

Jerry: Hey Amy, it's good to see you again.

Amy McGrath: It's good to see you as well.

Jerry: Thanks for coming on the show. Uh, let's take a minute and just... If you could introduce yourself, that would be great.

Amy McGrath: Sure. Well, I'm Amy McGrath. I, um, long story short, I'm girl from Kentucky who left home at 18, uh, joined the United States military, uh, the Naval Academy and then the Marine Corps and followed my dream to become a fighter pilot, which at that time when I was growing up here, uh, wasn't available to women, so I sorta had to fight my way to, to get in the cockpit there.

And, um, served for 24 years, loved it, met my husband along the way, um, had three children at the end of my military days and got out, uh, in early 2017 of the military and moved back home to Kentucky and ran for political office. Uh, not once, but twice ran for a House seat and then a Senate seat, uh, here in Kentucky and, um, learned a lot in the process of, uh, those things.

Jerry: See, now what you did, Amy, would you confirm for me the wisdom of my asking people to introduce themselves? Because what I loved about that, Amy, is you said, "I'm a girl from Kentucky," and that was the basis. 'Cause that's... You know, I've had the great, good fortune of having gotten to know you over these last few months and really, uh, deep in my admiration for you.

And one of the things that I've always enjoyed is the girl from Kentucky, 'cause she does show up. (Amy laughing) She, she is there and uh, uh, I'll say this out loud, uh, I was a fan long before we met, uh, because I was one of those people who got addicted to that viral video, your first campaign commercial when you were running for Congress, and, uh, I remember you standing with a flight jacket, white shirt, I think, in front of a fighter jet-

Amy McGrath: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and talking about, uh, 9/11. So take us to that moment, take us... What was the message there and, and tell us about that.

Amy McGrath: Well, I think for me, um, when you asked me earlier how to define myself, I may start out by saying, I'm a girl from Kentucky, but what, what I really am more than that is an American, a patriot who loves her country and who said-

Jerry: Now you're gonna make me cry.

Amy McGrath: Well-

Jerry: (laughing)

Amy McGrath: ... and I was fortunate, right? I was fortunate to be able to serve my country in uniform, and I love that, but, um, somebody who deeply believes in America-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: ... um, believes in American values and believes that those of us who are patriots have to stand up and do the hard things. And what I was trying to do in that video was obviously introduce myself to people and get them excited about my campaign, right? That's important, but it was also to inspire people, inspire Americans to love this country, to, um, to look at somebody like me and, and think, "Okay, she was able to overcome obstacles, uh, to do these things." And that's what America is all about.

And we need people who love this country to stand up and we need to support people, um, who love this country and who are standing up at least in a political sense at the time. So that was what the goal of that video was. Um, 9/11 of course, is, is... we're having the 20th anniversary here-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: ... very shortly, um, and that was a time when I was a young first lieutenant, maybe a captain, I can't even remember when I got promoted, um, in the Marine Corps and I was very junior in my squadron, uh, and 9/11 happened. I was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego, California. And, uh, because we went change the DEFCON level that morning, uh, I got onto base before the base was shut down and, um, I was selected-

Jerry: It was like reporting for duty then?

Amy McGrath: I was reporting to ... When 9/11 happened, all of us who were air crew were called in by the Operations Duty Officer said, "Get, get your rear end on base."

Jerry: You can, you can curse, I'm from Brooklyn. (laughing)

Amy McGrath: Yeah. (laughing) We need you. And I lived, I lived close to the base, closer than many of the more senior officers lived. And so I got on, into the ready room, I got into the squadron spaces within, you know, 10 or 15 minutes after being called, and some of the more senior officers and more senior aviators, um, were locked out because they had locked the gates, so they didn't mean to do that. They, you know, it was... there was a lot of confusion on, as you know, on, on 9/11. And so the, the executive officer of the squadron looked around and didn't see many air crew to man the, the jets that had six air to air missiles, uh, loaded up, ready to go.

