

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:16,861

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

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00:00:16,861 --> 00:00:21,386

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations but not necessarily

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00:00:21,386 --> 00:00:28,393

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

4

00:00:28,393 --> 00:00:38,404

Five, four, three, two, one.

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00:00:38,404 --> 00:00:42,729

There are people who will do anything for thrills.

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00:00:42,729 --> 00:00:54,742

We call them daredevil's.

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00:00:54,742 --> 00:00:58,746

One mile an hour off and that means ten feet and you can eat it.

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00:00:58,746 --> 00:01:03,751

Who are these people and what drives them on to flirt with destruction?

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00:01:03,751 --> 00:01:19,768

Will they be possessed by a daredevil death wish?

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00:01:19,768 --> 00:01:23,773

The tower is 55 feet high.

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00:01:23,773 --> 00:01:34,784

The water is 18 inches deep.

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00:01:34,784 --> 00:01:40,791

The man will survive.

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00:01:40,791 --> 00:01:57,809

Daredevil gained great popularity in the 1920s.

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00:02:40,855 --> 00:02:45,860

The inspiration and the most emulated daredevil of them all.

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00:02:45,860 --> 00:02:51,867

What Houdini could actually do has been simulated and faked by many in the years following.

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00:02:51,867 --> 00:02:55,871

He was the father of it all.

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00:02:55,871 --> 00:02:59,875

Here in rare footage taken in New York at the turn of the century,

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00:02:59,875 --> 00:03:13,890

this master of the art demonstrates his escape abilities.

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00:03:13,890 --> 00:03:16,893

The ability to escape is at the root of all stunts.

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00:03:16,893 --> 00:03:28,906

Not out of a stray jacket or trunk or flaming pyre, but from the clutches of death itself.

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00:03:29,907 --> 00:03:35,914

Whenever you have winners, you may have losers.

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00:03:35,914 --> 00:03:50,930

On a warm July day in 1930, a well-dressed gentleman at a turtle prepared for a journey into legend.

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00:03:50,930 --> 00:03:57,937

They will attempt a stunt that has almost become the signature of the death wish.

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00:03:57,937 --> 00:04:02,942

To go over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

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00:04:02,942 --> 00:04:07,948

The greatest asset a daredevil has is himself.

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00:04:07,948 --> 00:04:12,953

Only through discipline and practice can he even hope to survive.

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00:04:12,953 --> 00:04:18,960

But even those are not enough if you lack the most important quality of all.

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00:04:18,960 --> 00:04:20,962

Luck.

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00:04:20,962 --> 00:04:28,970

Perhaps some stunts should never even be tried.

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00:04:28,970 --> 00:04:34,977

What is it that compels a man to go past the boundary of what is safe in order to risk his life?

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00:04:34,977 --> 00:04:38,981

None of the stunts you will see in this program should ever be attempted.

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00:04:38,981 --> 00:04:41,984

They are part of the world of the daredevil.

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00:04:41,984 --> 00:04:47,991

A world where an inch, a second, or a bad reaction can make the difference between life and death.

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00:04:47,991 --> 00:04:54,998

Our quest then is to find out what is the source of the daredevil death wish.

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00:04:54,998 --> 00:05:03,007

At first glance, there's nothing that would separate Pat Jackson from any other 42-year-old housewife and mother.

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00:05:03,007 --> 00:05:07,011

Unless she happens to be on the road.

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00:05:07,011 --> 00:05:29,034

Pat is one of the members of the World Series of Thrills, a group of daredevil who tour the country.

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00:05:29,034 --> 00:05:36,042

I consider myself a daredevil. I've been in the business for several years and I just love it.

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00:05:36,042 --> 00:05:44,050

I consider myself the normal housewife. I cook and wash dishes and wash clothes and go to the market.

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00:05:44,050 --> 00:05:58,065

It's like everyone else.

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00:05:58,065 --> 00:06:03,071

It's very rewarding. It's something different. It's a challenge.

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00:06:03,071 --> 00:06:11,079

I feel very lucky that I've accomplished something that not very few people do.

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00:06:11,079 --> 00:06:19,088

As the crew sets up her most spectacular stunt, a motorcycle jumps through flaming boards. Pat thinks about the danger.

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00:06:19,088 --> 00:06:25,094

I'm always a little shaky before every show. There's a certain element of danger.

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00:06:25,094 --> 00:06:38,108

If you lose control of your bike or if you're not lined up on the ramp properly, you crash into the

uprights.

