

KEEN ON RETIREMENT



Leading By Example: US Air Force Academy Graduate on How Millennials are Working Towards a Better America

Welcome to Keen on Retirement
With Bill Keen and Steve Sanduski

Steve Sanduski: Hello, everybody, and welcome back to another episode of Keen On Retirement. I'm your cohost, Steve Sanduski, and here with me as always is Bill Keen. Hey, Bill.

Bill Keen: Hey, Steve. How are you today sir?

Steve Sanduski: I am fantastic, and as you and I were chatting before we went live here, you know that I've just recently relocated, my wife and I became empty nesters earlier this year, and so we decided to do something new. So we sold the house and moved three hours north, so we're getting close to the Canadian border I think up here in Northern Wisconsin.

Bill Keen: Well congratulations on that Steve. It's nice to see you truly living life to the fullest and pursuing what you're very passionate about and enjoying life. You know? It's kind of what it's all about, isn't it?

Steve Sanduski: It is, yeah. We're very blessed and fortunate that we've got the freedom to be able to do that, so we've got a new place up here in a place called Door County, Wisconsin. Just a beautiful place here environmentally, and a lot of nature up here. So we're looking forward to spending a lot of time up here here in the summer where it's really hustling and bustling. Then in the winter time where it gets a lot of snow and things quieten down a little bit, so it'll be a nice change of pace for us.

Bill Keen: Very nice. The only problem is you're moving farther away from us here in Kansas City, but I guess that wasn't a concern, was it?

Steve Sanduski: Well I know, Bill, you've got a plane. In fact, that might be a nice little segue to our conversation today, because we're going to be talking about airplanes and pilots today. So yeah, we got you and Karissa be coming up here at some point to visit us, so we're looking forward to that, hopping in the plane.

Bill Keen: Yes.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, so we got a great, great guest lined up today. I am super excited about this, so I'd love to hear you set the stage for us here and introduce our special guest.

Bill Keen: We are a financial podcast. We talk about the things around retirement planning and getting your ducks in a row, being responsible, getting out ahead of issues, being prepared, going through the checklist driven process hopefully, when it comes to making sure that you're able to retire at some point and do exactly what you're doing, Steve, being able to pursue your passions whether it's a relocation or hobbies or things that are just close to your heart.

That's really the objective of our program is to help people get conscious and engaged on these things and these topics. Many of our shows talk about taxes and Social Security, inflation, investment returns, the economy, the markets. I think those are well received, but from time to time I like to have guests on and I like to include topics that I believe would be of interest to our listeners. Today I think we're just going to have a knockout punch here.

You know, Steve, I don't know about you, but I've talked a lot about being a member of AARP now, turning 50. I think you're just a little bit ahead of me. I don't think I'm catching you yet, but a lot of folks in our generation and in other generations talk about the younger generations coming online. They speak about these younger generations out of some sort of concern that, "Oh, maybe they're not as focused. Maybe they're not as driven." Or, "Maybe they're too in their phones or too into video games." Or where culture has just taken us today, a lot of it might be the media but this concern about the younger generations coming online I think is something that's somewhat prevalent.

I just wanted to stand today and I wanted to reject that idea, and I wanted to do that with a pure outright in the trenches example, which is our guest on the program today. I have with me in the studio, Steve, US Air Force Academy graduate, Second Lieutenant Matt Robbins. Matt, welcome to the show.

Matt Robbins: Hey, thank you so much for having me. What an honor, I'm going to add that to my LinkedIn profile.

Bill Keen: Oh, social media, excellent. Yes. Just to set this up, I want our listeners to understand I first met Matt when he was 15 years old. Matt worked at the flight school at the downtown Kansas City airport, and I do not think that he was able to receive any pay initially. I think he was volunteering, is that correct sir?

Matt Robbins: Volunteered for just a few months, and eventually they brought me on.

Bill Keen: Okay, so they brought him on to work in scheduling. So he was there when I walked in to the flight school to start some of my training. It didn't take long for Matt to approach me and say, "Bill, I know you have a plane. I would love to be of service to you, sir. I will keep your plane clean. I'll keep your hangar clean. I will do really anything that you need of me if I can just hang around you, hang around the plane, be a fly on the wall, go up with you if that's okay sometimes, anything just to be around the operation."

Of course I said, "That would be wonderful." Got him a key to the hangar and he did just that for a number of years for me. It took me awhile to even get him to accept any pay, Steve, for doing these things for me. But I can tell you this, flying with Matt when he was 16, 17 years old, he was sitting in the right seat of my airplane and we're flying on a mission, and I felt like I had somebody that was 30 or 40 or 50 years old sitting next to me because of his presence and his maturity. See if you give me the opportunity to introduce one of our guests again. I think I've used up all our time here because I'm so proud of this young man.

Just graduated from the US Air Force Academy in the most recent graduating class, and I thought it would just be wonderful to share some of his passion, his drive, how he's gotten to where he's at today, with our listeners, and to tell you that if we're passing the baton to this kind of the next generation, I think we're all going to be quite all right.