And he basically looked at me and said, "Go, get in the cockpit." And I was the most junior, if not one of the most junior, um, air crew in my squadron so I'm sure I was not the one he wanted to pick for that mission. But nevertheless, for

the next four hours, I sat on the runway, um, as a weapon systems officer at backseat or in the F-18 Delta, uh, runway 2-4 left at Miramar with six air to air missiles, loaded up, ready to launch, uh, to do the unthinkable, which would be, you know, shooting down an airliner potentially.

And so that was, that was my 9/11 and it really, um, was a very dramatic time obviously, and brought home to me just the magnitude of my job and what service to country means. Uh, and then of course after 9/11, we deployed again and again and again and again, you know, to the Middle East.

Jerry: Mm (neutral).

Amy McGrath: So it was certainly a turning point for me.

Jerry: When you were in Iraq?

Amy McGrath: I first went to Kyrgyzstan, um, for Operation Enduring Freedom, which was our push into Afghanistan, uh, it was early 2002. Uh, and I did my first combat tour there, and then my second combat tour was the initial push into Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom in the spring of 2003. Um, and that was very intense. Uh, and after that, um, I did lots of training tours, became a frontseater in the F/A-18, um, ended up doing another [crosstalk 00:07:35]

Jerry: I need to explain that.

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: I mean, you know, I... and I will give the, the audience a clue. We're gonna end up talking about your book, uh, *Honor Bound*, which is wonderful, and you do a great job of explaining to us non-military folks, backseaters and frontseaters. So what's a frontseater?

Amy McGrath: Yeah, so do you remember the movie Top Gun? Okay.

Jerry: Sure.

Amy McGrath: Most people do remember that. It was a different aircraft, but same concept, right? Um, in that movie, you, you saw F-14s which were Navy fighter jets. In modern day, we have the F-18, which is a Navy and the Marine Corps fighter jet, um, and there are two seat versions of that. Um, in the two seat version, we do more complex missions than the single seat version. Uh, and so that was my job for my first tour was to be a backseater, a weapons officer, run the radar, communication, the targeting, the systems. And then my second tour, I was a frontseater, I was a pilot, the one now flying the actual aircraft. So-

Jerry: And it was... As rare as it was for a woman to be a backseater in the Marines, it was even rarer to be a frontseater, am I remembering correctly?

Amy McGrath: They were, they were... they had... they were both rare-

Jerry: [crosstalk 00:08:55].

Amy McGrath: ... and it was even more rare to go from backseat to frontseat. Normally, um, folks don't do both, but, um, but I worked very hard. It was a dream I had since I was about 12 years old to be a, a frontseater and, um, and I, I, you know, I, I loved doing that job. It was tough, but, um, but ultimately it was, it was serving the country and that's probably what I loved the most about it.

Jerry: You know, that... and that's the second time you used this phrase, maybe the third time you used that phrase, serving the country, uh, now. And, you know, we started off by talking about patriotism and I asked you to tell the story, 'cause that was, that was my first real introduction to you is watching this viral YouTube video. Um, uh, and I think you may have been on, uh, uh, Stephen [Kobea 00:09:44], uh, at one point so I remember seeing that. And by the way it worked, I sent money immediately. Um, and that was because I, I think you ran against Andy Barr, it wasn't because I didn't like Andy Barr. Later, we'll talk about running against Mitch McConnell, which is a different issue.

But, but the reason that came to mind was not only did, did it help me understand who you are, not just were, but, uh, you draw both in your book, *Honor Bound*, and across our conversations, you draw this connection, uh, embody this connection between honor, duty, patriotism, service and leadership. And, uh... And sure, you know, the 12-year-old girl wanted to be a frontseater, got it, but that could have ended, but there's something else that animates you, um, around this notion of service, you know? And to, and to draw it out, what's the relationship between patriotism and service?

Amy McGrath: So when I think about my life and I think about this country, one of my favorite quotes has always been in the back of my head and it's "To much is given, much is expected."

