

## **Hull, James USCG**

[00:00:14.68] JAMES HULL: I was born in Portsmouth, Ohio on April 30, 1947. I still consider North Ridgeville, Ohio, where I grew up as my quote, "hometown", but I've lived in many places around the country. And right now it's Cape May Point, New Jersey.

[00:00:35.03] MARC HENDERSON: Do you want to talk about any family members growing up?

[00:00:38.13] JAMES HULL: Probably recognizing my mother who was a single parent for three children and my grandparents next door that provided me with a foundation that said, hey, if a job's worth doing, it's worth doing right. So I remember cleaning out the raspberry bushes after I did something that probably wasn't right.

[00:00:55.58] So I would give them credit for steering me in the right direction. I was 19 when I graduated from high school in Ohio, and then I went to the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. And I went there right around July. I don't remember the exact date. I graduated in '65. I graduated from the academy in '69.

[00:01:19.31] MARC HENDERSON: 1965, how did you end up at the academy?

[00:01:26.15] JAMES HULL: Pretty good story, actually. Growing up, I used to watch West Side or West Point Story on television. And my family didn't have lots of funds, but the object was to go to college. And I thought going to the Military Academy at West Point would be a good way to pay for my education. It sounded like it would suit me because I played-- I was a gym rat, and it was a team type of endeavor.

[00:01:55.19] Well, anyway, I applied there, and I ended up second in the nomination from the local congressman. But before that or during that time, Otto Graham, a football coach and NFL legend sent my football coach a letter. And this is a small high school. Well, Otto Graham was a top notch football player in Cleveland, Ohio, the Browns, et cetera. Anyway, he sent a letter to my football coach, and it was a wrestling season.

[00:02:29.18] He comes running in the locker room saying, Jim, Jim, you've got to apply to this. You want to go to a military academy. This is my hero. Make a long story short, I was accepted. Otto Graham called me up, and then later in my career, I was at the academy when he was there. He stayed in my house. Anyway, there's a connection there. But literally, it was a letter from Otto Graham. I never knew anything about the Coast Guard Academy. And after 36 years in active duty, I kind of thank him.

[00:03:02.57] MARC HENDERSON: What was the sense of the Vietnam War at the time?

[00:03:06.68] JAMES HULL: It wasn't at a-- I would call it a boil in the United States. I think there was a lot of antiwar protesters, not necessarily where I grew up in northern Ohio, but you read about the West Coast, you read about the East Coast. There was the black community integration issues, whatever. But it was a very volatile time and controversy over the war.

[00:03:33.56] And, you know, Lyndon Johnson, Nixon, then Ford, and so it was a tumultuous period of time. And what I knew was hey, there was something to be done, and it seemed like a just cause to protect that day the domino theory of communism spreading through Southeast Asia. I knew there was a draft.

[00:03:59.21] I knew that the controversies over that and then the lottery system, and I knew there was conflicts over people getting deferments and not getting deferments. And some of my classmates went into the military. A guy I knew that I went to church with actually was killed in Vietnam. But I knew the draft was controversial, but I don't think that necessarily affected-- I knew I might have to go but I wanted to go anyway.

[00:04:29.95] MARC HENDERSON: Can you tell us a little bit about your academy experience?

[00:04:33.04] JAMES HULL: I remember my family taking me there, and we went to the old World's Fair in New York on the way. And they dropped me off in front of Chase Hall. And they thought they'd see me again. Well, they did at Christmas. We went in. They lined you up. They cut your hair off, gave you a few things, yelled at you, and then you went out and raised your hand in the afternoon. And the rest of the summer was kind of a blur working with all the people from all over the country, small country. But there was 250-- I think around 258 people entered and about 132 graduated. I remember 4th of July. I remember--

[00:05:12.84] MARC HENDERSON: Why?

[00:05:15.00] JAMES HULL: We all got together. That was the first time we had two minutes off, I think. But, you know, I remember the people not by name necessarily, but the physical and mental challenges. So in many respects, it's a breaking down to put back together to form teams. And you had to help each other. You couldn't do it all on your own. And some people left, some people stayed. But it was geared towards the service and what it represented. But it was like a tremendous athletic contest. If you wanted to win, you had to play the game and you had to play hard.