Steve Sanduski: Well I love how you set that up there, Bill. Yeah, what a great story. Matt, this is the first time you and I have had a chance to meet each other, but based on what Bill is saying there, it's clear that you are someone who is really turning your generation into a great name here. Excited to hear what you have to say and share some of your insights. As we were talking here again before we went live, I had an opportunity to speak with someone not long ago who graduated from the US Naval Academy, and he is also a pilot now, a test pilot with the US Navy. So it'd be a lot of fun just to hear some of your experiences about being with the Air Force Academy and some of the lessons learned, and just how you think about what's going on in the world today. I think our listeners are really going to enjoy that. I'm sure we'll find a way to tie it back to the finance aspect as well.

Matt Robbins: Well great, and Steve, it's so nice to meet you. Bill, thanks so much for having me on. Bill only embellished just a little bit of that. I know he's very, very proud of me. But yeah, it's great to be out here back in Kansas City. I just finished up

four years at the Air Force Academy, kind of living out my dream. Aviation has been such a big part of growing up out here in Kansas City, and it's so nice to have mentorship like Bill.

Bill Keen: Wow, well that's an honor that you would say that, Matt. Steve, I was recently talking to Matt's father at a celebration they had at their house, and Matt, it's true, and I don't think he would've told me this if it wasn't, you were playing with little toy airplanes when you were two years old. Is that right?

Matt Robbins: Oh yeah. I got introduced very, very early. When I went to my grandparents' house, I don't know what possessed them to pick up a copy of Microsoft Flight Simulator. I think it was just to keep me and my brothers entertained when I went over there, but I knew nothing about aviation, but I got on that computer and I started the engines on a 747 and started doing loops in that thing. I don't know, something just hit me. Something just ... It's been a part of my life growing up and finally got into a cockpit of a real airplane. You can speak to this, Bill, it's just you get hooked.

Bill Keen: That's right, but I would say that the way I use aviation, the way I enjoy aviation, yes some of it will be the same, but you're talking about flying fighter jets. That's a little different endeavor isn't it?

Matt Robbins: Oh yeah. Yeah, it's a strenuous, strenuous career, but it's very, very rewarding, so that's what I'm working towards right now and I've got a few years before I can take that step, but that's the big goal.

Steve Sandusik I was going to ask you, Matt, when did you know that, yes, aviation is a passion, but when did you know that you wanted to be in the Air Force and essentially defend our country?

Matt Robbins: Well to answer that question you've got to put yourself in the shoes of someone that's my age. Specifically with the military aspect, you've got to think when September 11th happened, and I hate to bring up such a dark topic, but it answers your question. When September 11th happened, that was in 2001. I was born in 1997, so for all of my life as far as I can remember, whenever I made memories, we've been living in this post 9/11 war on terrorism, or at least thinking about it. That's a really strange environment to grow up into, where you think your country is threatened.

If you can put yourself in the shoes of a kid that's 11 or 12 years old and they're surfing around their computer one night looking on YouTube and they stumble on a horrible video of another American jumping out of a tower just so they don't have to burn alive, that scars you. It's horrible. It sticks with you. So I know just from growing up like that, that whatever I did I wanted to be impactful. I wanted to make a difference in someone's life.

One of the ways to do that was to try to prevent something like September 11th from ever happening again. So the good thing is, is that the military offered me with open arms, and I can have a marriage between that calling for service and for my love of aviation. That's where the Air Force Academy came into play. It was a match made in heaven.

Bill Keen: That's impactful isn't it, Steve?

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, it sure is, and appreciate that we've got people like you that are out there doing the work of defending, protecting our country. One of the things I'd love to learn, Matt, is the kind of training that you have to go through. I think we all maybe have these images or these stereotypes of what the training or boot camp might be like, but I would love to hear what was it like at the Air Force Academy, maybe the first 90 days or three months or six months. I got to imagine it was perhaps a shock to the system compared to your normal life, to then immediately go into the academy and go through some of that training. What was that like?

Matt Robbins: It was very fun, Steve, and I'm only being a little sarcastic. So what happens is the first three months that you go into the academy, and actually the class of 2023 is doing this right now as we speak, you'll go through basic cadet training, which is our boot camp for the academy. That's everything that you see in the media with the videos of you crawling around in the dirt, carrying a gun, doing pushups, getting yelled at, all of that. So did three months of that, and honestly that wasn't honestly a huge deal. I was completely expecting that going into the military, and it was very physically and mentally challenging, but I got through it.

The unique thing about the academy though, and a lot of people don't know about this, is that this place is a four year institution. It's a college, but you get all the added benefits of going through military training at the same time, and athletic obligations too, so it's very very challenging. In our freshman year out there, you don't have a lot of freedoms, we'll put it that way. You've probably seen the pictures or videos of young kids running around ... We've got a area in our cadet area, where we have our dormitories and our dining facility and where we go to class, and it's lined with these marble strips. They're all in squares.

As a freshman, you are confined to those marble strips. You can't wander around, you haven't earned that privilege yet. So as a freshman I was running on these strips to get to class. I couldn't wear my backpack, so I had to carry it, and you just look at this like, "Wow, what a goofy experience." But yeah, I'm still going to college. I'm getting a Bachelor's degree at that time, and I have all these obligations at the same time too, so it was very unique to choose to go to a military academy, but as regimented, as analytical as I am, it fitted perfectly.