Jerry: Luke in the Bible.

Amy McGrath: Yes.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Amy McGrath: And I have always felt like growing up here in Kentucky, um, I had been given much. Growing up in America, I had been given much, and that patriotism is a verb. In other words, it is something that we have to continue to do to take care of our country, to do the hard things. Um, that to me was a duty. And so being able to serve in uniform and to do it in the toughest, uh, service in the Marine Corps, um, was very appealing to me.

But even beyond my military days to stand up in a really tough political environment, even sometimes to stand up when you know, you know, some members of your family may not like it, um, and stand for something, uh, was really important. And to me, that's what patriotism was for me, just in the last four years and then when I think about going forward. You know, we have six months ago, an insurrection at our Capitol that many people are just... don't even wanna talk about.

Jerry:

Right.

Amy McGrath:

You know, this is a big deal. We have people who are literally trying to take voting rights away from folks. Um, we have to be involved and that's what patriotism is. It's, it's the opposite of, well, that's somebody else's fight, you know, that's I, I... Too much is going on and there's, there's too... politics is too dirty, I'm not gonna be involved, I've got, I've got my own life and that's too hard, or, you know? To me, it's, you have to be involved, this country need you to be involved. And so that was when I, you know, decided, hey, I'm gonna run, uh. Whether I win or lose, I'm gonna make a difference and I'm gonna stand up and do what's right. And it was a duty, both, both campaigns.

Jerry:

I'm gonna read to you from your own book. "There's so much emphasis these days on that word, patriotism, but it seems as though the people who use the word the most, understand it the least. Patriotism is the unwavering love of the place we call home and true patriots honor the finest principles of that place. Real heartfelt patriotism is why I joined the military and spent 24 years serving this country. In America, patriotism has always been about service that skin in the game. It is to me and the people I know, a verb."

I thought about that as I re-read the book, and was thinking about our conversation today, and I also thought about January 6th. And, um, we're talking now just a few days after Independence Day, and, um, I did something this weekend that I don't... that I hadn't done in many years. I hung an American flag outside my home.

Amy McGrath:

Good.

Jerry:

Because I have this image in my mind of people storming that Capitol, you know? On January 6th, I was transfixed like so many people just watching CNN as I did on 9/11. And watching people use an American flag as a spear against a police officer. And when I was thinking about speaking to you, I was thinking about this notion of service and honor, and patriotism. And I think more than the people who use the word the most understand it the least. There's this version that seems to be going on. There seems to be a, uh, a misappropriation of both the symbols of what this country stands for.

You know, I think of my grandfather who was an Italian immigrant, who would tip his hat every time we pass the Statue of Liberty, right? Who would put his

hand over his heart every time he saw a flag, and he'd make the sign of the cross every time he pass the cemetery in a church. Right? I think of, uh, of that... I think of my father and my uncles who served in World War II, I think of my father who, um, you know, was part of the team that went into Auschwitz after the camps were liberated. And as hard as that was, I know the pride he felt in being part of the force that ended that nightmare.

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: And that all seems lost right now.

Amy McGrath: It's not lost. And it's not lost because people like you put your flag out. Okay? And we all are doing what we can do.

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: And I think, you know, one of the reasons I ran for office and one of the reasons I try to continue to do, um, what I'm doing now, which is helped other patriots run for office-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: is that I don't want that flag or those symbols or, or our America, um, to be defined by those traitors-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: ... who stormed the Capitol and had the the balls to, to bring in the Confederate flag into the rotunda of our Capitol.

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: Um, to me, it is being honorable, is taking a step back, you know you're in the right, we know we stand for, for the right things, we know we stand for this democracy and all of what it should be for. And making sure that we calmly continue the fight so that this country is the country that we are proud of, that our kids and our grandkids can look at and say, "You know what? This country is not perfect, but we're gonna continue to make it more perfect." The founders when they founded our country, it certainly wasn't perfect. It was racist-

Jerry: They weren't imperfect.

