

AACONS Interviews Ryan Weaver

Narrator: [00:00:00] Welcome to African American Conservatives, the soul of the conservative movement. Your source for news and commentary from a cultural and right of center perspective. African American Conservatives.

Marie Stroughter: Welcome to African American Conservatives, the soul of the conservative movement. I'm your host, Marie Stroughter, reminding you to go to aacons.substack.com. There you will find links to this podcast. We hope you will subscribe, follow, like, all of the things that you know to do. Uh, you'll find our social media platforms, and also our commentary.

I've been looking forward to the show because Ryan Weaver is a friend of some mutual friends of mine, and I got hipped to his music through some of those [00:01:00] friends, and his story is so compelling to me.

He is a military veteran, a former Black Hawk aviator who served in Iraq, a Gold Star family member twice over, having lost his older brother and a brother-in-law in action. He's also a country music star and his latest release, a moving tribute to his older brother, Aaron is called "What You Think of Me."

I am delighted to welcome to the show, Ryan Weaver. Ryan, welcome to the show.

Ryan Weaver: Nice. Uh, thank you so much for having me. I appreciate it.

Marie Stroughter: Now, your family, like that of our mutual friend, Allen West, is devoted to country through military service. How is that ethos inculcated, do you think?

Ryan Weaver: Both of us obviously had careers in the military and the discipline, the drive, the success that you want to [00:02:00] have while you're in the military, uh, is, I mean, obviously starts at basic training.

He had time at West Point as well. Um, I was, I came straight out of high school, so I didn't have college before I went into the military, but, um, you know, it's been a huge, huge factor when it comes to the career that I've had since in the in the music industry because it takes a lot of discipline. It takes a lot of drive takes a a lot of planning, and it takes a lot of motivation, and I've definitely got a huge amount of motivation to have my two brothers in my corner, uh, and throughout every, any, any step that I take in my music career.

Marie Stroughter: The Black Hawk helicopter is well known, even among those of us who did not serve. What's it like to be an aviator for such an iconic vehicle?

Ryan Weaver: It was quite honestly, it was intimidating. Um, I, I, flight school for Blackhawk aviators when I went through was very short. [00:03:00] It was not a, uh, I think it was six weeks long, uh, to fly Blackhawks.

Now the rest of flight school that taught you how to fly the other smaller helicopters was, it took me a year and eight months to get through flight school. But, um, once you get in a Blackhawk, or once I got in it, it was, there's just so many. buttons and switches and noise. And it's, it's just a much more massive aircraft than the smaller TH 67s and the OH 58s, which were like the news helicopters that we learned to fly.

Um, most of my flight time actually came in combat. I spent most of my time, uh, flying the Black Hawk in combat. So it was a little bit more daunting, obviously, when you're worried about getting shot down or having to evade wires and birds and antennas coming up daily from people's houses, because we were westernizing Baghdad pretty quickly.

But, um, it was, it was, it's pretty awesome to say that I did it. I followed in my brother's footsteps. They both flew Kiowa Warriors. Um, And I follow in their footsteps that be an aviator, but my oldest Steve gave me the rec oldest brother, Steve gave me the [00:04:00] recommendation to apply Blackhawks because that's what he actually wanted to fly when he was going through flight school and the duty stationing opportunities.

And, uh, you know, just the mission itself was pretty exciting to me. So I took it.

Marie Stroughter: Well, I thank you for your service. I thank you for your brother's [service], your brother-in-law. It's amazing to see that kind of a legacy in a family. So your service is definitely appreciated.

Ryan Weaver: Thank you.

Marie Stroughter: Now, your new song, "What You Think of Me" is a tribute to your older brother Aaron, and it's become one of your most popular, with 55,000 views on YouTube in just two weeks.

We are going to play a clip of that now. Here is "What You Think of Me" by Ryan Weaver.

Ryan Weaver: So I take the pain and I push it down, Even though it hurts like the day I found out you were gone, you were gone. And it still [00:05:00] seems like yesterday, We were high up in that live oak tree, Blue skies above, the world at our feet, And I followed you, I followed you, You were everything. I wonder what you think of me.

Marie Stroughter: Tell us a little bit more about Aaron and the genesis for this song.

Ryan Weaver: Well, it's 20 years in the making because he, um, he was a passenger in a medevac helicopter, he survived Somalia, he was in the ambush in Mogadishu, uh, the movie Black Hawk Down was made after, and the story of Black Hawk Down. He was a cancer survivor, was non deployable, got a waiver to be deployed to Iraq.

Uh, he was an all American superhero. I followed, like I said, I followed in his footsteps. He was my standard bearer when it came to my military career and successes in my military career. But he was a passenger to medevac helicopter on the way to a bimonthly blood screening that was required by his waiver to be deployed when that [00:06:00] medevac helicopter was shot down.

I was actually in Iraq at the same time with the first armor division. He was with the 82nd Airborne and I flew home the next day to, um. Well, I, it took me four days to get home, but I left Baghdad that next day and never returned to combat, um, as the sole survivor act, um, applied in that situation, but, um, when we lost him, I had been singing karaoke and singing competitions in flight school and found out that it was something that I love to do, and after losing him, I no longer had his footsteps to follow in, so I needed to make my own.

And I started pursuing this dream in country music. So that was 20 years ago, um, on January 8th, this year. On January 4th was the last day I saw him alive. A female cavalry captain, Kimberly Hampton, was piloting a Kiowa Warrior on January 2nd when she was shot down and killed in action, and I flew her best friend from college over to her memorial service on January 4th, and I saw Aaron alive that day, and we released ""What You Think of Me"" on that day.