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00:06:38,108 --> 00:06:44,114

And if you're not going fast enough, you could get burned. It gets pretty hot.

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00:06:55,126 --> 00:07:19,152

Roger Cober is only 22 years old. His specialty is called the Slide Full Life.

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00:07:19,152 --> 00:07:25,158

You've got to keep your heels up and your elbows and your back of your helmet so they don't hit the ground.

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00:07:25,158 --> 00:07:31,165

If you put your heels down, you can just start rolling. I've got a few scratches. I haven't broke any bones yet doing it.

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00:07:31,165 --> 00:07:43,177

If you think about it, it just might happen. Just try not to think about it.

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00:07:43,177 --> 00:07:58,194

As soon as the truck reaches 50 miles per hour, Roger will begin his slide. This time, the

unexpected will happen.

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00:07:58,194 --> 00:08:05,201

A slight miscalculation sent Roger into a dangerous tumble.

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00:08:05,201 --> 00:08:22,219

Bruised and visibly shaken, he refused to acknowledge how close he came. The slow motion camera shows what happened.

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00:08:22,219 --> 00:08:28,226

Hi there. I'm Hank Wise. What you're about to see is all the Iron Man.

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00:08:28,226 --> 00:08:46,245

Relying solely on the precise alignment of veteran Daredevil's Elden Daniels and driver John Anderson, Iron Man Wise puts his life on the line as he prepares to let more than two and a half tons of truck drive over his body.

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00:08:46,245 --> 00:08:55,254

Danger is the weight of the automobile that we're using. We're using a truck. So we're coming pretty close to a 5,000 pound vehicle.

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00:08:55,254 --> 00:09:06,266

At one time, I had the truck come off the end of the ramp, broke both legs. You know, you do something 100 times, you're out of start gathering towards experiencing these little difficulties.

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00:09:06,266 --> 00:09:16,277

I think the epitome of the stuntman is that, uh, comes your time to go, you'll go. And up until that time, you want to fill your life with as many exciting things as you can.

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00:09:16,277 --> 00:09:24,285

Critical Inches Separate Anderson from Success or Agony.

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00:09:26,288 --> 00:09:35,297

I look forward to telling my grandchildren about the times I've been running with a truck. I live through it.

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00:09:35,297 --> 00:09:47,310

This is a charge that's been set and taught to me some years ago by a man by the name of Johnny King. He perfected this event. It's one that's going to cause quite a bit of noise, quite a bit of excitement, and a real blast.

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00:09:47,310 --> 00:09:56,320

What's going to happen first is the placing of the charge. As you get into place of the charge, you then check your perimeter, be sure everything is clear, and then hope for the best.

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00:09:56,320 --> 00:10:22,347

The danger involved, of course, as most everybody knows, explosives are not to be played with. It's not a toy. It is a calculated risk, and it will work today.

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00:10:22,347 --> 00:10:31,357

We generally feel that people come out to see what's going to happen to somebody. If the blood is spilled, they kind of like to be there. They're not mercenary and want to see it, but if it happens, they don't want to miss it.

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00:10:32,358 --> 00:10:40,367

After placing the equivalent of six sticks of dynamite below himself, John Anderson prepares to set off the charge.

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00:10:40,367 --> 00:10:59,387

You kind of get a self-sustaining thought that, Cassius is really what it's all about. It's a sense of freedom. And as you talk about a sense of freedom, nothing's better than coming close and walking away.

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00:11:00,388 --> 00:11:19,408

Anderson withstands the deafening force of six sticks of TNT. He, like the other daredevil we spoke with, seems to exist for the sheer thrill of cheating death. Why? What is the real motive behind the daredevil death wish?

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00:11:20,409 --> 00:11:23,413

Suicide!

69

00:11:25,415 --> 00:11:42,433

Where do daredevils come from? At his school in California, veteran stuntman Jim Cajana trains the daredevils of the future. And though they may call the jump suicide, safety and training are of prime concern.

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00:11:42,433 --> 00:12:01,453

Approach the trampoline with your feet distanced apart so that when you're going to hit the tramp, your left foot will be forward. Okay? Then you watch your spot on here because if you're not watching the trampoline, your foot could get caught here, or when you jump, it could get caught in between the springs.

71

00:12:02,454 --> 00:12:14,467

Hopeful to become stuntmen for films, these young people must first learn their craft from the basics up. Without the proper equipment and professional training, none of these stunts should ever be tried.

