then you're on the only

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:02:56] carrier.

I don't know,

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:02:58] like military. It doesn't go to desert storm.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:03:02] Yeah. And people would think, well, aren't you lucky? Aren't you lucky that you didn't have to go? But, but no, we wanted to go. You're willing, you're willing and ready to go. And we will, you know, all that, all that years of training and yeah, we want to.

T T to be involved and, and, people don't understand that. Certainly your, your family, Oh gosh, we don't, we don't want you to go and be in combat and, and so, okay, so you don't, I don't think that, that you have to willing, you're, you know, you know, bend over backwards to put yourself in that position, but if your unit is going, then absolutely, you're, you're going to go and want to go.

And, Again, I, I got a taste of that at, at, at the end of my career, the little, little, a little skirmish with the Iraqis in the late nineties, we were doing no fly zone patrols over Iraq throughout the nineties and into the two thousands. So I spent a lot of time, Bosnia was going on during this time.

And so lots of, lots of time, no flies on patrol. What

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:03:59] was combat like for you.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:04:03] it was,

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:04:03] cause again, is it movie or is it, yeah, this is real

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:04:07] magic. It's a great, great question. very confident. the first, first flight I was a squadron commanding officer and, and led an Airwing strike. So a couple dozen airplanes, and I'm the lead.

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And, We never flew better formation, never had better radio discipline. I mean, everyone is on there, and this is the wee hours of the morning, you know? But a combat for me as a military aviator. It's silent. It's just like you're in an airline seat and you can hear the ambient noise of the airplane.

You're looking out. The window is the airplane floats through the sky. Now, I was in my, my cocoon. I can see, you know, 180 degrees all around me and my little canopy. I can hear the engine, but you would see lights just like a, like flash bulbs going off or maybe just a, a spray of light, and this [01:05:00] is triple I anti-aircraft artillery and they're shooting at you.

Hmm. They, they could hear you coming and they just started shooting up into the air. But again, it's silent. You can't hear it in the movies, you know, you'll, you'll hear it. but, you know, there it is. I have a, another impression of, of being over the target area and my bomb is, is on its way to the target.

And I can sense lights going off underneath me. Just this muffled. And, and Ron, it's a night and run night vision goggles switch, which, which, you know, amplified light. . So, you know, you can, you can kind of sense that. And we were, they obviously missed. Okay. But, but yes, silent

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:05:39] in your mind, is it, your training prepared you, you're just kind of going

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:05:44] on training.

Training prepares you, and so you, you fight like you train . And you can't just say, all right, well, once we get into combat, we'll just, we'll just suddenly amp up our game and it doesn't work that way. You have to have practiced, practiced in flight, refueling. If nothing else practiced, a rendezvous is flying formation.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:06:06] By the way, talk about inflight fueling. That's on. Some people have never even heard the

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:06:10] concept of,

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:06:11] you're talking. Explain that to people because. This isn't just parking kindly at the gas station and filling your tank. Explain what you're discussing here.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:06:21] Yeah. again, routine operation, for us typically, off the catapults, you go overhead the ship and you rendezvous on the tanker does day night.

So what does a tanker, oftentimes it's a, it's another carrier airplane and it's outfitted with a fuel tank. That has a little hose at the end of it, and this hose has paid out into the Airstream. It's a basket. And so, I have an inflight refueling probe on my aircraft, so I'll extend that and, and I fly my probe into this basket and we're going about 250 miles an hour

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David Pasqualone, Host: [01:06:51] to 450 miles,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:06:53] but it's all relative.

So you just kind of stabilize behind and then just kind of a little bit of power and you fly the probe into the basket and it takes fuel. Now sometimes. the air is turbulent and that basket is kinda kind of moving around and in a couple of, you know, left dried up down. And so you kinda, you're, you're flying your airplane and kind of doing your best to put your probe there and then you kind of give it a shot and, you, you might hit it good or you might, might miss or maybe lip it, you hit the edge of the basket and then the probe comes off.