[00:05:50.66] MARC HENDERSON: Did you get any specialized training from while you were at the academy?

[00:05:55.61] JAMES HULL: I would call it the sea and its lore. We had pulling boats. We'd run down in the morning and go over and-- are you talking about the summer or my total academy time?

[00:06:06.98] MARC HENDERSON: Yes.

[00:06:07.66] JAMES HULL: Over the total academy time, we took cruises. One cruise we took with part of my class, we went on high endurance cutters through the Great Lakes, went to Grand Haven, Michigan, which is home to a festival every year for the Coast Guard. We also took the Eagle, the sailing ship that we got as reparations from Germany, the horse vessel, and sailed it to various locations.

[00:06:34.83] So it was an experience of learning the nautical history of the Coast Guard, not in the depth that I realize today I probably wish I would have learned. I'm still learning history about the Coast Guard. But it was to inculcate you into a military organization, challenge you both physically and mentally because I was a pretty big frog in a little pond, and I found out there was an awfully big ocean with sharks in it, so to speak. So in those days, 1965, the people that came out of New York and California were a year ahead of everybody else.

[00:07:13.35] So those guys skated, and we all had to memorize and catch up. But then after a year, we got ahead of them because we'd been studying for a whole year, I think. But there were people from every state in the union, and we only had, like I said, less than 200 people by the time the end of the summer I think was over. And you bonded together. And I'm friends with every single one of them today. And those people would come to my rescue today if I needed them.

[00:07:41.48] MARC HENDERSON: Do you think your academy experience prepared you for your first assignment as an ensign?

[00:07:48.50] JAMES HULL: I'll be perfectly frank. Probably not to the extent it should have. I was probably still a little immature. I didn't know as much about life as I thought because I went from this little place in Ohio. 10, 15 miles was my kind of circle of where all my relatives and everything were, and then you go to New London and you really-- your first couple of years, that's where you are.

[00:08:13.52] And even over time, I was a guest after one year in my own house because I'd only get home for a couple of weeks in the summer. So did it prepare me? Probably not as much as a seagoing officer as I would have thought, even though I took navigation and I took everything else. So I was an apprentice but I learned pretty quick.

[00:08:33.62] MARC HENDERSON: Sure. So how did you end up at your first assignment? Could you take us through that?

[00:08:41.39] JAMES HULL: The way the academy worked is you worked through your academy time and you got a class rank academically, and one was for leadership, whatever. And really, class rank determined where you were on the list. It's not that way anymore. But if you were number one in the class and they had 130 people, there were 130 billets and the first guy got first choice and you went down then the last guy didn't get a choice. I was fairly lucky. I was in the early 20s.

[00:09:13.62] But when it came time for my pick, we still had a lot of World War II vessels doing ocean station, weather stations out in the middle of the ocean. But I picked a brand new ship that was just coming out of Avondale Shipyards, a 378-foot Cutter Rush. So I was really part of the pre-comm detail the first couple of years of its life and service. And I wanted to go on a new one. I'd been on the old ones going through the Great Lakes and I said, why do I want to live in World War II? I'd rather live in 1970.

[00:09:47.97] MARC HENDERSON: So you arrived at the Rush. Did you attend any schools en route?

[00:09:53.55] JAMES HULL: I did not attend any schools en route. I stayed at the academy over the summer as a summer ensign to train, to help facilitate the incoming class of swabs, we called them. And I helped the second class who were the people that oversee the new people coming in. So I was there until August I think it was,

[00:10:15.30] and then I had a month where I got married and drove across country and checked in on a Friday and said-- or on a Saturday. I came in and I said, hey, I'm going to check in on a Saturday. I got tomorrow off. I'll see you Monday. They said fine. I get up Monday, go to the ship and the engines and everything are all running and they say, oh, we forgot to tell you we're getting underway for five days. So I left my wife at home and that started my career. And then I went to schools.

[00:10:42.51] MARC HENDERSON: What was your indoctrination to the ship?

[00:10:44.48] JAMES HULL: I was a deck watch officer. So I wasn't going to be an engineer because you either went deck or engineering in those days, and I wanted to be a deck watch officer. So first thing was to get qualified as a deck watch officer. They assigned me a job as antisubmarine warfare officer. We actually had torpedo tubes and everything else in those days.