Amy McGrath: ... and sexist and all-

Jerry: That's right.

Amy McGrath: ... kind of [crosstalk]

Jerry: That's right.

Amy McGrath: But the principles are real.

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: That principle that all people are created equal, that principle of, of, uh, equality of a country ruled by, by laws, you know? Um-

Jerry: The constitution party of-

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: ... party-

Amy McGrath: Exactly.

Jerry: ... and above individuals.

Amy McGrath: All of that matters, but you know what? We take it for granted.

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: And one of the things that I worry about with our country right now is complacency. Complacency is, um, a threat to us. I was, uh, at my kid's baseball practice the other day, and I was talking to a friend, um, who was part of the, the parents and, and she was a lovely parent, and she said, "You know, um, I really thought... I think we're gonna... we're okay now. You know, I mean, Trump is gone and we've got Biden in here and, and I really haven't been paying much attention to, to, to politics and, and what's going on in the country." And I, and I thought, you know, it's great, I wanna take a break too, believe me-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: ... but, um, I also wanted to tell her, you know, we still gotta pay attention because, um, we cannot get complacent and that's what's going to really hurt our country."

Jerry: I understand the wish to get relief from the tension of it, you know, um, four years under a president who di- who just fundamentally did not understand what we just said, and you know, his statements about, um, those who served in the military as being suckers and losers, um, you know, whether he directly said those words or the fact is we can believe that he said those words because of other words we've heard him say.

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: That experience, it was, it was exhausting to feel that, um, to have, uh, civil rights attacked in the United States on a consistent unexaggerated basis, because they've always been under assault in so many ways, and they've always needed defending. But the rights of immigrants, the right... the, the ability to participate on a world stage to take our place, to live up to the sacrifice that my father and uncles made, whether they served in Europe or served in the Pacific and what the ideals meant as flawed as they were. But, you know, when those 19-year-old kids stormed a beach in Normandy, they weren't sitting there, you know? They, they, they were scared-

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: ... and maybe they weren't there by direct choice but they were doing what was asked of them.

Amy McGrath: That's right. That's right.

Jerry: You know, you tell the story about sitting in tense in, you know, in the Middle East and, and, and that experienced it. I wanna bring forward to the choice to serve, uh, uh, in, in afterwards. And, you know, in our conversations, you've told me stories, and you talk a little bit about this in the book about teaching at the academy-

Amy McGrath: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and you tell a story and I'd love to hear it again about, um, having to teach about the constitution, can you share that story?

Amy McGrath: You know, I taught US Government and I taught constitutional development, and it was one of the courses I taught at as well as a national security course, and I... You know, my students, um, had really... what I found was that they had really... were losing, or had lost faith in our political leadership. Here I am at an institution where if you lie, cheat or steal, you know, you're kicked out and you can fail tests. You can fail a physical test or, uh, or, uh, you know, um, a, a calculus test and remediate and be fine, but if you lie, you're going to an honor board.

And so here I was an instructor teaching them about politics, but teaching them about our, our constitution and our government, and I realized that, you know, our political leaders, they, they didn't believe we, we had one side that was just spewing lies after li- you know? And it was really hard for me at the end to, to be able to look them in the eye and, and try to be, um, unbiased. You know, it's hard to teach when, when you're, you're supposed to, to sort of present both sides and, and one side is, is so dishonest and in an institution where, um, honor and honesty, um, matters.

So that was the, the timeframe for me when I, I said, you know, "I really gotta look and try to make a difference because these are the future leaders of our country, and if they don't believe that people who are political leaders, uh, they can't believe them, they don't think that these people need to have character and honor, and integrity. Where are we going?"

So that was a big turning point for me. And I, I... When I thought about making that jump from the military to politics, I was actually reading a book called tHe Mathews Men, which was about the Merchant Marine, uh, men and during World War II, who were not a part of our armed forces, who did not get the benefit of being in the armed forces, but yet suffered tremendous, uh, loss of life in getting the logistics across the ocean that we needed.