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00:12:14,467 --> 00:12:39,494

Okay, this is a special harness made for this. And just remember you guys, you can't do this without this type of jacket. You have to have the special materials and the equipment for these sort of things. Now walk the bike out, walk it out little by little so you can feel where it's coming to. Keep going, keep going.

73

00:12:40,495 --> 00:12:47,502

A dangerous movie stunt is demonstrated and attempted. Each step of the way blocked and discussed.

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00:12:52,508 --> 00:13:01,517

If done incorrectly or without proper equipment, the illusion of being shot off a horse or speeding motorcycle can be fatal. It requires training.

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00:13:09,526 --> 00:13:12,529

Alright, hold it, come down and feel it.

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00:13:13,530 --> 00:13:16,533

Alright, let's go.

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00:13:17,534 --> 00:13:18,535

How do you feel?

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00:13:18,535 --> 00:13:19,536

Alright, good.

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00:13:22,540 --> 00:13:37,556

There is danger in everything. What I try to do is set these stunts up and make the illusion out of it and show them the difference between what you can do without thinking and what you can do with them.

80

00:13:37,556 --> 00:13:48,567

I'm gonna do a suicide here. Actually just land on your back, but like, let's see the difference here. You gotta go a lot slower because it's a distance. You fall, if you go too far, you land in your neck, so I give it a shot.

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00:13:51,571 --> 00:14:03,583

Daredevil is a guy that just says, well, let's just go for it. Stuntman nowadays kind of figures everything out and makes it look like an illusion. That's what we want to do with these kids. We want them to know that there's an illusion factor.

82

00:14:04,585 --> 00:14:18,599

Children, kids, they have no fear whatsoever. They'll do anything, so what I have to do is try to mold that energy that they have into safety. All kids love to do anything. If they see somebody jumping off a building, they want to do it too.

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00:14:19,601 --> 00:14:32,614

Somewhere in the enthusiasm of these young people, we may find the seed of the Daredevil wish. The belief that there is always a way to do what seems impossible.

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00:14:39,622 --> 00:14:44,627

Perhaps the ultimate Daredevil story belongs to Chuck Strange, pickup pilot.

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00:14:48,632 --> 00:15:08,653

Wow, I love the sound of crunching metal. That's what it started out to be. I started off with demolition derbies and really enjoyed it. I started wanting to be more specialized. I had my very own unique act. Nobody was jumping a pickup. They said it was impossible and I said, great.

86

00:15:08,653 --> 00:15:15,660

Next thing you know, I'm flying a truck through the air. Flying a pickup is just one of the ultimate stunts. It's unheard of. You shouldn't be doing it.

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00:15:15,660 --> 00:15:26,672

The very first pickup jump was ramp to ground and the doctor said I should have died in that one. I landed so hard that they said my spine should have been shoved into my skull and I should have been a foot shorter which just ruins a wardrobe.

88

00:15:26,672 --> 00:15:39,686

My world record jump, 107 feet over 18 cars, was set at the Ontario Motor Speedway and that jump in itself was in fact flying a truck through the air further and farther and higher than the Wright Brothers first airplane flight.

89

00:15:40,687 --> 00:15:48,696

Your lineup is very critical. A bike jumper can look at his ramps at a speed and the whole thing at one time. When you're in that pickup you've got to look at the speed or your ramps.

90

00:15:48,696 --> 00:15:55,703

Coming down the lane, you've got to make sure your mouth is closed or you'll bite your tongue off from the blow. You've got to exhale where your normal reaction is to inhale.

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00:15:55,703 --> 00:16:10,719

To me it's something scary as it goes swimming.

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00:16:10,719 --> 00:16:23,733

Why a daredevil seeks out danger and death has been researched by psychologist and sociologist Dr. Samuel Z. Klausner, author of *Why Man Dares*.

93

00:16:23,733 --> 00:16:47,759

In fact what they've done is increase the general energy level by going through fear and by going through fear and overcoming fear they end up with a quantum with an amount of euphoria that they couldn't have enjoyed otherwise and that's the base of the motive for doing some of these thrill seeking things.

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00:16:54,766 --> 00:16:58,770

They know the thin line between euphoria and horror.