And now the basket is flailing in the, in the, in this 250 mile an hour slipstream it goes left and right for a stables out. you, so you know, you in the, in the receiver airplane, you kind of push, push away and get away from that while the oscillating basket. But you got to try again because that's where the fuel is and fuel is time.

and if you don't get your fuel, if you're going to, you're not going to be able to participate in the, in whatever you have to do. it's because it's a routine thing and, and we do it day and night and, and it's, it's a, it's a lot of fun, but when you really need gas, or the few times in my career that I really did.

And, okay, I've got to, I've got to do it now.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:08:04] I see 200 not like to an outsider like me, that's just mind boggling. It you have to giant. I mean, these aren't like little Hugo cars here. I mean, you have two giant vessels in the sky flying. Very close relationally. I mean, very close. 250 miles an hour with two tubes connecting and you're filling up

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:08:26] in the sky and at night, at night, and at night you, you see this, a cluster of lights.

You can't see the airplane, but to some cluster of lights. And, you, you watch your altitude and you just join on this cluster of lights. And then it kind of shows itself into, an outline of an airplane. And, and, I'll, I'll signal to the pilot with a flashlight, he'll signal to me, there's nothing set on the radio and, and get the fuel you need.

And, and, away you go. And so, so all of that, all that precision and, and capability, it, it begins in training. It begins with the brief.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:09:01] and like you said, you, I always heard you play how you practice, but you fight like you train. And again, all of our listeners, you don't have to be a Naval aviation expert to be living these out.

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I want to go back to that though. Again, you had the willing heart and it's so many men and women in the military with a willing heart to go to combat. You're just the hero on the inside. But what I keep observing is God doesn't cause heartache and pain. He might allow it for our purpose, but he's not causing anything.

And when people will say, well, why did this happen? It's hard. We've all had hard, horrible

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:09:36] things happen to us.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:09:37] Right? But that's because of Satan in the sin in the world. That's not because of God's will and his love. So I want to make sure our listeners can differentiate that because the, the cause of pain isn't God.

That the peace is from God. The pain is from the sin and the evil in the world. But thinking about this,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:09:58] the

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:09:58] one terror [01:10:00] that doesn't get deployed, you're in the Pentagon. Wow. It's attack. And now you're sitting here, we're drinking coffee together and, and hearing your story, she's gone as his hand on you and has a purpose.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:10:14] Absolutely. So

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:10:15] talking about this, you go from, and we're going to, just for the sake of time, you go from the military. To consulting. Is there anything specific you want to talk about that or do

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:10:26] you want me to finish my career in legislative affairs? So, I wore a suit, a business suit, and I would, work with Congress.

I'd spent time on Capitol Hill with staffers, professional and personal, and help them with their Naval aviation questions. That was my portfolio. And we would go to factories where ships and airplanes are built. Or we would take them on tours of a basis and squatters and such and, and really enjoyed it.

And then from there and then so on. So I retired.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:10:58] Oh, here. Okay.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:10:59] In, on Monday morning, I, after our, my, my Friday retirement, I, I went to work for a defense consulting company. Hey, we're wearing the same suits and, and now it's, clients, constituent clients that, that, that would make a widget that, that the, the military would need.

And so I would help them. To, to market that, to, to the fleet and business development. And, I enjoy that. Still working with the same staffers to, you know, is there, is there a, is there money in the budget

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R and D money to, to test this widget? that, that was, that was a fun experience. People think that, Oh my gosh, you know, what we're talking about is lobbying.

or talking about our R plus subs, member ads, and R, someone say pork. This is pork. but, but the way it works is, the Congress has an allotment for the military. Okay. Now let's say, here's this, you know, multi hundred, a billion dollar chunk of money. This is your . And you are going to work within that, that huge chunk of money.

But sometimes programs, they can't, they can't spend all the money that they've been given in a given year. Just the way it works. So there's a couple, three, 5 million that is available out there for projects. Like, let's, let's test a, a new uniform that's kind of non microbial. It could act as abandoned.