On the [00:07:00] 10th anniversary of Aaron's death, I wrote this song, "What You Think of Me", in my living room with Craig Wilson, who also passed a couple years ago as well. Um, and You know, it was a tribute to Aaron, but we

came out with the Celebrate America EP with the Professional Bull Riders in 2018, their 2017 18 season, and it really, because of "Burn" and the song that Allen West actually used for his campaign for governor, um, Because of "Burn's" success and what it what was going with it I didn't want to put out a ballad about Aaron until that song found its time and was was done moving Um, and I got picked up by professional bull riders and we wrote another song called "Never Forgotten" that was put on that album. I wanted to save "What You Think of Me" for Aaron. I didn't want "Never Forgotten" and what and the professional bull riders bought me out of my rights to the Celebrate America EP And I wanted to own "What You Think of Me" outright.

It was it was my [00:08:00] tribute to him. What --"Never Forgotten" if folks go watch that music video --It's also an amazing tribute to our fallen law enforcement first responders and military and our border patrol and law enforcement as well But uh "Never Forgotten" was played in every arena across the nation in 2017, 18, 19 and 17, 18 and 19 with the professional bull riders.

I wanted to wait for "What You Think of Me" til the time was right. And I couldn't think of a better day than the 20th anniversary of the last day I saw him alive to release it and was, I'm super proud of the project itself. The idea, the video concept has been in my mind for 10 years. It's been evolving as the 10 years have gone through.

And essentially when people watch the music video, they'll see that the football game that's played in there. It's a state championship football game. It's really, um, a metaphor for my music career and the kid playing me. Um, I never played varsity football. Aaron and I were too small. We ran track and cross [00:09:00] country after my 10th grade year.

I stopped playing football because I didn't grow. But this state championship football game and the relationship between Aaron. And his fam and Ryan and his family and their sister, Shannon, who is my younger sister. She plays his older sister in the video. It really, it encompasses all the different ideas of family and sacrifice and overcoming hardships and having to look at loss.

Uh, to fuel your fire, to want to be successful and to want to be better and want to achieve. Um, and that's, I hope when people see that, uh, in, in the video, they'll, they'll get the message. Well,

Marie Stroughter: It's definitely a moving tribute. As I said, I, I had tears, um, and knowing the story behind it, the fact that it was the anniversary, uh, makes it that more poignant, I think.

Ryan Weaver: Yeah, we I mean I wanted to I tried to release a lot of my videos with something else uh, you know in I mean that that it has to do with [00:10:00] whether it be a date or or the person somebody that's in it or whatever it may be and And one of the other cool things that I didn't get to mention and I believe you saw it in the performance scenes Dean Sam's the guy playing the piano in the performance scenes.

He's actually the founder of Lone Star, the band Lone Star and still currently playing with Lone Star. He produced the song and one of the the coolest things about this and coming full circle in a journey is the very first song that I ever sang in a singing competition or karaoke competition was Amazed by Lone Star that I won.

And for me to be able to have Dean Sams, the founder of Lone Star, um, who still plays with it, produce the song and be in the video with me, um, really was an awesome thing.

And now here we are in 2024, 24 years later, and I have him, uh, as part of this project is pretty empowered, pretty empowering and pretty powerful.

Marie Stroughter: Wow. What a story. And also the gentleman who plays the coach is a [00:11:00] warrior, a veteran also. So I really appreciated seeing those little nuggets in there.

Ryan Weaver: Greg Gadsden is a great friend of mine. Colonel Gadsden. A lot of folks may know him because he's the man that saved the world in the movie Battleship, uh, or helped save the world in the movie Battleship. He's, uh, an amazing human being. He and I've gotten to know each other over the last eight years and or so in doing nonprofit organization events and, and raising money for organizations that we believe in and, uh, hearing him speak, uh, multiple times.

He's just an inspiration. His story is incredible. But one of the stories that he tells when he does his speaking engagements is that the New York Giants, and I don't remember the year, but he they were owing to had not won a game and the wide receiver coach played football with him at West Point, and he called him up after he was injured that Greg was injured and.

Asked him if he wanted to come and speak to the team to, to give him a little bit of his background story and overcoming [00:12:00] obstacles. And obviously as he had, and Greg went and spoke to them and they went undefeated for the rest of the season and beat the Patriots in the Superbowl that year. So it's pretty incredible.

I wanted to have him. And when folks watch the video as well, what he had or what he said was not scripted, I wanted him, the kids had not met him yet. I told them a little bit of his background and his story. A lot of the kids had just played the regional championships and won, and were going to state for their high school football teams.

So, Greg coming in and talking to those kids, it was a life, hopefully a life changing moment for them because they're going to remember not only being part of a music video for the rest of their lives, but they're going to get to remember that they got to Listen to the great Greg Gadsden, uh, Colonel Gadsden, speak to them, uh, and motivate them, and hopefully it took them on to the state championships and they won there as well.

Marie Stroughter: Wow, what a cool story. Wow. Now, you said in your debut at the Grand Ole Opry "On January [00:13:00] in 2004, an angel fell out of the sky in a blaze of glory. My brother, CW2 Aaron Weaver was flying to Baghdad International Hospital when the Blackhawk helicopter that he was a passenger in was shot down and all nine souls on board perished.

And I came home to his funeral. That started my dream in country music. So in 2003, my boots were in the sand in Iraq. And today I'm standing in front of you on a stage at the Grand Ole Opry. I'm a true testament that dreams can come true in this beautiful country of ours."

I know you talked a little bit already about, uh, how that was the genesis for your, transition to country music.

What was it like in that iconic grand old Opry?