[00:11:06.84] And I worked in the Combat Information Center. That was the assignment they gave me. I mean, I didn't really have a choice. They said, OK, here's what you're going to do, and in an emergency, you're going to go to this place. And you had drills, and you learned what your job was. And then we got underway quite significantly because remember I said it was a brand new ship. So we had to go to shakedown training in San Diego.

[00:11:30.78] I went to San Francisco, by the way. I went to shakedown training in San Diego. We went up to Seattle. It was a brand new ship with controllable pitch propellers and turbo and diesel engine-- or jet-powered Pratt and Whitney engines to go at high speeds of like 33 knots. And the Navy was really interested because they'd never experienced somebody with controllable pitch propellers. The shafts would turn or the propeller blades would turn vise just a strict propeller.

[00:12:02.55] So anyway, we had a lot of things to learn. And it was faster than any ship the Coast Guard had. And it was the first one on the West Coast. So it was a pretty busy period of time because everybody on the ship was learning how to run it. It's kind of like for general population would say it's a destroyer, a small destroyer.

[00:12:19.74] So we had a 5-inch mount. We had protective equipment. I told you we had torpedo tubes, and our mission was ocean stations. At those days, it was a mission that had really-- it's time had passed. Commercial airplanes traveled across water, and the navigation system when they did it wasn't very good. And we'd go out in the middle of the ocean and we'd call it Oscar Sierra on station.

[00:12:45.06] So the airplanes had some kind of a beacon to know where they were in the middle of nowhere out in the middle of the ocean. That only lasted a couple of years, and I did a few of those patrols. But we did that. We did environmental stuff. We did fisheries. You know, we did a little bit of everything on the West Coast. Operated with the military in exercises. I did several of those. And of course, we went to Vietnam and we operated with the Navy that entire time.

[00:13:18.60] JAMES HULL: The crew, to date it, we had Filipino stewards that helped the officers. We still had to take care of our own bunks and everything, but they did the cooking and whatever. And this was a way for people from the Philippines to actually be gone for a while and make good money and go back home and live very well in the Philippines.

[00:13:40.53] We had different populations on board, not too many blacks, but we had blacks on there and they were part of the crew. Everybody was part of the crew. You had to work together. But predominantly, it was people from all over the United States. Because it was Vietnam, we had a tremendous number of people on this 160, 170 man crew that had gone to college either one year, three years, had graduate degrees or whatever.

[00:14:12.27] I mean, my roommate graduated from Dartmouth. So people came in to the Coast Guard, some of them to avoid the draft or because they liked the Coast Guard, and others, but it was a draft populated in many respects crew. We even had some people from the Korean War, a couple of the senior chiefs and whatever. The average age, though, was still only probably 23, 24 years old, but it was a good crew. You had to work together and you learned a lot about people.

[00:14:45.18] MARC HENDERSON: Did you ever witness any social tensions or turmoil amongst the crew?

[00:14:53.28] JAMES HULL: No, there was always-- sometimes personalities would clash, but I thought the draft, if it did anything, it brought America together. What it really did is in a crisis or a combat situation or in an exercise, you all had to do your jobs. And you really had to help people because not everybody had the same level of experience or education or whatever.

[00:15:19.80] I never saw any social tension. The people from Alabama worked with the people from New York, worked with the people from whatever. And in the officer corps, there were Reserve officers, Academy officers, career officers and people that were there just to do their time and get out. But when you had a mission, we all pulled together. And they kind of froze the crew because we knew we were going to Vietnam, so many of the crew were together for a whole two years.

[00:15:51.63] MARC HENDERSON: How long were you on the ship before you found out you were going to Vietnam?

[00:15:56.19] JAMES HULL: I don't know how I knew, but I knew we were going to Vietnam. At least that was in the ethernet someplace. We were going to Vietnam, and we were not going to go right away. But after we got our shakedown cruise and became more proficient, we would go to Vietnam. So I anticipated it.