So like, you're wearing a bandage, you know, could this be helpful on the battlefield? The answer's yes. So that, that's, that's just one example. And there's many, Oh, absolutely. How this works. And so I did that for five years, before I came down here, as a not for profit executive at the Naval aviation museum foundation.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:12:36] Yes. And for those of you who have not been to the Navy, the Naval aviation museum, it's beautiful. But Kevin actually had. A huge influence in starting an amazing program. So I want to talk about that and I want to get into where you're at today because everything to date that we've listened to is in that same line from nine years old.

I want to be a pilot. And you've stayed in that realm, in that world, and then listeners don't know. Yeah. But now you have this other side. So go to the Naval Aisha museum. Talk about what you're

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:13:08] able to accomplish. Those, a, a, an exciting time. the Centennial of Naval aviation is going on and, and, and the, the museum is that the third largest aviation museum in the world.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:13:19] And it's beautiful and well done. If you haven't been there,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:13:21] it's gorgeous. Absolutely. Is a, you know, hundreds of thousands of people a year visited to us. Close, close to a million, you could round it up to a million.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:13:31] I think we go at least at least twice a year on a bad year, and sometimes four times.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:13:35] There's, there's always something going on there. And, and, it was, it was a, for, for a passionate guy like me, a terrific place to work during this time, this thing called the national flight Academy. Was under construction. And I get, I got there while the building was under construction. And this is a building next to the museum that, it's a weird looking building, but, but inside it, it looks, sounds, smells like the interior of an aircraft carrier.

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And this has simulators inside it and, VR radar control rooms and briefing rooms, if you will. And what is designed to do is to imbue seventh through 12th graders with STEM principles, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, using the wonder of flight. And in this case, with, with Naval aviation as the, as, as the, the, the, the background here.

so the, the way that works is that, Campers, if you will, again, since seventh through 12th graders will spend a week there. And, there's, there's a, there's a cost for that, obviously, but, but the, the money's made will go to support the Naval aviation museum to tell the story of Naval aviation. So that's how the, the, the Navy has allowed this to be built.

And, when I was there, the building was complete, but now we have to have a program . So, the university of West Florida was a [01:15:00] partner in this, and also a company in Orlando, that, that was involved in, in theme parks and the entertainment industry. and so, so these, these are very creative people, so we learn through stories.

So how, what story are we going to use to, to get the, the, the kids excited about this. So they, they looked at this building and, and said, I know we'll make it a spaceship.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:15:25] Okay.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:15:27] And, and we can, we can do this and that. That's a marketing person talking or anything. And, and, so the, those of us on the foundation, no, no, this is.

You know this, this is, this is an aircraft carrier, and the missions are not combat missions. They're not, but here's an example. search and rescue. So I would be in a meeting and say, well, we, you know, we could have a, a, a fishing boat is lost. A father and children is lost and they're out in the Gulf of Mexico and we got to find them.

So we can, we could have a latitude longitude and we could give each, each simulator crew a 30 degree wedge, let's say from three, six zero to zero, three zero, zero three, zero. To zero six zero out to a hundred miles and, and, and sir set patch of water in the creative Geyser is writing this down. Oh my gosh.

This is just like, Oh yeah, we can do it, you know? And so, so I got to be part of the creative team using, using my, my understanding of, of what you can do that's not combat to, to excite people

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:16:24] and, okay, let's go there. What did that trigger in you that I'm taking, this was a catalyst for today,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:16:28] correct? yes, the, the creative juices and, and, yes, I've, I've been

Creative, all my life, beginning with drawing. And I would like to draw stuff. And, and I, I have an artistic ability that I've, I've kind of let lapse, but, but that, that's one example. Writing is, is another one in. And

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I knew that, that, you know, I've certainly written professional things in the course of a career and, and some professional essays that were published, but, but I'll just, the day to day administrative writing that you have to do.