Ryan Weaver: Well, I was fortunate to be working with the late, great Charlie Daniels, and he actually introduced me onto the Grand Ole Opry, and that was September 11th in 2015, which is, was another, the fact that it was September [00:14:00] 11th was, it was, because that's what really, I mean, caused Aaron and I to go to combat.

Um, that's the reason why it was the, the, as you said, the genesis, the, the catalyst for the reason why we lost Aaron, because we, we went to combat because of 9 11, but I had, I had the opportunity to perform at the Ryman Auditorium, where the original Grand Ole Opry show was from, because a lot of folks don't know that the Grand Ole Opry is not a place, it's a show, um, the stage of the Grand Ole Opry was the Ryman Auditorium stage back in the day, and they moved it to the Opry House, where it is now.

So, But I, I had the fortunate opportunity in 2014 to open for Charlie Daniels on the Ryman Auditorium stage, which was absolutely incredible. It was the first time I'd ever walked out to a show, a sound check, and cried. Um, Bridgestone Arena at the Volunteer Jam, I performed between Ted Nugent and Michael W.

Smith in 2015, early in 2015. And then on September 11th, I got introduced onto the Grand Ole Opry for my debut. And the [00:15:00] coolest thing was I got to sing "What You Think of Me" And I got to tell Aaron's story on all of those stages and I made a promise to myself when I started in country music That I would always make a point on stage to tell Aaron's story because I didn't want anyone to forget and by that point We also had lost Randy because I spoke about Randy and at the beginning of it as well and Randy my brother in law was killed in action on December 17th in 2013 when the pilot or when the Blackhawk he was piloting was taken out of the sky by an IED on a mountainside.

And, um, you know, being able to tell their stories in those iconic venues and standing on the center circle of the Grand Ole Opry stage, I mean, obviously, that means the absolute world. That was, that was the pinnacle. I mean, I performed at Madison Square Garden, and I have to be honest with you, performing on the Grand Ole Opry stage, In the opry house with Charlie Daniels introducing me.

You just can't I mean it But it's it's hard to say that either one of those is a is a bigger thing for me [00:16:00] But you and i'm never going to have that happen again You only make one debut on on the stage of the grand opry and charlie daniels is no longer alive So being able to have those two things happen Obviously was a dream to me and i'll give you a little back backstory on that When I first moved to nashville and retired out of the military I I've got a job as a personal trainer, uh, working as a barback at the Wild Horse Saloon here in downtown Nashville and going to college full time.

I finished my bachelor's degree after I got out of the military, but, um, when you're doing the tour for being an employee of the Wild Horse Saloon, the

Opryland Hotel owned or owns the Opry House, but they also owned the Wild Horse Saloon. Well, you're doing the tour and you go into the Opry, onto the stage of the Grand Ole Opry.

And at the opera house and all these folks that are coming into town, they're obviously, I mean, there's tons of musicians and singers and songwriters and all that. And we're all coming in to find [00:17:00] jobs. So, I mean, there are probably 20 of us sitting there and they said, all right, if you guys are singers, here you are.

You have the opportunity to stand on the center stage of the Grand Ole Opry. And saying, you know, to the Opry house, who wants to do it? And you had several folks sitting up and a lot of folks knew that I was there for country music. They said, Ryan, you want to, you want to get up there and sing? And I said, no, I said, no disrespect to anybody else here, but I don't want to stand in front of that in the center of that circle until I've earned it.

And then the first time I got to stand on the center circle of the Grand Ole Opry was when Charlie Daniels introduced me on September 11th, 2015. So pretty incredible story.

Marie Stroughter: That is such a cool story. I want to pivot for a moment because you mentioned Randy and of course, you know the song we're talking about today dedicated to your brother Aaron And we mentioned in the intro, uh, that you are part of a gold star family twice over.

And of course there are blue star families. Talk to us a little bit about what we [00:18:00] as citizens can do to support our gold star and our blue star families.

Ryan Weaver: Well, there are a lot of non-profit organizations that are out there that do great things for our, our Gold Star families and, and the surviving families, because there's so many, uh, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors also handles toxic exposure, military sui or suicide for veterans, you know, the family members that are left behind, um, so they're, they're surviving, I like to call them surviving family members as well, so.

Um, they've lost tragically someone due to their service in one way or another, and whether it's P. T. S. took them out of this world, unfortunately, or toxic exposure took them out of this world, um, there are so many, you know, different opportunities for folks out there to support. My suggestion to most folks that are out there is really do your due diligence on researching these nonprofit organizations to support, uh, our, our surviving family members,

because there's so [00:19:00] many out there as a 21 year combat veteran, as a country music artist.

Now I get people all the time that want me to come and support their organizations. And the first thing I do is ask them for their paperwork. I want to see what their numbers are, where, where are their dollars going? Are they actually going to support, you know, veterans or, or, um, law enforcement families?

Are they going or law enforcement first responders? Are they going to support them? Are they going to administrative costs? Are they going to parties like the wounded warrior project did? And, and, you know, I, I tried to make sure because I don't want my name associated with any nonprofit organizations, um, that are not doing the right thing.

I've turned down a ton of, uh, opportunities to get in front of thousands of people and and speak for pay, you know for pay because I pay my bills speaking I pay my bills emceeing. I pay my bills doing concerts Um, i've had an opportunity to do that and i've turned down a lot of opportunities because the organizations were not Legit, um, I know [00:20:00] one great organization that helps out a lot of other smaller organizations the warrior shield foundation They're an incredible non profit organization.

I work with them. I've known uh known that organization since it started but they Raise funds for other non-profit organizations that are not just military, but law enforcement, first responder and military non-profit organizations. That's a great small one. There are other great large ones that are out there.

Back to Blue's, a good one. There's so many, uh, other organizations. And obviously you have to listen to the people that you trust when it comes to that. And then. Once again, do your own research and make sure that you know that you're getting involved with an organization that really is doing the right thing.