Jerry: And they kept Europe...they kept-

Amy McGrath: Absolutely.

Jerry: ... the United Kingdom free.

Amy McGrath: At enormous cost to their families and to their lives, and they did it because that was their duty. They were the men who knew how to do it.

Jerry: Right.

Amy McGrath: Okay? And so when I looked at, okay, I'm retiring, I've served 20 years in the military, I can get a modest pension from my retirement, there's lots of, of, uh, 40 something women out there who could run for office, but can't do it because they're taking care of their kids or they could, you know, but I can.

Jerry: Right.

Amy McGrath: So I have to-

Jerry: Right.

Amy McGrath: ... because it's something I can do, something I'm passionate about, uh, it's something I have the skills for and my country needs me. And that, you know, that was, that was the decision for me at that time.

Jerry: Mm (neutral). Against pretty intense odds. I mean-

Amy McGrath: Yeah, but-

Jerry: ... you'd never run for office before, right?

Amy McGrath: Right. Right. But I had also done some things that had never been done before, by a woman and in the, in the Marine Corps, and, and, and so I felt like I knew how to face obstacles, I knew-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: .. what hard work was and that I could tackle it, and ultimately we did. And I'll tell you that even though we lost both campaigns, um, we really ran races that I'm extremely proud of where, you know, the political winds move a certain way. You're not, you're not always able to, um... You know, you're not always able to determine it based on how good of a candidate or how hard you work. Sometimes it's the political winds of where you're running frankly.

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah. And who you're running against.

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: I mean, in the Senate campaign, um, you ran against Mitch McConnell who's arguably even as a minority leader, one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, because of the way he wields power. Um, and the fact that you made it as far as you made it running against him, I, I found it extraordinary. Um, and your willingness to run against someone like that was extraordinary?

Amy McGrath: For me, it was about, I am here, I can do this, um, I must try. I must try to make a difference. And we were in a position to win, had the, had the winds blown a certain way.

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: We knew that that was, um, that was always going to be the case. You know, we didn't... But, but in, in the world of Trump being as volatile politically as anything else, it could have easily gone another way-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: ... but you have to get yourself through hard work into a position where you can win and make a difference, and we were there, and so I'm really proud of that. And we... You know, part of this running for office stuff is not just winning or losing, some of it is getting your voice out there, um, speaking, speaking up. You know, here in Kentucky, I've had people come up to me and say that they registered to vote for the first time, because they were inspired by my campaign. They never had, uh, a candidate that they really supported or, or wanted to get behind. And so part of it is just waking people up to our democracy and to what the role is that everybody can play in that democracy, you know, more than just voting. Sometimes it's donating, sometimes it's being a part of a campaign, sometimes it's just reading more about the issues and what's going on.

Jerry: And, and forcing yourself to be more informed. And so, you know, part of what I'm hearing, and it doesn't surprise me is an extended definition of success, you know? We, we, we spoke after the loss and I know personally it stung, it hurt, and it was hard.

Um, and I imagine it was hard 'cause you know you'd be a great senator. You and I both knew you'd be a great senator and the country is missing your service in that way, but I don't think the story is over. It's just a lose- (laughing). Um, but part of what I hear you doing is not, it's not, uh, like a consolation, it's, it's a definition of success that is actually in some ways links right back to service, links right back to honor, which is that w- winning would have been great, losing sucked, but trying was the service.

Amy McGrath: That's right. The actual act of running, being a part of our democracy in that form is a service to country. And that leads me now into what I am trying to do with, uh, *Honor Bound Inc*, which is, um, a C4 organization that, uh, has the same title as the title of my book, but its, its goal is to inspire others who have served this country, who know what it's like to, to serve, um, to put the country above themselves or their party, et cetera, to think about running and being a part of our democracy by running for office to think about that as a service and to do it. Because how many times have you gone to vote and you just look at the ballot and you're like, "Oh my gosh, we can't get anybody good to be on the ballot. (laughs) You know, there's lots of people that you knew you wanna-

Jerry: Right, right.