And, and was confident of, of my, my abilities there. But, but yes, I wrote scripts, plural, involving, you know, ships colliding and sinking, or is there's fires that we have to put out. There's, there's, there's this and that and

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:17:17] these true experiences. Are these based on fit, is it fiction based on fact, or is it.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:17:23] Straight off the bat. I think it's, it's just, I think it's fiction based on, okay, you know, D D do ships collide at? Yes, they do. Sometimes merchant ships. Okay. What if a merchant ship collided with a cruise ship? And now we have thousands of people that are at risk and maybe the ship is sinking, they gotta be rescued.

the other ship is burning and maybe got to put out the fire. And so we have our, our simulators that we, that we built over there. And, and these, these simulators can do any, and, So we would have a, again, the the, the middle schoolers, our high schoolers, they would say, okay, we have to fly this far.

We have to carry this much a payload, let's say water to put out the fire, or we have to carry this much weight in people back. Do we have the fuel? How long will it take? How many trips do we have to make? All of those, remember all those fifth-grade war word problems? You know, the train leaves Chicago traveling West at six miles an hour.

You know. And I, I guess I did pretty good those problems, although at the time in fifth grade, I don't think I liked him, but, but, but aviator is, do those word problems in their head all the time with fuel, time, distance and, and, and what have you. So, that's an example of what we did.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:18:33] All right. So now you finish, that's a great, phenomenal program.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:18:40] the kids love it. They absolutely do. And, and, that it's unforgettable for them. It is teamwork, but it, it excites them about, science and technology. And, and maybe some of them will, will go into a STEM field. It, it was not designed as a recruiting tool. People often think that it is and it's not, but, but you know, you can, you can go and apply yourself in school.

And this, this math can be pretty fun.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:19:06] No wonder, great, great opportunity, great experience. You meet new people and it's

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:19:11] team against team and it's all, all fun competition. They have their little, little colored shirts that they wear. yeah, they, they love it. It's a huge success.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [01:19:20] So now you finish at the Naval museum and now you are facing, all right, I have a passion I love and I got to fulfill through my life.

I'm a creative guy and I enjoy this. Those projects are the Naval aviation museum. That kinda sparked that creativity and lit it back up inside of me. Now what happens?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:19:44] Well, after I retired in 2005 a friend said, you should write a novel. And I, I waved and white get out and he put his finger on my chest.

No, you need to write a novel. So I thought, you know, maybe I will, maybe I'll write a novel or I'll write a [01:20:00] story. And, and, you know, th th the kids can have it if nothing else, but we'll see. So over the course of, of several years, I would write, I just in a frenzy on the weekend, the 7,000 words, and then I would put it away for months and pick it back up.

I gotta I gotta work on this. And about four years after I started, I sprinted to the finish. And when I was done, I thought, wow, I've really got something here. And so I started shopping it around and I had a friend, a warn Carol, who had written a, a Naval aviation trilogy. And so he kind of gave me some pointers and I shopped it around New York.

The way it works is you've got to get an agent first. You can't go right to Harper Collins. You go, you find an agent represent you, that that will take into a publishing house. And so, you gotta find an agent that does fiction, military fiction. We'll take a first time novelist, you know, is open to that.

So it's kinda kinda narrows the universe. But I would find them and I would send them a query letter and I'd pitch it and, and oftentimes they would say, okay, send me some, send me a chapter, send me the whole thing. And, I would get feedback most of the time. I think they, anyway, I got feedback and I said, okay, look, you, you have some ability, but this is for me now.

Or, this, this needs work. I'm sorry, but you know, but they would almost always say, keep trying. . So, but, but once you were rejected by an agent, you're rejected school. So you've got to keep finding new ones. In the meantime, I met some people through the foundation and then met someone through leaders to, that could help me find the right publisher and find an editor for it.

that came together. And in the summer of 2014, Raven one. Well was published.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:21:49] All right. Yes, and that's when we met at Penn school leaders. Yes. It's a great, just for the listeners, it's the oldest networking association in Pensacola. It's for business, and Kevin and I were both there for different reasons, and that's actually how we met.