Marie Stroughter: That's so important. You're right. And you touched on, um, PTSD and you touched on the suicides. Talk to us a little bit about that because that is such a painful and. difficult subject. And, you know, I started a podcast recently, a separate one from this one talking about mental health [00:21:00] issues. Mental health issues are so important to me.

And I think that it's something that we don't talk about a lot. And I think no matter what administration, no matter where you sit on the political spectrum, I don't know of any administration that has done mental health well, I think that

that that's an area where we can still use a lot of help and guidance in terms of getting people the help that they need on a regular basis.

So talk to us a little bit about the suicides and the PTSD and those sorts of things and and the organizations. I know there are a few that are dedicated to those issues as well.

Ryan Weaver: Well, first, uh, if I, if I can, and not to get into the politics side of things, but policy side of things, I do know that, um, when Trump was in office, he signed in legislation to help out with the opioid addiction, uh, crisis that our veterans, he signed in millions of dollars to support VA had [00:22:00] one of the highest ratings it's had in a long time at a 90 percent approval rate from veterans.

Not from people outside, but from veterans. It had a high approval rate. So I can say that Trump did do some, uh, do some great things. Biden immediately canceled that opioid addiction program and the funding for it, unfortunately, because that is one of the biggest killers of our veterans now, because the amount of--

Marie Stroughter: I mean, isn't that odd, I mean, given the situation with his own son, I mean, I know we're not supposed to get, you would think, I don't know, you would think, but I mean, it's.

Ryan Weaver: I agree with you 100 percent on that, but the bottom line is this, I would say that in recent, you know, recent years, or recent presidents, I mean I served under Bush Sr., Bush Jr., Clinton, Obama, I mean I served under all those presidents, and the suicide Rate, you know from the Vietnam suicide rate. Those are probably the highest one highest Uh numbers that are that are taking their lives right now But outside of that the opioid addiction that we problem that we had With with all that [00:23:00] was happening is hey, you got a you got PTS.

Let me give you this drug Oh that drug's not working. Let me give you another drug. Oh those that those drugs. They they weren't working separately Let me give you both those drugs together. I mean that that's what the programs were turning into and that that needed to be, it needed to be combated just like every other problem that we have in the military, but this is massive and it's just getting, I mean, we're starting to see with the number of folks that were fired because of the vaccination mandates, with the number of folks that are suffering from vaccine injuries, with the number of folks that are dealing with the military now that With the focus more on, uh, D E I and gender problems and all this.

We're not, they're not the military itself is, is changing into a completely different environment. And I've got so many, and don't just take this from me as an outside person. I've got so many friends that are in the military that are just talking about how the morale is in the dumps. And if you, you go to serve your country, you sign on the dotted line [00:24:00] with the potential of losing your life and you have, um, Commander in Chief or folks above you that sincere, that genuinely don't seem to care about your welfare and your well being.

Your family members are dealing with this as well, and then you're looking around the world saying that we have countries all over. The suicide rate is not not going to stop climbing, unfortunately. So what do we do? What do we need to do to fix it? There are organizations like the American Soldier Network.

Annie Nelson, who has a suicide prevention hotline. She's also working on programs for alternative medicines. Alternate alternative methods for helping with the suicide rate or helping with suicide and getting people's demons in check.

Um, or at least for them to be able to understand what's going on with them. You know, obviously to me, that's an incredible, um, an incredible advancement, but it's incredibly important that we look at those issues and not just, I mean, as the military, we're all told to suck it up and drive on. I mean, that [00:25:00] was one of the most.

popular sayings in the military when things were tough, suck it up and drive on, keep your mouth shut, don't complain, don't go to sick call, don't do this, don't do that. And, you know, going through my VA disability, um, uh, program, excuse me, evaluation after, after the military, I realized that everything they were telling me not to do in the military.

Was a detriment to me outside of the military where the military didn't care about me anymore. Um, now imagine you have all these folks that get out of the military and they don't go through the process or haven't gone through the process, don't understand the process because it wasn't really well, um, explained while we were in.

They and they and they're living on the street, so they don't have anything and they don't know who to turn to. I think that I try to make my platform a place where if anybody's having any kinds of issues that they can, they can reach out and I can get them some help or at least get them connected with somebody who can help them.

Um, but then you're seeing all these folks that are even in my position who have the platform [00:26:00] That are advocates for suicide prevention suicide awareness taking their own lives So it's it's a it's a problem in this country. Obviously Biden's policy of removing programs that are going to support it the va uh rating gone back down in the tank again I think that we need to get Legislators up there who really genuinely want to support our military before it's too late before.

I mean, they're already having massive retention problems and massive recruiting problems, and it needs to be fixed. We need a leader back in the White House that actually can do that and legislators in our Congress that can make the legislation that will provide the opportunity for our military service members to thrive as opposed to want to kill themselves.

Marie Stroughter: You are absolutely right about that. I did serve on Black Voices for Trump and I was very happy to see, uh, all, uh, some of the issues that were, uh, egregious, just egregious. I mean, you were, you, you couldn't get on social media without seeing [00:27:00] horrible videos of the way that our service members were being treated in the VA hospitals.

And, and we do have Donald Trump to thank for fixing some of those issues with the VA. I am the parent of two children that I adopted as toddlers, uh, who do suffer from PTSD from issues stemming from their first family, um, and so I know firsthand how difficult it is to get the assistance that you need.

And, as you allude to the fact that medication is just pushed, pushed, pushed and not some of these other things. But it's easy to just hand a script to someone and say, you know, here, go do this rather than doing the cognitive behavioral therapy and some of the other things. And the equine therapy and animal therapy and some of the other, as you mentioned, the alternative types of therapies that there are.