Honestly with the people that I was able to go to school with, all of that stuff, all of the other obligations, militarily speaking, kind of fell by the wayside. I really enjoyed my time out there.

Steve Sanduski: What's the theory behind having it so regimented when you first come in? I got to believe that over time the military has determined that there's a certain way to train people for the rigors of being in service. So what's the overall thinking behind basically breaking you down, I guess, in that first year? Is there some theory behind that in terms of why you need to go through that type of regimentation?

Matt Robbins: Sure. The military is trying to clean you up, so to speak, and indoctrinate you into what they need you to be. So this concept behind breaking people down and building them back up is trying to erase I guess the chip on your shoulder if you want to walk into a military academy, from all the accomplishments that you may have had in high school and growing up to get into a place like that. Because frankly, it doesn't really matter. You are here to serve your country, and I don't care necessarily what you did growing up, but when you come in as a freshman at a military academy, you're at the bottom of the totem pole. You've got to earn your way back up, and that incites people to work harder and to work the way the Air Force wants you to work. So I don't know, maybe there's more elegant theories than that, but that's how I took it.

Steve Sanduski: Then how do you view that type of training? So you've got the physical part and then you've got the mental part of them trying to break you down. Did you find that one part was harder than the other to really get through in maybe your experience? Then maybe some of the other folks that you see, did they find the physical or the mental part to be the more difficult?

Matt Robbins: Well everyone's got their own struggles out there of what they need to work on the most. The academy has a really strategic way of being able to have all those things gang up on you on the worst possible time and really cause you some stress. I'm very grateful for that, because that would really help out whenever we do the things that we'll be doing in the military in combat. So for me, honestly, the military stuff, it wasn't really ... I don't want to say it wasn't a challenge, but it wasn't horrifying. Freshman year wasn't that bad. That's what everyone's typically scared of when you think of the military academy.

For me actually sophomore year's the worst, by far the worst, because that's when everything gangs up on you. Your academic load is incredibly rigorous. You have all this military stuff. You have a new job that's given to you as a sophomore. You're actually in charge of the freshman and try to mentor them, and you have all your physical obligations as well, in addition to whatever you're doing extra curricular. I was down at the airfield quite a bit, so all that just seemed to coalesce my sophomore year, and it was very very challenging.

But I'm so incredibly grateful for that experience, Steve, because I'm more confident now that the academy has taught me how to put 10 pounds of stuff into a five pound bag, and I can tackle these issues that they come across my career later on or just in life in general. It's stuff that I can handle because I've done it before.

Bill Keen: Then what did you learn your sophomore year? So you said that was really the toughest year. All these things were hitting you and building up. Did you figure out things on your own and figure out how to manage all that, or did the academy, were they teaching you strategies to deal with stress and strategies for productivity to get all these things done, to put 10 pounds of stuff in a five pound bag as you say? Or how did you go about getting through all of that and any lessons that you learned that might be applicable outside of the academy?

Matt Robbins: You know, they certainly teach you that. I mean they offer those lessons, but I don't think you can really learn that unless you just go in there and go in the mess and do it, so I had to learn about myself quite a bit and how I handle stress and how I get through that kind of stuff. For me, what really helped is just personally developing a very regimented schedule. I knew what time I was going to get up in the morning down to the minute. I knew exactly what I was going to do. I knew how long it took me in minutes and seconds to walk to class and really just allot your time. I had the pressure in the back of my mind every time I knew I wasn't sticking to this regimen.

I knew that, A, if I want to go and take a 30-minute nap because I'm so exhausted, well that means I'm going to be staying up until 1:30 in the morning trying to finish this big paper. So you've got to know what you're capable of and you've got to know where your faults are, where you have to work and to be self-aware of that and embrace all the stuff that you have wrong with you. Getting that out of the way early really helped me out the sophomore year, and made the last years of the academy much easier to get through.

Steve Sanduski: And Bill, along those same lines there, I know you're a pilot, so you're very methodical. We talk a lot about a checklist financial planning process. I know you've got a lot of things going on in your life in addition to the financial advising work that you do. Do you see any similarities between, Bill, how you're running Keen Wealth Advisors, to what Matt is doing there at the academy in terms of how you're putting 10 pounds of work into the five-pound bag?

Bill Keen: You know, what's amazing about that, I was listening to Matt speak, and I thought first off when he was talking about how he operated and conducted his day, it sounded like a really solid thought process for someone who was going to be flying very fast in an airplane at some point. His thought process is about understanding your weaknesses, understanding your strengths, understanding the timing down to the second, everything's very very precise. Wouldn't you say, Matt?

Matt Robbins: Exactly.