So I'm very thankful for Pensacola leaders. Okay, so you get Raven one, it all comes together

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Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:22:09] in ruins. So you go, you go on Amazon. Amazon Kindle direct publishing, and it's basically you hit enter on Amazon and there it is. It's out there. Now. Certainly you need to spend monies on editing, on a professional cover, formatting.

And I had formatting help through my publisher, Jeff Edwards at brave ship books. And once we got it in the, in the right formats, you hit hit enter. And it's there. And, so within weeks review started coming in and they were glowing positive and I had no idea. And, and, and they, they came in review after review.

This is incredible. What a story. And in Raven one is a story of a, a pilot in a squadron, in the Persian Gulf. And he has a commanding officer who is terrific. And the second in command executive officer is like a homicidal maniac. And so there's, there's that dynamic there. And, and it is a detailed look at squadron life.

And, and S is very detailed. And in some readers say, Oh my gosh, you know, all this detail. Is, it's kind of overwhelming, although I do give a glossary, but most readers appreciate it. Okay. You're, we're gonna, we're gonna immerse you in this world that we've just been talking about. People would ask me in my career, you know, what does it like to be a pilot?

Wow, that's cool. You're a pilot. Wow. What is that like and how do you answer that question at a cocktail party without, you know, taking over for the next, for the rest of the party and you can, so I said, okay. Well, it's pretty cool. I'll, I'll bet. I'll bet. It's cool. And that helps them. But with a book with a novel that you can get lost in your, you're immersed in and you're living it.

And, and Raven one has been downloaded primarily on, on, on Kendall. And there's, there's hard, hard copies and audio book, but a well over 30,000 I thought, probably close to 40,000 downloads around the world. And it's a genre, number one, and in three countries. Wow. Anyway, it's,

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:24:16] yeah, you were a top 30 international bestselling author, correct.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:24:21] Last month, it, in, in all of Amazon, I, I ran a promo and it hit number 33 in all of Amazon there, there's, you know, 10 million titles monster. So, so this is, I mean, it's pretty cool. And, so, you know, for, for a time, you're, you're up there with, with the Gricean of the world and, and Stephen King and.

And, and, and those, those types of guys, James Patterson, and, I th I liken it to a, you know, I'm, I'm proud to be an independent writer and having success with it. but it's, it's like, a ballplayer going to the major leagues for a cup of coffee. And, But anyway, the, the way to, the way to get [01:25:00] higher and that is just keep, keep writing books.

So I've, I've written a couple of, follow-ons to Raven one. they're totally separate stories, different parts of the world, but, keeping some of my main characters, following them through their careers.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [01:25:12] Well, let me ask you a question then for the listening audience. They're learning a lot today, but if you had one message takeaway for them right now, how would you summarize this all?

So you went from being a pilot to working as a consultant to now you're rekindling that creative juices and everything's a challenge. It's not easy, or everybody would be doing it, but for the listen right now, how would you. What would you advice would you give them?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:25:44] Well, it, it's, you know, find your passion.

And, and for, for me, it was enable aviation and I was able to, to, you know, do some my talents and, and right. And again, did, didn't know what, what happened, but, the, the, the response was such that I want to keep, keep doing this and, and writing the stories that I want. I'll, I'll have another novel out next year.

It's going to be a historic fiction. Okay. About the world war II, battle of midway. there's a movie just recently came out about that. but, but this novel that I've written is going to be historic fiction. All along the lines of Michael share is the killer angels about the battle of Gettysburg, about the real men who fought it.

And some of the conversations they would have, all fictionalized, but, you know, but certainly believable. So like Sherra and his son who followed him. I haven't changed any facts. And, and, but I, but I am going to give voice to some of the, to some of the, the real men in this case who, who were there and, and, and fought it.

And I, I want to bring that battle to life. And again, my, I, I'm known for the detail and an immersion. We're, we're gonna, we're going to be able to be transported back to 1942 and this is what really happened. Awesome.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:27:03] So you didn't just, Hey, I'm going to do this and do it. But you had to take that first step, and that first step is probably the hardest.