And, you know, we're big believers in alternative meds here. I household, you know, we, we do a lot of the [00:28:00] aromatherapy and all these kinds of things too. So it's really important, I think to have kind of an integration between the two modalities because It's just, I think that that anecdotally it bears out that you see a greater response, but to have people who can genuinely listen to what you're going through, um, it saved my kids, you know, and so I think you're absolutely right to address some of those issues.

We've got to look outside of the box.

Ryan Weaver: Well, I think that one of the, uh, there are several different things that you can do to support, but an idea that I was, I just came, was thinking about while you were talking, the, a lot of folks out there, if they want to support and help with nonprofit organizations, look into the organizations that get military service members together to do, to, to have fellowship and to do things like the hunting outdoors, the fishing, the, you know, the, the hiking [00:29:00] trips, the different things like that, because it's, One of the I, and I think you would say, I don't know how many military service members before committing suicide always.

Or a great number of them felt that they had lost their purpose and that they didn't have a a reason And that was the reason you know the main one of the main reasons after the fact that you would attribute to their social media postings or Whatever they may have written in their suicide notes or whatever it may be But they they just felt like they no longer had a purpose.

They no longer had a family They know even though they had their own family there I can't have, as, as much as I love my wife and she listens to everything that I have to say, I can't have a conversation with her about some things and truly expect her to understand. But when you can be in a, around a campfire with your brother or sister that went, was in combat, and you can have those conversations and, and make dark jokes about it and, you know, and, but be able to relate with each other about All of the, the things that you went through, um, [00:30:00] those, those are invaluable opportunities to be able to save someone's life.

I have a buddy of mine that we go to several non-profit events together, and he says that he, I mean, he had been, I don't know, he had twice tried to commit suicide or attempted suicide. Um, he w- he felt that he was reaching out for help more than anything, and was he felt grateful that he didn't. You know complete the act but he said every every year when these events are over I feel this sudden loss of set, you know this drop of uh, the sadness and and then but then I Immediately start looking forward to the next event and that's what you know drives me to want, you know to continue and folks some someone may consider him weak for being that way, but um, I guarantee you that most of the people who who would think that way Have not never been through the things that he's been through or seen the things he's seen and Providing an opportunity for him to be able to talk about those things is extremely [00:31:00] important So those of you out there if you have the capabilities and I also you can reach out to me and say, "Hey, Ryan, can you give me some great outdoor organizations or outdoor non-profits

um that can that I can sponsor a military service member or sponsor a law enforcement officer?" Because law enforcement officers are dealing with this on a day-to-day basis, too um Please feel free to reach out to me and I'll I have several outdoor non-profits that do great work. They're local nonprofits that really Strive hard in their communities and you'll see that I would have 99 cents to every dollar doesn't go back towards uh, those events I'd be surprised.

Marie Stroughter: You mentioned your wife and you've said that you would not have a career in music if you had not met your wife. Tell us what you mean by that.

Ryan Weaver: Well, uh, as I said, I moved into Nashville and I was working two part-time jobs going to college full-time. I had no time for music and I was broke to, um, my kids were still in high school.

I had just gotten out of the military. My paycheck [00:32:00] was cut down to a third. I did retire. Um, but my paycheck was cut down to a third and my kids still needed to maintain their lifestyle. Um, so I was struggling when I first got out, but I was also trying to, I would rather have it been that way and try to find my way, um, than any other way because it really got me back to working, working hard like I was a private in the military all over again, but working hard to find success again and get back into it.

Well, I met my wife. I did a mini triathlon the one morning and then went to play some volleyball that afternoon and I met my wife there playing volleyball. I fell in love with her the first time I saw her. She, I was in the friend zone for a couple of months with her, but, um, but, uh, she, once we started dating each other, her dad, she's a corporate meeting planner and her dad owns, uh, incredible events and corporate meeting planning business, and they do.

Incentive trips and all that, but they were in a really high season for them. And she was the only employee [00:33:00] that was working in the office. And, um, her dad was watching me and I wasn't doing music. I was, I was trying to just get my bills paid and, and find my way at that point. And then he, he offered, he's.

Brought me over to his house and he said, what do you need to pay your bills? And I I said I need this much a month and he said we'll tell you what Uh, I will if you work eight hours a week or 80 hours a week I'll I will make sure that you get what you need to pay your bills, but I want you to get back into music and so that really and and then her being here to support me and Uh through the ups

and downs through Randy, uh losing his life Um, she was there when it all happened.

Um She's just been an amazing support structure. She believes in everything that I do. Um, she knows that I'm a little bit controversial sometimes on the political realm. And she, she says, I'm just going to stay out of it. I'm not involved in it. I'm going to let you do what you're going to do because your voice is much louder [00:34:00] than mine will ever be.

And, um, but you know, she, she's always been there and her dad, He's got one of the biggest hearts in the world and I love him to pieces like he's my own family and her family Brought me in like I was part of their family just the same and I'm just extremely grateful that she came into my life And I'm she's that she's there for me just as much as anybody else has ever been

Marie Stroughter: Well, you know, I friend zoned my husband for a while too, and we're, we just celebrated 34 years.

There's something to be said for the friend zone. Those are the best relationships that's built on friendship.

You mentioned first responders and law enforcement and border patrol and, uh, some of, uh, the other ancillary services, uh, who put their lives on the line every day.

Talk to us a little bit more about that.

Ryan Weaver: We have a song called, let's "Talk About Heroes" that honor essentially honors them as well. Never forgotten was a, um, uh, was more of a, a tribute to, to those who have fallen obviously. Uh, let's talk about [00:35:00] heroes was more for those who are still serving out there.