Bill Keen: Not to promote here the Keen Wealth 3P's, but perceptive, personalize, and precise, that last one, that precision is a huge one for me in the way we operate the firm. Yes, we work with a lot of engineers, but regardless of that, who like precision, but regardless of that, we need to be precise in what we do. But to take it where I'm at in life and compare that to where Matt's at, I'm at a point where I have the wonderful fortune of being able to delegate tasks, as Keen Wealth has grown over the years, and I've gotten incredible team members that have helped me that may even be better, and probably in most cases are better than me at certain tasks, I've been able to delegate things to, who help us to collectively continue to be better and more perceptive and more personalized and even more precise.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, and Matt, obviously when you're in one of the academies like you've been, you learn a lot about leadership. Not only do you, I think you learn about leadership, but you also see leadership in action from the people at the academy. I'm curious, what are one or two maybe leadership lessons that you learned or one or two of the leaders at the academy that you really looked up to, and what was it about them that you really admired in terms of how they exhibited leadership?

Matt Robbins: Yeah. So there's a lot you can take out of that. Leadership is such an art and science you can spend your entire life learning how to be an effective leader, all the way from the team level up to strategically running a company. So I ran into a lot of really, really interesting people out there, all the way from colonels and generals to fellow cadets really that demonstrated leadership. Two things that I'll point out are something that I'm trying to develop right now, that's my main focus, and that's showing a little bit of humility, and also leading by example. I tend to focus on those two things right now because that's a first impression set of skills right there. Those are something ... You can pick up someone's humble, or you can pick up if they walk the walk in addition to talking the talk.

Matt Robbins: If you put service before yourself when you talk about actually showing and leading by example, I'm going to be much more inclined to follow somebody into combat if I know they have my back and they've been there before. So one of the best ways that we learned leadership at the academy was actually being thrown into a leadership position and leading our peers. Peer leadership's incredibly difficult, I'll tell you that. But I was really fortunate to be able to lead the precision flying team at the academy. It's a 27 cadet team, and we flew inter-collegiately with other colleges. One of our metrics about how well our team performed was if we can score points at these inter-collegiate competitions.

So if I'm going to require or stipulate that my team puts in an extra 30 minutes or an extra hour to practice their event and to score more points, then I better be putting in at least two hours of extra work, because leading by example is so

important, and you can pick up on someone that doesn't do that so quickly. Humility's so important too, because I just really think that you can't fight a war with awards. The stuff on your resume, the stuff on your LinkedIn profile, for example, I mean doesn't really mean a whole lot to me. I think what's going to show more in a leader is those traits, those skills, those habits that you developed to get that award and showing those in everyday practice.

Someone that has a flying award, for example, because they flew a plane really well one year, doesn't mean as much as actually flying with that person saying, "Hey, he's a very safe, conservative, and precise pilot." So those are two things that I'm working to develop currently. I'm hoping I can be a pretty humble person and lead by example as I go out into the active duty Air Force.

Bill Keen: One thing, Steve, that Matt mentioned there was being on the flying team. It probably makes sense to clarify this. Some folks think that if you've actually gone to the US Air Force Academy that you're instantly flying right off the bat. It's not the case, is it, Matt?

Matt Robbins: No, no. A lot of people get that confused. I had a lot of weird looks whenever I told people I went to the Air Force Academy and think, "Well what do you fly out there?" Well, I happened to fly something, just based on the team that I was on, but that place is not intended to develop pilots necessarily. The Air Force Academy and the other military branches and their respective academies, the goal of those institutions is to develop future officers and also to get an academic degree. That's what the academy did for me. We do have an airmanship program there. You can fly gliders occasionally. You could fly in a small two seat small airplane to get you accustomed to what flying is like before you go off to pilot training, but besides the very lucky few of us that were on the flying team, you didn't get to fly very often out there.

Pilot training for the Air Force occurs after you commission. So if I weren't going off to graduate school I'd be heading off to pilot training right now, and that's about a two year program where the Air Force would teach you the way that they want you to fly.

Bill Keen: Right. So Matt has got his aeronautical engineering degree, a Bachelor of Science now, Steve. He's entering into the Master's program in aeronautical engineering as well at the University of Washington. Did you tell me you'll do 18 months or two years?

Matt Robbins: Yes sir, 18 months.

Bill Keen: 18 months, and he'll come out with his Master's degree in Aeronautical Engineering, fully paid for by the Air Force by the way, and also I don't know if you care if we share this, but you are Second Lieutenant.

Matt Robbins: Correct. Yeah, I do get paid out there. It's one of the best deals. They only handed this out to a very, very select few. I was incredibly lucky to be able to pick up one of these graduate school slots. But it's really neat for me to be able to finish my education out and really learn to be as effective as I possibly can as an officer in the Air Force, and they're supporting me through that. That's one of the ways, I mean the Air Force is treating me so well. The military I think in general will realize that if you have people that are willing to put in a significant amount of effort to be as capable as possible, they're going to support you and try to lift you up and raise you to higher levels. That's what they're doing in this case. I'm very, very fortunate.

Bill Keen: Then you'll head out to pilot training after your Master's degree, at the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program at Sheppard Air Force Base, is that correct?

Matt Robbins: Yes sir.

Bill Keen: And that's already been determined?

Matt Robbins: Yes sir.

Bill Keen: Okay. Okay, very nice. So to tie that back in with what Matt was saying about flying, in his freshman year at the US Air Force Academy, he was able to make it onto the flying team. It sounds like about 27 of you were on the flying team.

Matt Robbins: Correct.