[00:16:13.20] We weren't allowed to tell anybody once we found out. I don't remember the exact day because it was no surprise. It was more when we were leaving. So it was in the fall of 20-- or 1970 that we went and came back the next fall. It just made about a year from the time you left to when you came back.

[00:16:31.84] MARC HENDERSON: Did you have any mentors that you remember?

[00:16:36.42] JAMES HULL: My mentor probably was a guy named Gary Bucher who had been on there for a year or so before me. He was at part of the very beginning when they were just putting the racks together on the ship down in Avondale, but he was one of the best officers I ever knew. And he didn't want to become a career officer, but he was-- and I told you he was a Dartmouth graduate.

[00:16:58.56] And I'm not saying that separately, but he could take issues. He knew what he was doing. He was a professional, and maybe he didn't want to necessarily be on the ship. He might have wanted to do something else. He was very professional and, you know, I wanted to be able to have the same kind of maturity he did when he had to do things.

[00:17:18.10] MARC HENDERSON: What were some of the attributes that made him so great?

[00:17:22.41] JAMES HULL: He was professional, wasn't afraid to speak his mind if things weren't right. He still followed orders and everything else and we were in Combat Information Center. Again, I was a watch stander in there, and you had to do navigation. You had to do piloting. You had to do exercises.

[00:17:42.75] You had to do communications with airplanes. And it was a team of people in there, but you stood watch even when you were just underway. And he really knew what he was doing and was a professional at it. And I wanted people to respect me, and people respected him. So I kind of followed his lead.

[00:17:59.55] MARC HENDERSON: Did the Rush have a flight deck?

[00:18:01.54] JAMES HULL: We had a flight deck. And that was also unique in those days. And we had to get qualified for helicopters to land behind us and you have LSO officers waving wands. We all had to learn this stuff. But yeah, we were-- everything was new. So whether it was how fast you were going or whether to use diesels or turbines, flight decks and then what do you do with the helicopter if you have it?

[00:18:27.48] It wasn't assigned to us permanently, but you'd practice the landings because the airplane pilots also had to get qualified. And you had to do so many a year. And we didn't take one to Vietnam. Nowadays, they always go with ships or drones or something. But you find out quickly you do have capabilities on a ship, but it's nice to have something that can go far away and tell you what's ahead of you or watch a situation for you.

[00:18:53.48] MARC HENDERSON: Can you tell us about preparations to leave and then your trip to Vietnam.

[00:19:01.26] JAMES HULL: San Francisco-- you asked me about the time I was in the academy. San Francisco was another world when I got out there. I mean, from Connecticut to Ohio to San Francisco, there were people and thoughts and processes and antiwar-- Ron Dellums from Berkeley. Patty Hearst was kidnapped while I was there, but it was one of the most exciting places I'd ever been in my life.

[00:19:24.60] So my wife and I and a bunch of other young people we knew-- and there weren't too many married out there-- we always went into San Francisco on Friday nights. There were so many flights to Vietnam. You could actually take a flight out of Traverse City and Travis Air Force Base and go to Hawaii where my sister lived for the weekend if you had one day off or something. And you could go to Lake Tahoe skiing. And there weren't too many hills in Ohio or Connecticut.

[00:19:48.70] So anyway, there was a lot of life to learn at that time, a lot of protests, a lot of antiwar feeling and that particular thing. But San Francisco at that time had a shipyard. There were four aircraft carriers there. There was a weapons station there. There was a submarine base there. It was a Navy town, so to speak, but there was a lot of anti-military, anti-Vietnam stuff going on.

[00:20:15.73] But it was a very exciting time. I was still growing up and maturing, and I was newly married. And I'd probably take a second on that. I was gone all the time. Out of the first two years we were married, I was gone 3/4 of the time. I was either underway and then you come back. And even when you're home, you're standing--

[00:20:36.68] and when I got back from Vietnam, they told me I had to stay three more months. And all the Reserves left. And I had to be around to get the ship ready for-- as the ops officer to get the ship ready for another exercise. But now you take my wife. We got married when she was a junior in college. Well, she went back and finished college. But that was a pretty sad parting, by the way, when we had our last dinner in Chicago.

[00:21:02.05] She flew-- because she had to leave to go to school earlier than I deployed. We'd go and then when I'm coming back, I'm getting ahead of myself. You had to number your letters so you knew which-- because we got everything via high lines and ship UNREPs over there. The letters got a little separated at the end.