Everybody can go check it out. It's got Don Jenkins who was a Medal of Honor recipient. We got Rudy Um, who is a tunnel rat in Vietnam? We got Tracy Tippett.

We have every every aspect of our heroes in there. Um, we had small town Claxton Georgia, Evans County when it went to, uh, Southeast Georgia, Evans County, Heath Smith, great friend of mine, executive produced it. And, you know, we, we put it together with Chris Martini, an awesome, uh, director, a conservative director of directing it.

And the team was, it was incredible, but I wanted to make sure that. We were at a point where BLM was burning everything to the ground, and police were being attacked on a day to day basis, and, you know, civilians were being killed, and the police were putting themselves in line, and firefighters were getting shot by rioters, uh, paramedics were trying to save people's lives, and they were getting, they were getting attacked, and it was just I just, I wanted to make sure that, that our heroes [00:36:00] knew that we out here still, we still support them and that we still love them.

Do I support every, every bad cop that's out there? Absolutely not. The fraction of those bad cops to good cops are, are, are, is extremely slim. Um, do, do I want them all to know that we stand side by side with them on a day to day basis? Absolutely. Half, half of my family's law enforcement. Uh, there's no way I could look at law enforcement and say, We've got one person out there doing this and, and, and that's the, the, the whole, you know, that's, that's whoever every law enforcement is because it's just officer is it's just not that.

And I wanted them to know that because I know that they were being attacked and I know that they were being vilified and I know that, um, that, America needed at that time to stand up and say, Hey, we're here to support you, and we're always here to support you because Lord knows most of those people that are criticizing them would run from danger.

While those law enforcement officers, first responders, firefighters, border patrol, [00:37:00] all and military are all running towards danger and they need to know how much we love them.

Marie Stroughter: That's absolutely right. Um, you know, you mentioned the fact that you're a little controversial online, uh, and it's true. I think the fact that, you know, that you have served in military gives you that ground to stand on, if you will. Last week, we spoke to Michele Tafoya. Um, and I know Riley Gaines, and we talked about women in sports and how they're being erased. So the fact that we have someone like you, someone like an Allen West, you know, out there talking about what is happening to our military.

People need to listen to those who have been on the ground. What Is this administration doing to decimate our military? You've mentioned our recruitment numbers. Allen talks about our recruitment numbers all the time. We've got, as you said, these woke policies, we've got these woke folks in there. I mean, I'm waiting for the [00:38:00] day when somebody appoints Allen West to be, you know, SecDef, but that's just, you know, my little heart, of course, if

he doesn't run for president first, but I'm just saying, you know, we've got these incredible voices and you do have a platform. What are people missing?

Ryan Weaver: The bottom line is this. Our military is supposed to be lethal and capable of defeating our enemy. That's the bottom line. They need to be prepared. They need to be trained. They need to be lethal and capable of defeating our enemies. We have been a deterrent military just as much as we've been an action military.

And right now, the focus isn't on that. The focus is on whether, you know, whether someone can pee in the right bathroom or not, or whether somebody, whether, whether we're focused on a slight fraction, a very, very small fraction of the military, a very tiny number of people, that the rest [00:39:00] of the military Has to be focused more on that than they are in combat readiness It's the same thing in the united states.

If you look at the military the the, obviously, it's a the military is not a democratic republic. It is a Dictatorship, let me let me just put that out there for everybody you do what you're told It's not the same culture as the rest of the United States. However, it is indicative of what's happening in the rest of United States Why is it that we all have to count out to a very small fraction?

Of demented people when normal logical people up until this administration We're perfectly fine. And now all of a sudden everything has got to be focused on that Well, our combat readiness is being affected by that and if you're you have a president who is a White multi-millionaire who's made his multi-millions as a politician is doing nothing but bagging on White men who have been the preponderance of our military service members.

They have It based off a population [00:40:00] alone. How can you expect them to want to serve underneath you? Like if that's all you do is say that they're bad and everybody that's around you says that white men are bad Why would anybody want to serve in the military? That has a commander in chief that is doing nothing but that and the thing is is like if you're not gay If you're you know, I could go through all of that then then you're you're You have to kowtow to everybody else who is and I'm not the thing is you and I know this it's there's not I mean it is it's pretty straightforward when you go to a promotion board that if you put me up against a Minority female or minority male the promotion board is required to meet numbers based off of skin color and sex It's that's point blank ethnicity and sex.

There's nothing that I can do about that We could be equally qualified in that regard. Here's the thing. I think that that's important I do think that that's important the equal opportunity programs in the military are important But when you start focusing on that more than you start you [00:41:00] you're focusing on capabilities and lethality and combat readiness.

Then you have a problem Then it becomes your you have folks that don't care about being promoted because they know they're not going to based off of their skin color alone now, we've got racism racism across the boards simply because you're picking people based on their skin color or you have sexism Uh based off of their their sex and it's wrong they should be promoted based off their capabilities that first and then the rest of it needs to come into play

Marie Stroughter: And that's absolutely right.

When I go to the hospital in cardiac arrest, I'm not going to say, "I want the best Black doctor," you know, I'm going to say who's the best doctor for the condition that I have. That's absolutely right. And you know what, you talked a little bit about, you know, the fact that there are good cops and there are bad cops.

There are good people and bad people in the military. There are good people and bad people. everywhere. That is a sin problem, not a skin problem. You know, it's crazy that we are doing this kind of thing, you know, where [00:42:00] we've got these, these, um, insane quotas. And when you see what happened at Harvard recently with Claudine Gay, that affects people like me, because then people think I'm there because, oh, skin color.