Bill Keen: So he flew on the flying team, competed against other, of course the Navy and many other schools, is that correct?

Matt Robbins: Yes.

Bill Keen: Matt received tons of awards on the flying team. Dean of the Faculty Award for Outstanding Cadet Research Spring of 2018. He received the US Air Force Academy Outstanding Cadet in Powered Flight 2019, Department of Aeronautics Outstanding Cadet in Flight Mechanics 2019, Department of Aeronautics Outstanding Cadet in Basic Research. Number three in top pilots out of 263 cadets, and this was the highest placement for any cadet in the history of the US Air Force Academy Precision Flying Team.

But I've got about 10 others that I could walk through here. Here's how I'll summarize it. His number nine out of nearly 300 was the lowest that he scored in any of these awards that he received over the course of his time there. So I wanted to kind of go through some of his accomplishments here as we are midway through our session with Matt, to demonstrate that not only did he have the vision and the drive. He is, in his words, walking the walk here as well. So it's pretty impressive.

Steve Sanduski: It's super impressive, absolutely. So as you mentioned, you're going to grad school, and then you're going to flight school. Are you looking that far beyond now once you get out of flight school what you're hoping to do in maybe the first couple years after getting out of the flight school?

Matt Robbins: Well I hope to be a career officer, so if I'm going to graduate pilot training and complete that program, then I'll have a tenure commitment to the Air Force. That's where all this comes full circle with them supporting my education like they are, is that I'll be working as a pilot for at least 10 years. So I'm not sure what I want to fly, I'm kind of waiting until I get into these trainer jets to see how I like it and what community I best fit into, and I'm sure the folks out there, the instructor pilots will be able to make a determination for me. Whatever happens, happens. I'm happy to do whatever the Air Force needs me to do, but I'm really hoping it'll be in the cockpit of an airplane for at least 10 years.

Steve Sanduski: Excellent.

Bill Keen: Matt, you heard how I opened the program today, about the youth of our time, if you will, and folks being concerned about your generation actually. How old are you, 22, right?

Matt Robbins: 22, yes sir.

Bill Keen: 22, yes. Do you have any commentary on your generation? People that were Steve and I's age when we were younger, if you would've talked about us, you would've said, well, we're always in trouble too when we were young. So there's always that, you look back, right? But what's your opinion on the generation of today? I know guys like you pull a lot of weight.

Matt Robbins: Yeah. I get a lot of flack for being a millennial. I think that the gut reaction of a lot of people, look at someone my age and immediately think that we think that we're entitled to something, that we're just lazy, we don't do anything. I'm hoping I can provide a little bit of a voice of reason. That hasn't been my perspective being a peer with a lot of millennials, and I'm a very critical person, I'll be upfront. I hope I can tell it like it is with people that are just completely lazy. I can pick out someone like that. I really don't think that's the case.

Here's my theory. I don't know, take it with a grain of salt. I'm 22, I realize that. But I think there's three tiers of people. I think the first tier of people is someone that works very, very hard, works diligently, and they get into a career field that aligns with their passion and it happens to work out timing wise. So I mean being a pilot, it's something that I love to do, I think I'd do it regardless of the money. I'm so lucky that we're at a pilot shortage right now and people are going to be paying heavily for pilots. It's going to work out for me I really hope, and I'm willing to put in the work. I work very, very hard.

But the second group of people is I think where most of my generation gets lumped into, and these are people that still work very, very hard. They work incredibly diligently, but their passion doesn't align with something as, we'll call it lucrative, as something that's demand ... For example, a pilot. I'll give you an example. My brother, he works incredibly hard, but he never went to college. He had no desire to do that. He didn't have any desire to sit behind a desk. His passion was to be outside doing landscaping and mowing grass, and people will listen to that and they will laugh and they will immediately say that, "Oh my gosh, he's lazy. He doesn't want to put himself to good use. He's going to be mowing grass the rest of his life."

Well I'll tell you what, he's an incredibly hard worker. He opened his own landscaping company, and he was out in the sweltering heat in Kansas City, where it's 110 degree heat index working his butt off doing a really good job, and he just won the HOA contract for one of the largest subdivisions north of the Missouri River up here.

Bill Keen: Awesome.

Matt Robbins: He's going to be incredibly successful, more than the people that offer that criticism towards him. Then we get the third tier people, and that probably the people that you're talking about, Bill. That's the human parasites that just suck up all the government resources and don't give anything back. I'm being very critical. Those people do exist, but I think they're in very, very small numbers. They're certainly not the majority of my generation. Unfortunately the media just portrays it like that, that people don't have a work ethic. I haven't had that experience. Maybe I'm blindsided by the fact that I had a very good peer group at the Air Force Academy.

Maybe it's true that our generation has a larger proportion of those that just don't want to work. I can't speak to that. I'm only 22. But I will say from as critical as I am, I don't think people need to worry about people my age. I think we have good mentorship, we grew up in good families for the most part. We've seen people go to work in the household for 15, 20 years. We know what's going to lead to financial success. That's been my experience, and man, I just really wish the media would give us a break a little bit.