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00:16:58,770 --> 00:17:20,794

I never had any nightmares until that fateful dome crash and when that happened I mean I don't know it must have taken me at least six months. I mean I would literally wake up in the middle of the night the usual routine you always hear about sweating and I would just relive that crash over and over again and it was rather horrifying because it was a very spectacular crash and just to think about it, you know, kind of gives you a shiver.

96

00:17:23,797 --> 00:17:28,802

The place? The Houston Astrodome, 1978.

97

00:17:28,802 --> 00:17:33,808

On the pass that I made to go up the ramp, suspension broke. I just knew I was in trouble.

98

00:17:33,808 --> 00:17:52,828

Most of the 59,000 people watching were sure that Chuck Strange was dead, a fear shared even by his own crew.

99

00:17:52,828 --> 00:18:07,844

The next thing I know I was not unconscious from a blow to my nose which broke my nose. It came just that close to cutting my head off. About 30 seconds later I came too and your head's down, there's blood cushing out of your mouth, your nose.

100

00:18:07,844 --> 00:18:19,857

The first thing you see are your bones sticking up out of your arms, your elbows are broken. As a result I was hospitalized for four weeks and had to undergo seven operations. Six to my arms and one to my nose for plastic surgery.

101

00:18:20,858 --> 00:18:37,876

We sometimes wonder why people return to the stress seeking situation even when engaging in stress seeking, doing something risky, leads to physical harm. People will end up in the hospital and as soon as they're out of the hospital go back into the stress seeking act.

102

00:18:37,876 --> 00:18:55,895

One of the things that we find is that there's an obsessional character and if you will almost an addictive aspect to stress seeking. Once somebody has tasted it, the need to do it again becomes even stronger than it was the first time.

103

00:18:55,895 --> 00:18:59,900

I'm not going to be satisfied until I've flown a truck over 40 cars.

104

00:18:59,900 --> 00:19:05,906

After two years of recovery and countless operations, Daredevil Chuck Strange plans his future.

105

00:19:05,906 --> 00:19:24,926

I've also got this hell bent dream if you don't mind that I want to fly a diesel truck with trailers and I want to jump that over at least 20 cars, 25 right in that area. I'm convinced I've worked out the possibilities. I know I can do it. I've got it all worked out and I'm just very anxious to fly a diesel truck through the air.

106

00:19:24,926 --> 00:19:42,946

Most of the Daredevil's have a deep desire to live to the hilt and they're engaging in these stress seeking activities are really ways in which they can maximize the effect of their living.

107

00:19:42,946 --> 00:19:51,955

They think I have a death wish. People on my line. Three times now I'm supposed to have died. Doctors have said you did not survive that crash. So I have jokingly said I'm immortal.

108

00:19:51,955 --> 00:19:58,963

But when you come that close to dying and believe me I've been there. I think you appreciate life. I know you appreciate life more than the average person does.

109

00:19:58,963 --> 00:20:10,976

I mean sure people are out there that have been injured bad and still depraved in some way but when you've come that close to dying, just a simple thing like seeing the sun come up, the birds singing to get up and walk again with your own feet.

110

00:20:10,976 --> 00:20:17,983

I appreciate life very very much. I do not want to die. I believe in what I'm doing. If I thought I'd die tomorrow I would never get in a pickup again.

111

00:20:17,983 --> 00:20:23,989

I've always said I'm either going to be dead or retired by the time I'm 35 and I got to get in there.

112

00:20:24,990 --> 00:20:41,008

It's very easy for the daredevil to go over the brink, to push himself or herself to the edge and move into self destruction so that being a daredevil or a stress seeker almost can become suicidal.

113

00:20:42,009 --> 00:21:01,029

Let us warn the foolhardy. What professional daredevils do let others not try to imitate. Recognize the dangers for what they are.

114

00:21:01,029 --> 00:21:12,041

Daredevils are special members of our society. By taking us with them to the edge of life they make us acutely aware of our mortality and the value of our existence.

115

00:21:12,041 --> 00:21:18,047

We can all feel a little more alive because of these extraordinary people and their daredevil death wish.

116

00:21:31,061 --> 00:21:50,081

Coming up next in search of continues with an investigation of fire walking. Then on FBI the untold stories see the story of hijacker D.B. Cooper.

117

00:21:50,081 --> 00:22:00,092

And on Sunday night battle veterans and historians explore in depth the first combat hotspot of the Cold War in the Korean War, fire and ice.

118

00:22:00,092 --> 00:22:04,096

Beginning at 8 here on the History Channel where the past comes alive.