So would you say, or

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:27:12] it's certainly hard and to, to write a novel. It's hard. I mean, I'm not a marathon runner, but friends who know me say, yeah, you're right. But, I, I imagine it's like running a marathon. You know, just completing a marathon is a monumental achievement. And so to, to complete a manuscript and publish it is a monumental achievement.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:27:32] But to the audience, you'd see it starts with the step and you just keep

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Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:27:36] going. You know, you, right now it's, it's a, it's a great time to write. And if you've got a story in you, I, I would, I would try it, but, but sure. It's, it's, yeah, sure. I'll, I'll write a book. There's a lot more than that. And, and, would certainly encouraged anyone to, to, if, if you think you want to try to write a book, or do you want to be a Naval aviator when you grow up?

Or, or to be a, a, a corporate trainer, I'll give it a shot. You know, and it's, it's your passion and, and you're gonna. You know, you'll never work a day in your life. And which is, we just kind of tried. I mean, you know, you know, there's, there's some drudgery in publishing. I mean, you know, the words don't always flow and, and editing is in, is a huge part of it, but, but absolutely wouldn't, wouldn't trade it

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:28:27] for the writing specific.

Is there a book on writing a book or is there a brand that you'd recommend?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:28:33] Yeah, Stephen King's on writing.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:28:36] Stephen King's on writing. I'll put this in the show notes.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:28:39] Yeah. On writing is a, was very helpful to me. there's another book. I forget the author now you're, you're listening to no bird on bird. but, but certainly those, those types of, those types of books are going to be helpful. And I, I imagine it all kinds of stuff on the net. I mean, it's, there's everything on the net. But, but, I, I would recommend a Stephen King's on writing as a, as a place to start.

My, my brother-in-law was a New York city cop, and he had a way with words, so he went out to Hollywood and he's been on several shows. Wow. Like CSI New York and Hawaii. Five-O as a writer. I mean, there's, there's this, an insatiable appetite for police stories in Hollywood. And you know, I've write genre fiction and military techno thrillers, and there's an insatiable appetite.

And that's another area. You know, am I competing against, say, a Steven Coons, Clive Cussler, the late Tom Clancy and the guys that write for it? Am I competing in it? And I would say no because there's plenty of, you know, people go to a movie. That was great. When can I go to another movie? That was a great novel when I want to read another one.

And if this, if this, if a author writes another one, terrific. But, but while that author is writing. There's other ones that are available and published that I can read right now. Anders, there's absolutely a market out there

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:29:57] because you don't produce a novel in a weekend.

[01:30:00] **Kevin Miller, Guest:** [01:29:59] It's, yeah, I don't, I'm slow. I, you know, I, I, I write big books and I cannot lie.

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They're their, their epics. They, I, and I think probably more James missioner that, that really gets immersed in a subject then say Clive Cussler, who's very prolific. And, and, and churns it out, or writers like that. And, and they're both great.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:30:24] All right, well let's do this. Bring us to today. Where is Kevin Miller today and what projects are you working on now?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:30:31] this afternoon I'm going to be editing, with my wonderful editor, Linda Wasserman. my new novel, I've entitled it the silver waterfall, and this is my battle of midway novel that will come out in June of next year. Nice. Also this afternoon, I'm going to be working on the Raven one video game,

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:30:50] video

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:30:51] game, video game.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:30:52] What's that? Oh, Ooh, new,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:30:54] video gamers found Raven one, several years ago. And, and, and these are the guys, these are the, the, you know, forgive me, but you know, the, the Walter middies who have an FAA teen cockpit in their basements, you know, we don't have a lot of basements, but they, they've got the whole set up.

And, These guys have a, a software for the FAA team. And I'm told, and I, I agree that they're better than I was. I mean, they, they, they, they really get into it. Sometimes they, they put on headsets and they'll talk to each other fly formation. You know, a guy in Iowa and a guy here in Florida and California, it's, it is incredible.

