

OUT OF AN AMBUSH, Thanks

General Charles C. Krulak, the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1995 to 1999 and currently president of Birmingham-Southern College, tells a compelling story of life, war and faith.

Years ago, he was a young second lieutenant who had just married after graduating from the Naval Academy. He and his wife went down to Quantico, Virginia, home of the school where officers learn about honor, courage and commitment. He shared a room with another married officer, John Listerman, who was a Christian.

“That meant nothing to me other than that he was a really nice guy,” Krulak said. “Because of John, I guessed this Christian stuff must be pretty good.”

After graduating from basic school, Krulak and Listerman went to Camp Pendleton, California, where they joined the same battalion preparing to go to Vietnam. “I then saw John Listerman as a tremendous leader who was aggressive and technically proficient. People loved him. He was committed to his troops, and his troops were committed to him. He was a Marine’s Marine.”

In December 1965, Krulak and Listerman went to war. Listerman’s war, however, lasted one day. “While on patrol moving through the jungle, we came around a corner in the trail and ran into an ambush,” Krulak said. “John took a .50-caliber round in his kneecap. As his kneecap burst, he was thrown into the air. The second round hit him below the heart and exited out his side. I was wounded also, but not as badly.

“I crawled about 30 meters to John, but before I could ask, ‘Are you OK? Can I do anything?’ he said to me, ‘How are you doing, Chucker? Are you OK?’

“When I said I was OK, he said, ‘Are my men safe?’ I said, ‘Your people are OK.’”

Krulak said Listerman turned his head and looked to the sky and repeated over and over, “Thank you, Lord. Thank you for caring for my people. Thank you for caring for me.”

Listerman and Krulak were evacuated. Krulak later was converted to Christianity. Listerman became a doctor and retired after 36 years of practicing medicine at Heartland Community Health Center in Lawrence, Kansas.

And the prayer that Listerman offered as he lay wounded in that jungle in Vietnam is instructive for us today.

We should be thankful to God for His enabling us to care for His people. We should also express gratitude for those with whom we serve.

And while you are praying, don’t forget to thank Him for His care and blessings for you.

– Beecher Hunter