Bill Keen: I was having breakfast yesterday with my son Devin, who you know, and you've flown with Devin. Devin looks up to you as a mentor. I specifically, Steve, made that connection between Matt and Devin because I realized Matt was going to be a great role model for Devin. But Devin is right on his heels here... I just had lunch with him. He's doing an internship. He's a mechanical engineering guy, third year now University of Missouri in Rolla. I had science and tech. I had lunch with two of his other friends there from Rolla yesterday as well, and boy, these guys are going places. They're thinking about how to add back to the stream of life and add back to the development of our country. It's amazing. Little different journey than you're taking, but all these guys with engineering

degrees, Steve, man, I'm starting to feel a little bit better about our future. You know it?

Steve Sanduski: Yeah. Yeah you're right. I mean I like how you laid that out, Matt, in terms of the three different types of people. Bill, you made a good point too. If you go back when you and I were in our early 20s, every generation has their thing. I'm a young baby boomer, and I think Bill, either you're a young baby boomer or an older Gen X'er, but-

Bill Keen: That's right.

Steve Sanduski: Every generation has its stereotypes. You also made a good point, Matt, when you talked about your peer group. It's like who are you hanging around with? Well clearly you're hanging around really high achievers, people who work hard, are passionate, and are going to get things done. I'm very blessed my three kids are all doing terrific and college graduates and gainfully employed, and they hang around like-minded people, so we're very very fortunate that they've turned out well. But I do think that a little bit of a stereotype of the millennial generation I think is true, and this is not a bad thing. That is that they know what they're passionate about. Like you said, that second group is ... they're going to work really hard, but the things that they're passionate about aren't necessarily things that they're going to get paid a lot of money for.

So like in your case you mentioned your brother loves the landscaping business, and so that may or may not turn out to be lucrative, depending on whether or not he builds a big business out of that. Other people might like to have a job that allows them to live in the mountains and do work virtually and be a freelancer, and so they might have to scratch and claw a little bit to generate business, but they're willing to make that trade off because it allows them to live the kind of lifestyle that they want to live. So I think we all just make our own choices, and I don't think any of us should be in a position to judge if that's a good choice or a bad choice. It's their choice. We have freedom of choice here in our country. But yeah, it is interesting to see how that all works, but I agree with both of you in that I think our future is going to be in good hands. People will always do what they need to do to meet the things that they need to meet to get through life.

Matt Robbins: Exactly. I would just clarify with that second group of people, I mean when you talk about going into what you're passionate about at a young age, let's give even the most extreme example, someone that flips burgers and wants to do that for the rest of their life. You may say, "Hey, he's just going to be stuck in a position that's not going to afford him a lot of wealth in the future," but I would disagree. I think if you work your way up and you work hard and you go into a management position and you start to own some fast food franchises, for example, you could work your way up and be very, very successful doing something you love.

With the example of my brother, I do think he's going to be very successful with landscaping because he's a smart business man, really he is. I think with a lot of people that are my age though, just the millennials, it just takes some time. A lot of people frankly don't know what they're passionate about, and that takes a few years to figure out, "Hey, what do I want to do?" So I don't know, just be patient. If you're frustrated with millennials, maybe.

Bill Keen: Steve, one thing that I did see, and I would think that we'll probably have this in our show notes, is I've got so many really awesome pictures of Matt. Devin and I visited Matt at the Air Force Academy Colorado Springs, flew out and saw him his sophomore year there. We've got some great pictures from there. Matt has some wonderful pictures of other things that he's got, but he also has a really interesting picture, and I think this is going to have to make our show notes, of you shaking hands with President Trump.

Matt Robbins: Oh yeah.

Bill Keen: On graduation day from the academy.

Matt Robbins: Yeah, that was an incredible honor to hear him speak. He was our commencement address speaker, Steve, so it's on a four-year cycle, and luckily President Trump ... He kind of shook that up because he was supposed to come in 2020, but he decided he liked our class a lot better than those folks, so he came a year early.

Bill Keen: He didn't shake stuff up, he's not known for shaking stuff up or anything, is he?

Matt Robbins: Oh, my goodness. Well, and here's the thing with the military, I'll tell you what, democrat or republican or independent, I don't care what you subscribe to-

Bill Keen: I was going to ask you. That was going to be my second question, Steve. So it's going there naturally. I was going to ask Matt what his, and I know a lot of times we don't talk hardcore politics on here, but I'm going to ask you because I think our listeners would be interested to hear about a guy your age and your position, what you're doing, what you're thinking about what you're seeing. So continue your thought right there that you had.

Matt Robbins: Sure, but I'll clarify. Second Lieutenant Matt Robbins doesn't have any sort of political animosity. He salutes whoever tells him what to do. I don't care if he's a republican or democrat. Matt Robbins, I will say though, and this is a function of my age, I'm pretty moderate. I try not to subscribe to a particular party because I don't like to be caught in a specific container with what I can believe and what I can't believe. I will say, I'll just be completely up front that fiscally speaking, financially, I tend to lean a little bit more to the right as far as what the government provides people. This comes from somebody who is receiving quite a bit from the government. I'm very fortunate. I can't be hypocritical about that.