The technology we

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:31:33] have today is incredible. There's almost no excuse not to be able to succeed

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:31:38] is amazing. So a digital combat simulation in, in many, I think most everyone has heard of or seen Microsoft flight simulator. So something like that. A higher end. It's not candy crush on your phone.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:31:49] And that we're

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:31:49] talking about here.

So, so that exists. And so, but a, a crew of guys and in some former aviators out in California and a coder who lives in Brussels of all places, we, we found ourselves and, putting together, the Raven one mission

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sets. So there'd be 15 missions taken from the novel, and, and they're doing a terrific job of being true to the novel.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:32:13] Wow. That's hard to find.

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:32:14] Yes, we're working in this digital, you know, here's the digital limitations and there are some limitations, but, but, you know, keeping this the story, and again, it's, it's a story that the, the players of, of the, the Hornet video game, they've read Raven one they love, they read the others, and, and they just love it.

They can't wait to be the characters that they know from, from the novel. It, it's surreal to me to, to see this. And so this afternoon though, I just got another Microsoft spreadsheet. And, and I'll go through it and I'll say yes, that, yes, that's, yes, no, let's change this. Yes, yes. And, and they'll, they'll make the proper corrections and it's gonna be amazing.

So that'll be out, second quarter of next year.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:32:56] So right around the time of the book. Yes. Wow. I'm excited for you. You're, you're inspiring, man. This is great because you're working hard. You have a focus, but at the same time, you're just watching the fruit just come out of it that you don't even expect.

Just from God

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:33:11] just been blessed. I found a much better balance in my life than I had, than I had as a professional, you know, working, you know, in, in an organization. Those were, those were wonderful years. But, there was a time that, that God grabbed me and said, you need to focus on me. And yes, and my life is so much better now.

And, and, obviously a work in progress as we all are. But, but, it is, it's gratifying to, to write people enjoy it. having fun with, with all these projects and, and enjoying my family and, and this, this stage of my life, Very, very blessed.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:33:50] That's awesome. Well, is there anything else that you wanted to share today that we didn't cover?

We can come back and once your new book and video games are leaving to do a follow up, but is there anything you wanted to discuss today or closing thought with the audience?

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:34:04] Yeah. You know, we talked earlier in the podcast about cultures and, cultures can be changed and, a couple times. Working with the companies, some larger and some smaller, was able to imbue this culture just, just through, just through a talk and in one company, a local company, the, the, the boss came to me several months ago and says, you know, Kevin, you visited us

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several months ago, and initially we didn't really move out on it, but our people a while back started using this briefing and debriefing technique that you taught us, and now we're all doing it.

You've changed the culture of our company and in a, it can be done. And, and, there's, there's a cottage industry of, of people out there that, that, that do this. And they talk to corporations or they work with small groups of people. And I'm working with a guy out in California right now. We might, we might go into business together, to do [01:35:00] this, but, but, organizations like this, they like to, you can, how, how can, how can we better.

Improve, the, the culture of excellence. How can we better improve our, our teamwork and that, and that is all the stems. From what I learned here when I, when I showed up in November of 1981.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:35:18] Well, thank you for sharing with us today. you truly have a remarkable story and it's been great to get to know you much better today.

And, for our listeners, make sure you check out the show notes. there'll be the links in there that we discussed. Check out Kevin's book and be prepared for the new book and the, video game for those gamers out there. And also, I have one more question that I have to ask you. Huge controversy right now.

You've been in the sky, man, is the world round,

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:35:48] I assure you. It is.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:35:49] I know it is, but just if anybody out there is done, I mean, the world is round from an expert who has spent thousands of hours and this guy. All right, Kevin, it's been a pleasure. Thanks for being here

Kevin Miller, Guest: [01:35:59] today. Thank you so much.

David Pasqualone, Host: [01:36:00] I appreciate you and to our audience.

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Intro/Outro Reel: [01:36:31] The remarkable people podcast. Check it out.

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