Amy McGrath: ... vote against maybe, but who are you really for? And, and so, you know, to try to inspire people to, to be part of my job to inspire people to love our country and believe in our democracy is to help candidates who I think, um, understand what honor is and integrity just by the way they've lived their lives to think about running and to support them in running, because at the end of the day, yes, Jerry, I would have loved to have been a senator, I would have loved it. I feel like I could have done a lot of good for this country, but it was never about me, it was about getting better leaders for our democracy, this great, awesome country that we love that has that amazing flag that we fly-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: ... that I'm proud of. I want leaders I'm proud of-

Jerry: Yeah.

Amy McGrath: ... and I wanna help get them elected. And so that's what this is about.

Jerry: And, you know, Amy, early on, I said to you, I can't do what you can do, but I can do what I do, which is talk with people like you to, to support the process of becoming those stronger leaders. And, you know, I'll just build upon what you're

saying, which is that there is a... that, that those listening who might be inspired to run, God bless you, go. But those listening who also like me can't run, be inspired to be informed, be inspired to be engaged, to be inspired to go into that voting booth or depending on your State, vote from home because thank goodness we can still do stuff like that in certain areas. Go and be informed. That is a way of serving as well.

Amy McGrath: That's right. And, and, and looking into, and supporting organizations that, um, are supportive of our democracy because this is a long... this is gonna be a long fight. You know, one of those things that I talk about in my book is that, you know, I don't... I never got anything overnight. It is a long, hard struggle, but those of us who are patriots are gonna have to pick up the pack.

And that means, you know, yes, of course vote, yes of course be informed, but if you can do more, do more. The single most important thing that the way we have our voice heard in this democracy is voting one, number one. Beyond that, what can you do? Well, you can support others that run, um, whether they're direct support to candidates that you like and that you agree with and that you believe in, but it's also to organizations that are supporting candidates that you can believe in.

I mean, a lot of people don't have the, um, time to look up candidates and figure out what, what's viable. What, what... You know, is this race winnable and that sort of thing. And so there are organizations out there, um, that will help with leadership development and help with, um, helping people, um, get into office. You know, my organization is one of them, but there's a number of other ones.

And so that's, that's what it takes, you know? Or if you're somebody that wants to focus on structural change, for example, you, you, you wanna get rid of gerrymandering like me, or you wanna get rid of the money problem in politics that we have. There are organizations that are out there lobbying and, and trying to make those things happen and making good progress on some of these issues. But again, it's gonna require engagement from patriots.

Jerry: You know, I often think of the difference between, say, a military operation and policing. You know, military operation theoretically has a beginning, a middle and an end, but policing doesn't actually end. It's a practice, it's taking care of, it's in service of and wh- when, you know, separate conversation about when the military does policing, it's confusing, I mean, when police do military operations, it can be confusing. But when you think about... Just think about the word for a moment. You know, here's another word that comes to mind, the democracy needs to be tended to-

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: ... like a garden needs to be weeded.

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: You know, uh, right now, you know, Sam Clark, my neighbor is baling the hay at our pastors right now, you know. The pastors need to, need to be tended to constantly.

Amy McGrath: Constantly.

Jerry: And that, and that's not a problem, that's the honor. It's an honor to serve, to tend the garden of the democracy because we get to enjoy the fruits of that and [crosstalk]

Amy McGrath: That we have inherited. You know, the founders gave us a great framework and then they moved on. You know, we fought a civil war, um, and we had patriots, United States Army that defeated a rebellious-

Jerry: Secessionist.