[00:21:27.07] And anyway, it was a very good reunion, but she wasn't sure who was coming back after all this time. So we had this little-- and she knew more of Army people coming back. And they experienced maybe different things than some of the Coast Guard did. But anyway, here we are. We've been married 52 years. But it was-- you only talked to the person two or three times over ham radio or whatever during this whole period of time.

[00:21:54.29] So the family part I learned a heck of a lot about life and people that helped me through my career, but there was no press release or band coming down or whatever. So we're going to Vietnam, and everybody's getting everything prepared. And you're doing all this stuff because you're going away for a year.

[00:22:13.10] And I remember vividly the boss comes down, the three-star admiral off of Treasure Island. And we're all standing there in our uniforms. And he wishes us well. We get underway, and the fire boat shoots off red, white, and blue and we steam out of the harbor. And we come back a year later, there's the fire boat.

[00:22:34.63] The boss comes down again, different one. Says, oh, great job. You guys really did good things. Put on your civilian clothes. Some people got leave right away. Some didn't. And you went home. There was no anything. We didn't wear our uniforms to work before or after because they didn't want people to know you were in the uniform because people would sometimes do things that weren't right.

[00:22:55.27] But there was no fanfare. You went away for a year and you came back. And I went to Vietnam in one of the safer ways to go. I didn't go on Hamburger Hill or things like that, whatever, in Vietnam. JAMES HULL: We went from San Francisco to Hawaii, did some more training, but really stopped there to get some advice because there was a big Navy base there at that time.

[00:23:23.07] We trained in San Diego before we left, but then when we really left, we went to Hawaii and then we proceeded west to Subic Bay in the Philippines, picked up our communications codes which, by the way, didn't work when we actually got to Vietnam. But thank heavens for an LST that gave us them.

[00:23:41.79] But we went to Subic Bay and kind of got the lay of the land. And again, remember I'm a pretty young person. I'm just doing my little cog in the wheel, but it still was serious business. So then we went to Vietnam and did MARKET TIME and coastal patrols for the next year. You go out for about a month, maybe two months then you go into port for four or five days and-- anyway.

[00:24:04.53] MARC HENDERSON: Were you still an ensign during this deployment or did you make--

[00:24:08.31] JAMES HULL: I made lieutenant junior grade during the middle of it. I came back as a lieutenant junior grade. And I kind of say I went from ensign to ops officer because I was the ops officer coming back. And that was a higher job than me, but truly, we'd been together so long. You really did know what you had to do.

[00:24:27.09] And I was a little worried about being a navigator because I wasn't the greatest back at the academy. But I found out there are really big charts. The bigger the chart, the more the sun lines cross right together. But anyway, it was a-- it still was a great-- it was an experience. I say great. I learned so much about life and people and professionalism and whatever. So that's where I was.

[00:24:51.12] MARC HENDERSON: What were your first impressions in Vietnamese waters?

[00:24:56.58] JAMES HULL: We were to stop infiltration of arms and people and whatever. And of course, you got to remember what you're listening to the newspapers because it was



newspapers in those days. And I would say I didn't have the same opinion after a while that the papers portrayed because if Vietnamization was working so well, why couldn't you just go in any of these places?

[00:25:21.51] We were basically from the Mekong Delta around to Cambodia, but I would say within, I don't know, 20 hours, 24 hours we got there, we got orders to go up off of Hanoi, which wasn't obviously friendly territory. They had information on a trawler that was coming down that was filled with people and ammunition.

[00:25:46.20] And five days after we were on station, we were in charge of an operation to stop this trawler. And it was classic dark of the moon, you know, everybody turns on their lights. They had to get within three miles. You knew the guy was bad all along. I mean, why couldn't we take care of him immediately?

[00:26:09.03] But we had an engagement with another Coast Guard ship. And I think it was 125-foot Navy vessel and a minesweeper. And the classic warning shots escape and then he pulls off his tarp and starts shooting at us with a long bore weapon. And so it was a very interesting night.