She checked off a box. Not because I have a 137 IQ, which I do. So it bothers me that, that I, that that happens. So yeah, we need to, and I'm half white too. So that's the other thing. So do, does the Black half of me have to hate the white half of me? I mean, that's stupid. So I'm going to get away from all that.

Ryan Weaver: A point, a point that you made that is 100% uh, true. Is that what, what a lot of folks don't realize is, is that these policies that are making it easier based off of your skin color is only a detriment to that skin color. I mean, if, if you're given it as opposed to having to earn it, your qualifications aren't there, then what Everybody else that had the qualifications just looks at you and says, well, you're not capable anyway.

And what, what's the first thing that they're thinking [00:43:00] about, what they see? And that's it. And so all you're doing is, is making it a detriment to

anybody and, and especially the people. Who like you who have the capabilities who are smart who have the qualifications who earned it? What I mean, what does that mean for you?

It's it's it's it's become so crazy now in that regard and the military is is Now focused on that as opposed to their their combat readiness. They're focused on those kind of things and for us I mean Allen and I have talked about this uh as well, I mean, there's so many so many folks that have talked about it's just like When can we get I want to go back.

I have a song called "I Want to Go Back" that we're going to be putting out this year um, when can we go back to the to the the days of being You know hired by merit, um first when can we go back to that because all it's doing is is causing this rift It's also causing divisiveness amongst the races and that's the easiest way for them to divide us Because all you I mean, I don't know if you i'm sure that you saw it the democrat party if you and it's it's the [00:44:00] same As it is today If you disagree with them and you're a white person, you're racist.

If you disagree with them and you're a Black person, you're all those other names they call black people that disagree with them. You know--

Marie Stroughter: ...And we've been called a few of those.

Ryan Weaver: Yeah, yeah. But I mean, I just want us to go back to those days of us loving this country. I'm gonna send you this song. I'll send you.

I want to go back. I'll let you listen to it And you'll see what i'm talking about It's as the the lines in it say I want to go back to my hand on my heart standing at the start of class Yes monkey bars on the playground with my dad, but the the the chorus says, um liberty Uh, we believe that we all stood together and we believed that it would last forever when we're kids You know, when we're innocent, when we're not taught to hate based off of anything other than someone being a bully to you, you know, whatever it may be, that's where you learn to not like somebody.

But outside of that, I want to get back to that. And I mean, the military would be an amazing place to get a start at that. Obviously, since all this stuff's happening around the world right now [00:45:00] that wasn't happening under Trump, and now our military service members lives are going to potentially be in danger all over the world again because of a Democrat president.

Marie Stroughter: That is absolutely right. If you are just joining us, our guest this segment has been Ryan Weaver. He is a veteran. A Gold Star family member and also a country music star whose latest single is entitled "What You Think of Me." Ryan, where can our audience continue to follow your work find you online and purchase the single?

Ryan Weaver: RyanWeaver.net has everything on it. RyanWeaver.net And all my socials most of them are @ryanweavercountry. Uh, if it's not a blue check mark, it's not me there is one @ryanweavercountrybackup because I got banned for a January 6th video of Antifa busting windows. I got banned for 30 days and lost all my income off of Instagram and in uh one shot but um which happened, it turned out to be a true video by the way.

Um But anyway, yeah, so everybody can go to [00:46:00] @ryanweavercountry on most of those I'm on all streaming are all media outlets Truth Social, I'm on on it all but blue check mark on there. Um, but yeah I haven't quite figured out the X thing and I'm not on TikTok. I haven't figured that out either. Um, I can only handle so many social platforms at one time.

Marie Stroughter: Absolutely. So now this is the part of the show where we bring in DK. DK, come on in. I think he's got a couple of questions for you.

Hey there. How you doing?

Ryan Weaver: DK. What's up, man?

DK: Here we go. Here I am. Two questions. I have a serious question and a goofy question. Okay. I think I'll ask the goofy question. I'll start with the goofy questions.

As a country star, what is your reaction to the recent controversy involving Elle King, who performed at the Dolly Parton tribute at the Grand Ole Opry a couple days ago? She was supposed to sing "Marry Me," the old Dolly Parton hit.

She forgot the words and eventually just said, uh, [00:47:00] I won't repeat exactly what she said because I don't want to use That word is like blankety blank, I'm hammered. So, so everybody wanted the money back. They were saying how dare she treat Dolly Parton this way. How dare she treat, um, the Grand Ole Opry that way.

Ryan Weaver: There's two ways of looking at it. One, one, yeah, I agree. I mean, Dolly Parton's an icon, and the Grand Ole Opry is a sacred place, but on

the other side of it, George Jones, Hank Williams Jr., pretty much every country music artist that was in the Dolly Parton Uh, ERA can honestly say that they've gotten hammered and performed on stage

So welcome to country music, baby. That's true, that's true. They have all forms of music. They, they've all performed drunk. Everybody's got their, their, their, you know, their moments. I, I can't say that I've ever been drunk on stage, fortunately, because I know that I [00:48:00] forget words if, when I, when I do karaoke, if I'm drinking

So I, I won't, I won't do my own shows drunk. But, uh, I mean, I do a. you know, shot of tequila ahead of time, take off the edge, a little ceremonial thing with the band. But, you know, I won't get on stage if I've got a buzz.

DK: Recently we saw the October 7th attack on Israel in which, um, 32 Americans were killed.

Some were taken hostage. Americans are increasingly attacked in Iraq, where you served. Including a recent attack on an American airbase in western Iraq. American ships are being threatened by the Houthis. A few days ago, U. S. officials warned that Americans were being targeted by Hezbollah. Are you concerned about America being dragged into a Middle East war?