Amy McGrath: ... [crosstalk] that was trying to, you know, continue in the enslavement of other human beings. Um, that's our legacy, uh, and they handed that to us. And then we had the greatest generation that, that, you know, fought for our country and our democracy overseas, um, against fascism, uh, and, and world domination by, you know, the Nazis and, um, and, and then built... literally built the world that we enjoy today with the, um, you know, free trade system.

And I feel like, again, there's some, some... It's easy to get complacent in the say, you know, there- there's no battle for us, but there is. It's our job, it's, it's my generation's job to continue to protect this democracy. It's what my life has been about, you know, in uniform and out of uniform. And being a part, an active part of what is going on in this country, politically is absolutely protecting this country. It's so important.

I mean, think about the misinformation that's out there, think about how much, uh, even other countries like Russia are pumping in disinformation to divide us, to weaken our democracy, to weaken our systems, um, of government. And only... We, we are the ones that have to stand up and, and fight it, and we have to do it consistently.

Jerry: I often think of my teacher, Parker Palmer, who has this beautiful image that he calls a tragic gap. And the gap is between the world as it is, and the world that we knew was possible. And he says that we're all called to stand in the tragic gap. Um, uh, because on the one hand, um, if we give up and give in to the world as it is, we give over to corrosive cynicism, and if we stay fixated only on the world, as it can be, this perfect idealized country, for example, then we give up, we give over to a kind of irrelevant idealism.

Amy McGrath: Yeah.

Jerry: And, and I think what we're both getting to is that, you know, one of the greatest expressions of service and honor, and duty is to actually stand in that gap, knowing that this country can be really screwy, but that doesn't mean it's not worth tending to. And so the, you know, the gap in a sense is between complacency, which you have seen in the one hand, the relaxation of, of being vigilant. And I would say on the other hand, the cynicism, why should I try anything? Why should I run? Why should I vote?

I mean, my God, if we haven't learned why you should vote, you know? And yet w- what we have to do is we have to stand in the middle between those two places. And, and, and I think you said it, well, the service is in the trying, not in the winning.

Amy McGrath: Right. We have this phrase in the, in the Navy, in the Marine Corps, and in the military, it's called being on watch, being on duty. And if you think of, you know, our generation as being the generation that is, is inheriting this country right now, okay? Um, I very much take it personally, what happens to our democracy. And so I look at things like January 6th, and I look at the misinformation and I look at the ripping apart of, um, sort of the basic principles of our democracy right now and I think to myself, "Oh, no, no, not on my watch. I'm not going to let this happen on my watch. I'm going to do everything I can to protect this country."

And I think that, you know, we don't have a right to give up. Um, we're not fighting the Nazis, we're not, you know, in a civil war the way we were in 1863, um, but the threats to this country are still real and they're coming from within. And when I think about the f- my friends who I have lost in Iraq and Afghanistan who are gone, I'm here and they're gone, and I owe it to them to do everything I can, um, to protect our democracy and to not give up.

Jerry: Yeah. Well, Amy, I, I wanna thank you not only for coming on the show and talking about your life and your beliefs, but I also wanna thank you for the service, for a lifetime commitment to things that matter, for your integrity, um, for your sacrifice, and I wanna thank you for becoming a friend. Um, you've taught me a lot about leadership, not in an intellectualized way, but in an embodied way. And, uh, that is deeply moving to me and very profound. It's an honor to be with you, not just for this show, but on an ongoing basis.

Amy McGrath: Well, I really appreciate that Jerry. And one of the things that you do such a good job of is getting to the heart of what this is all about, why are we doing this? What is this all about? And there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about the why for me. Um, and if you bring it all the way back, it's what kind of country do you want our children to inherit because we are the ones that inherited this that we have now. What are we gonna give to them? And, um, you've helped me remember that about what I've tried to do in the last four years, and hopefully what I'll try to do in the future.

Jerry: Oh, I am keeping an eye on you 'cause I know there's a future there. So thank you for saying that and thank you for coming on the show.

Amy McGrath: Thanks Jerry.

Jerry: You too.