[00:26:35.20] So five days after we were there, we sunk a ship. And people back home, that made the evening news. And everybody knew that it was-- we had just gotten there. But you didn't communicate right away. So it wasn't till later they found out it really was us. But that kind of set the tone for us very quickly, and we followed this vessel for five days before he went into the Mekong Delta or tried to.

[00:27:00.65] So anyway, we seemed to always be where there was something happening. We all did our job. Technology was not what it is today. We'd draw a little box on the radar, and we made sure the contact stayed in it. And we really couldn't see it all the time. And we were in pretty busy commercial waterways.

[00:27:20.63] And I remember the night-- I'm getting away for your question-- the night some ship captain calls out and says, Coast Guard ship, Coast Guard ship, turn on your lights. And we're being, you know, hiding behind them someplace or aside. But we followed the ship, and what did the crew do? We had those five days that everybody had to make sure the weapons officers knew what they were doing.

[00:27:42.26] Everybody had to make sure they knew what their job was going to be because we knew at some point in time we were going to confront it. Meanwhile, the ops officer and whatever, we had to make up plans for the other ships. And our boss would tell us who was going to help us or whatever depending on what happened.

[00:27:56.78] But we knew when the dark of the moon was, and so we kind of figured them in a couple of days. So everybody knew what their job was. There was no hesitation in what our job was. I did feel any-- we were over there to do a job, and this is what we were supposed to do. And all of a sudden it was real.

[00:28:15.26] MARC HENDERSON: Sounds like the training adequately prepared you.

[00:28:18.26] JAMES HULL: I think we were more than prepared to do what we had. Some of the equipment didn't exactly perform up to what I would call correct standards because it was old fire control systems even though it was a brand new ship and that would break down once in a while. But we fired over 3,000 rounds in gunfire support.

[00:28:40.37] So we sunk the ship and they captured some people on shore. And we recovered some of the ammunition and went into I think it was Vung Tau. But anyway, Cam Rahn-- it wasn't Cam Rahn Bay. We went in and they displayed the weapons. Nobody had done this in quite a long time.

[00:28:59.64] So anyway, it kind of melded us under fire, knew where we had some weak points and whatever and then we went back on patrol. And all your letters, all your food, everything came via UNREPs. And that wasn't a common Coast Guard practice. Well, I probably did 30 of them. I was the accounting officer during that period of time. Everybody learned how to do these things. Helped me later on in my career when nobody had done it except maybe me and a couple of other people on the ships I might have commanded.

[00:29:28.43] So we got all of our food and ammunition from Navy vessels. You'd share information with other ships on patrol when you were there. But we did gunfire support a lot. The Army would call in or the Marines would call in and they had OV-10 airplanes. And you could see them sometimes, and then they had spotter planes and they'd tell us whether we unfortunately killed a water buffalo or bad guys and peoples or disrupted a supply line or whatever. And those statistics from our ship are-- like any ship over there-- are available.

[00:30:03.45] One night we get called to the south of Vietnam and there was an Army-- It was a fire base in South Vietnam that was getting overrun by the Vietnamese. And another Navy vessel and ourselves provided gunfire support all night. And the classic called in the rounds who were out here, called in the rounds closer, called in the rounds closer, but literally, we had to stop firing at one time because the gun was so hot. We had to slow down.

[00:30:35.63] We shelled all night and basically saved that battalion because then the next day they were able to get reinforcements and whatever. And that never made big time news or anything. We didn't even understand exactly the whole situation until later. Then before we left, we had another ship that we ended up sinking while we were over there right before we left, so it was beginning and end.

[00:31:00.35] But by the time we left, everybody knew their job. They'd say, OK, we're going to have an UNREP. Everybody got involved. Officers enlisted, whatever. We all got involved. So it was a pretty proficient crew that we did our job very well. And the mission was to stop infiltration. And take a look at what the Coast Guard does today, boarding fishing vessels. And those were the Vietnamese fishing vessels, OK?

[00:31:30.50] I also remember one night this fishing vessel because we didn't harass them but you did go and find out who they were, so it's the middle of the night and I have to admit I have an 8 to 12 or something like that. And this guy we said, OK, what are you doing, et cetera? He

wouldn't respond. And then he finally responded and then he came and pulled right in front of us and slowed down, you know, and you all of a sudden pull back the engines.