Ryan Weaver: We're already in, we're already in one. I mean, a lot of folks don't realize, like, I mean, if, if we're attacking folks over there in multiple locations, we, we, I don't know the best way to say it. We have a, we have a, I call him a clown in chief. Um, we [00:49:00] don't, we have, the patients are running the asylum right now.

Um, it's, we don't have a leader in the White House. Everybody said the world was laughing at us under trump. Well, why weren't why was nobody attacking anybody under Trump if they were laughing at us? Um, everybody thought that we were a joke We're a once I said it earlier in the podcast. We're deterrent military just as much as we're an action military um, the militaries around the world we we were the elite and we can't say that now we I mean we can't well, I believe that we have we could have the most powerful military in the world again Um, I but I believe that they have figured we have an invasion in our own country and we have we don't have a president That's stopping it.

He's actually suing the states that are trying to stop it And the thing is, though, I, I'm going to say this, and I hope to God it doesn't happen. Please, God, don't let

it happen, but it's going to, whether it's, I mean, we may see the first time in [00:50:00] our history since, what, the Civil War? A war on our own soil.

Um, we've got, when, when you have illegal immigrants that are outpacing the birth rate of Americans, uh, in, uh, two years? Outpacing it. People have to look around and see what we're, what we're facing right now. The importance of our Second Amendment. Imagine if we had a government that, that disarmed us and then they let this happen.

Um, it's already happening. We already know it's happening. So folks want to know if we're in, in my, in my fear that we're going to be in another, we're already there. It's it's a different kind of war. It's not the same that everybody expects like the Gazas. You know that we're seeing in Gaza between Israel and Gaza.

It's not that same kind of war. This is going to be as prolonged in the amount of time Imagine this the amount of time it took us to come go from the united states into into uh, Kuwait to attack Iraq months [00:51:00] we've had hundred millions of people crossing our southern border over the last couple years Imagine what what the capabilities are going to be if they start getting because they're not tracked We don't know where they are They get court dates that are supposed to show up for those court days But nobody knows I mean the millions that have been lost that haven't even been seen coming through the border They know the gotta ways we're in trouble.

We're in big trouble and Americans I'm telling you if folks don't start training themselves and they don't start our military itself Um, is not necessarily going to be able to handle things in the United States, but they're going to be in our neighborhoods. People need to train themselves to defend themselves.

They need to arm themselves and use their constitutional rights to do that. And they need to vote a president back into the White House that is going to clean out D. C. And I don't think that anybody else that was in the running with Trump would have done that. I think that they would have been part of the [00:52:00] establishment.

And that's just my opinion because you still have Republicans attacking Trump because he's against the system. Now, is he perfect? No, he's not. But am I concerned that if we continue on this route, that we're going to end up in a, uh, a war on our own soul? Absolutely. If you don't put somebody like Trump back in the White House.

DK: Well, I think you're absolutely right. Especially in terms of, uh, the immigration crisis. I mean, you watch the news and all they want to talk about is these poor women and their children who just come to this country to. Give their children a better education. Hopefully they can find jobs as maids and so forth.

But in reality, if you talk to people on the ground in Texas, they're finding dozens of military age people. Military age men from across the world. I saw a picture of the other day. It was a whole cluster of Chinese men, no women, no children. They're all in their 20s and 30s. They walked across the border voluntarily surrendered.

Why [00:53:00] are so many Chinese men suddenly decided to come through Mexico into Texas and to surrender to authorities? And then you see Americans being attacked. Across the globe. And it's not just Americans. It's the Jews in Israel. And where's our president? Where's our president? He's on the beach. Yeah, I was right about this because he was so effusive in attacking MAGA Republicans.

You know, he goes on TV and say how we're a threat to democracy. But he can't go on TV and talk about the rising anti-Semitism that's going on in his country. He sees that as a lesser evil, I suppose. I suppose. And it's not just anti-Semitism, you've seen, uh, something that, that affects me a lot is the, the number of Black Christians in countries like Nigeria who have just been slaughtered by these, uh, Islamists who were probably fueled by Iran.

So it's a global war. Um, I'm sorry I [00:54:00] got off on a rant there, but--

Ryan Weaver: No, I agree, I agree with you. We see eye to eye. And here's the beauty of this, here's the beauty of this conversation. Not one Democrat would look at the conversation that we're having right here and see That we agree and are and you're you're Black and I'm white and no it doesn't matter But that's all they want they want to talk about that They want to say oh we all disagree because of the color of our skin And then what is Biden is doing the same thing like he's pushing that divisiveness out there The things that affect you are the same things that affect me We want we want our country.

We want our kids to be safe. We want to be safe. We want to live and be able to chase our dreams in these great United States of ours is exactly what I say. And there is the division is not there like everybody thinks it is. And it's amazing that you and I both got attacked in the same words. By some multi millionaire white man who was a segregationist just a couple decades ago.

And he's telling, and he's saying that we're the ones that are the problem. No, we're not. We want to have a leader in the White [00:55:00] House that's actually going to do something for this country. That puts us first. That doesn't put, because right now, we have not been put first as soon, as soon as Biden put his hand on that Bible and lied.

As soon as he put his hand on that Bible and lied, America has been put last. And we knew it. I mean, it was, we knew it was going to happen and it, and I'm, I'm excited to see, not excited, that's sarcasm, to see what they're, what, what's coming for this election year, because if, if COVID was what they did last time, imagine what they're going to do this time.

DK: Exactly.

Ryan Weaver: If you want to do a political one, bring me back on for a political one. I'll come back on and talk to you anytime.

Marie Stroughter: All right. Thank you so much, Ryan.

Ryan Weaver: Appreciate y'all. Thanks so much for having me.

Marie Stroughter: Thank you for your service.

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