But with a lot of social policies, I'm very, very independent, we'll put it that way. I don't believe in a lot of room for the government to tell people necessarily what to do I just really wish we could get somebody into office, or into office when I say not just the president, anybody that's representing us, that doesn't feel the need to subscribe to a party ideology such that you don't get anything done, and that's the current landscape that we're seeing politically right now, is that there's just not much getting done because it's just this political bantering back and forth. I think there's room for rationality that doesn't subscribe to one particular ideology, that takes this a la carte option with a lot of problems that our society's facing. I think if we rationalize through a lot of these problems and don't just lean towards one extreme or the other, we're going to get a lot of work done.

Let me just add a disclaimer though. The Air Force did not teach me to think about that. I mean that's just completely Matt Robbins' views. The military, I want to be clear with that, no matter what happens up in Washington, we're going to salute and say yes sir, yes ma'am. That's not a problem.

Bill Keen: Yes, and right now the way we stand, are you happy with the support the military is receiving at this time?

Matt Robbins: At this moment in time, yes. I think we have a friend of the military in Washington right now. I'll say that without a doubt.

Bill Keen: You see what I was talking about, Steve, when I said I'm pretty positive on the future with gentlemen like Matt Robbins taking the baton?

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, I do. I do. Since we're talking about the military and perhaps the role of the military, Matt, I'd love to get your worldview let's say, on the US position and what our role in the world is. It seems like the current administration has a certain worldview for the United States' role in the world, and other previous presidents may have had a different view. So how do you think about the role of the military today in light of the kind of threats that we face that might be different than, say, when we had World War II for example? That was a very different war for very different reasons compared to the kind of engagements that we tend to find ourselves in in society today. So how do you think about the role of the military today?

Matt Robbins: Sure, well I'll contribute what I can. I'll preface this with I'm not a political scientist, I'm an engineer, but so I've got a little bit of perspective. Ever since World War II, we've got the unique opportunity to be the world's superpower. Right now that's being contested. It's being contested by Russia. It's being contested by China. We have a special duty as the superpower that we are in the world to be able to make sure that the world is a safe place and we are keeping order. A lot of people don't like the idea of being a global police force, so to speak, but I do think if we were not involved in the conflicts that we get ourselves involved in, this world could be a much different place, and we would

face a lot more threats than what we currently see now. September 11th was, as I mentioned earlier in the podcast, as horrifying an event that was, it really did bring our country together and we were able to unify behind the foreign policy that we're currently pursuing.

I'd really hate for us to get to the point where we're so scared to get involved in these events that are happening in other parts of the globe that that threat now comes back to the homeland. That's the worst thing you want to see, so as a military officer, a brand new one at that, I'm willing to get involved. I'm willing to put my life on the line for these causes because I know it's what our country requires. It is very dangerous and no one wants to go to war, no one ever. I mean I have never met a war monger in my time in the military. No one wants to do that, but they know it's necessary. Let me say, I'm going to put myself on the spot here. I should never do this, especially not on a podcast, but they taught us a really really good quote I want to share with you, at the academy. We had to study these quotes out of a small book.

I said it so many times I still remember. Let me see if I can give this to you. It goes something like this, "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things: the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war, is much worse. He who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by exertions of better men than himself." I hope that was right. I did not anticipate coming in here saying that. But I mean that really kind of resonated with me as a cadet going through, is that, man this is a horrible thing, but man it is necessary. It is necessary, and I'm glad that we're on the end of being a global and not on the other side of things.

Bill Keen: Well-articulated, Matt. That's amazing. You kind of put yourself on the spot there, but that was impactful, impactful. We were talking about people that have gone before you, Matt. Steve, you might remember I've mentioned many times on our program General Hank Canterbury, who was one of my flight instructors. Do you remember us talking about him, Steve?

Steve Sanduski: I do, and I'm still waiting for you to get him on the podcast.

Bill Keen: Well Matt was a witness, I think we're working on him. I think we are.

Steve Sanduski: Okay.

Bill Keen: We were just in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin at the biggest air show in the world. 600,000 people, incredible. If you're an aviator or even if you just are interested in aviation, it's one of the most impressive weeks ever. I try to go each year. I had the unreal privilege of introducing General Hank Canterbury, who's now become a friend of mine, and he's actually written something in a book that I have coming out, Keen on Retirement. I had the privilege of introducing General

Hank Canterbury, who was in the very first graduating class of the US Air Force Academy in 1959 to Second Lieutenant Matt Robbins, who was in the most recent graduating class of the US Air Force Academy. I got to introduce those two and be a witness to them meeting, talking, even comparing their graduation rings. Is that correct?

Matt Robbins: Correct.

Bill Keen: Steve, I captured a few photos, impromptu photos of that introduction. I think we should probably upload those, because for me it was something very special to be a witness to, and an honor and a privilege to get to make that introduction. The general actually texted me the next day and asked for Matt's last name. I text Matt and let him know the general was asking more about his name, and Matt, you were a little concerned, weren't you?

Matt Robbins: That's pretty scary. Any time a general asks for your name it's either really good or really bad. So I don't know what to think yet.

Bill Keen: So General Hank Canterbury, 82 years old, 60 years Matt's senior. By the way, he is one of the most active, sharpest people. He's still a flight instructor. He flies upside down. He's an aerobatic instructor as well, something we all would look ... I would sure aspire to be as active as he is and engaged. I did say, Matt was a witness to it, he did say that he's going to consider being on the podcast, didn't he?

Matt Robbins: Yeah. Hope you get him on here. He's got ... I mean he could talk your ear off, Steve, for about three hours just about all the stories that he's done. It's absolutely incredible. It's daunting for me because I have to think, "How am I going to fill those shoes?" I mean the stuff that that man did, and a lot of people that get to his position in the military. It'll blow you away. I really hope you can get him on.

Bill Keen: Yeah. Well he had somewhere close to 400 combat missions, and I know that he had to jet us in an airplane, go into the water in Vietnam, and obviously he's still here so he made it. But anyway, maybe we can hear some of those stories if we do get him on. Thinking about people who have gone before you and the fact that him and others like him have passed the baton on to you, like you said, it's a little daunting, isn't it?

Matt Robbins: Very daunting.

Bill Keen: Well Steve, I think we should rotate into a little bit of his financial situation, what do you think?

Steve Sanduski: I agree, yeah. So we talked about the millennial generation and, again, we've got some stereotypes there, but I'd love to hear, Matt, about how you think about money, whether you're actually saving money at this point, maybe not

quite yet since you're just coming out of college, but how do you think about money at such a young age?

Matt Robbins: So I try to think as much as I can about finances, but it's very very difficult to at 22, just with all the financial pressures that we have, and the fact that I really don't make money to put away. It was very difficult to develop those skills at the academy, at least, because we couldn't really budget month to month. They gave us a stipend, but they could take out however much they wanted for uniforms, for haircuts, for linens, et cetera. So coming out with \$500 a month versus \$700 versus \$300, that was kind of in the wash. But now that I'm moving on and receiving Second Lieutenant pay, adult pay for once, I mean this is a great time of my life to be thinking about this kind of stuff.

To answer your question, Steve, I did start a Roth IRA when I was a freshman, and I've been maxing that out for the four years that I've had. Just trying to do my best to think about retirement, but for a person that's 22, I mean I've got to now pay rent on an apartment. I maybe have to look into getting a new car, because my first car isn't going to last 15 years. I wish it would. A lot of people, and I'm so happy I'm not in this boat, I'm so lucky, but a lot of people my age have crippling student debt that they have to now deal with. Now you tell them that, "Hey, we want you to put X% of your money into a pot that you can't open until you're 59.5 years old." They're going to look at you and shake their head.

So I am aware of my finances. I wish I knew more. I mean it's so complex, I really wish there was somebody that would be able to help us out quite a bit with this, but ... You're pointing at yourself.

Steve Sanduski: Yeah, I think I know somebody at Keen Wealth Advisor.

Bill Keen: Every bit of resources I can give to you, buddy.

Matt Robbins: Oh my goodness, I'd be appreciative. A lot of people my age just are really kind of lost with all the information that's out there. But I do know that it's a smart thing and I've bit the bullet many times when I've kind of felt the impulse and wanted to go out on the weekend and have some fun, and instead put that money in the Roth IRA. But it's interesting you bring that question up, Steve, because this is such a good timing with this podcast. Within the next two days, I have to make a very big decision when it comes to my retirement, because the military's actually changing their retirement system. They're giving me the option to opt-in to this new one or stay with the old legacy one, so it's just another ... At 22 years old I'm having to do some research and make some pretty big decisions about what's going to impact me 40, 30 years down the road.

Bill Keen: Amazing. Ray is our financial planner here, who was in the Air Force. So we have a lot of information about how programs work, so we need to talk in the next two days.

Matt Robbins: All right.

Bill Keen: Okay? Yes, absolutely.

Matt Robbins: Appreciate that.

Steve Sanduski: All right, well I think maybe this would be a good place to wrap up. Matt, thank you for being on the show, but more importantly thank you for dedicating your life here to the military and protecting our country. I feel better knowing that we've got people like you that are out there and serving our country, so thank you for that service. I wish you nothing but the best, be safe in all that you do.

Matt Robbins: Thank you all so much. It was such a pleasure to be able to talk to you both today.

Bill Keen: Matt, thank you for taking the time to come in. Really, really appreciate it. I look forward to watching what you accomplish over your career and your life. It's going to be a blast, it's going to be a privilege.

Matt Robbins: I hope it'll be good.

Steve Sanduski: All right. You can go to keenonretirement.com, get all the show notes and details that we talked about here today, and also listen to some of our previous episodes. So thank you all for listening, and we'll wrap for today. Thanks and take care.

Keen Wealth Advisors is a Registered Investment Adviser. Nothing within this commentary constitutes investment advice, performance data or any recommendation that any particular security, portfolio of securities, transaction or investment strategy is suitable for any specific person. Any mention of a particular security and related performance data is not a recommendation to buy or sell that security. Keen Wealth Advisors manages its clients' accounts using a variety of investment techniques and strategies, which are not necessarily discussed here. Investments in securities involve the risk of loss. Past performance is no guarantee of future results.