[00:31:57.17] So there was a lot of different experiences that you learned about driving a ship and operating a ship. And I always took the 4:00 to 8:00 watches in the morning and afternoon. And people thought I was crazy. But I like seeing the sun come up. I like smelling the bacon and eggs and a cup of coffee, quiet time. I probably have 5,000 sunrises and 10,000 sunsets. And then at night, you'd go up on watch and then you'd get a half an hour off to go eat and then you'd go back up. And usually the movie was at 8 o'clock after I got off watch, so life was pretty good.

[00:32:34.93] JAMES HULL: This was the most modern ship probably in the Navy too, by the way. I had a stateroom with one other guy up towards the bow of the ship. The crew had berthing areas of maybe 20 people in them but still they had modern racks. They weren't in hammocks. They weren't in burlap, you know, aluminum racks that they slept in, nice showers and heads. And I shared-- there were four people and we shared a head in the middle.

[00:33:09.94] By the way, no women in those days. It was strictly men before things changed later on. And so it was all a bunch of guys. And again, the average age was 23, 24. So the berthing areas were a little more raucous, whatever, than, say, officers quarter, but the living accommodations on the ship were really very good.

[00:33:35.04] Food was really good. It got a little monotonous at the end, I will be honest. I didn't eat eggs for two or three-- 2 and 1/2 years after I got off that ship. I just didn't want eggs. But anyway, the food was pretty good, both mess deck and officers, although we had our own galley, it was a combination type thing.

[00:33:59.60] Then the captain had his own meals up in his cabin. I only went in that room a couple of times and only once did I ever go past his desk. But anyway, those were the times we were in. And the food was good. We a few times maybe got close to the end of maybe ice cream or milk or whatever and then you'd get an UNREP and get more food, but hey, I came back-- how do I say? I was more slender when I got back than when I went over.

[00:34:32.30] MARC HENDERSON: How much time did you have to yourself?

[00:34:34.73] JAMES HULL: You lived in the wardroom. So we played pinnacle and hearts and spades and watched movies together, so it was a common area. And then you had your stateroom but you still shared with somebody else. So private time was sometimes mentally arrived at. When I got home, my wife would literally have to come and hit me sometimes for me to hear her because I could tune people out.

[00:35:04.38] When you're in a room with all kinds of things going on and you're at one end of the table before dinner, there was lots of noise and I could just-- to this day, if I concentrate on something, all that other stuff is just noise and I don't hear it. So that was one thing I learned. You created your own space. And I can't say I liked everybody on that ship.

[00:35:25.42] So there were a couple of people I forgot I was even with I think at the end. But I say that in jest. We all had our jobs and you all had your groups and then you had watch and you'd have a different group, you know, officer, enlisted. And it was good. It was 150 people, basically, that were together for a year and everybody knew their role. And it was a situation that was accepted and tolerated by everybody.

[00:35:50.13] MARC HENDERSON: What did you do for recreation or off duty activities at sea and ashore?

[00:35:56.25] JAMES HULL: At sea, we had some athletic equipment, but it wasn't like today. So you'd run around the flight deck if the waves weren't too big. And it was usually pretty good weather over in that part of the world except for an occasional typhoon or something but only one of those. You'd exercise. You'd walk around the flight deck, but it wasn't the exercise-- not everybody exercised like today. There's a bigger emphasis on it.

[00:36:28.49] So you developed your routine, and plus you were on watch eight hours a day. When you were off, you did exercises and did your job. But then on Sunday morning, you could sleep in. It was quiet. And Saturday morning-- from Saturday noon to Sunday night if you didn't have an operation going on, it was a little less active. But you got into a routine and you just accepted it.

[00:36:52.55] And you knew when you were going home, so you counted those days as you got to the end. But that's what we did on board. And there would be various events. And you'd have Christmas and everybody would dress up and go to the wardroom. And so we had-- and Easter and things like that. But you found your own private space and you found your way to make you happy.

[00:37:18.47] I mean, some people read thousands of books. But people adjusted to what it was. And there wasn't tremendous grumbling because everybody was in the same situation. But you did miss home at the end. I won't say you didn't miss some of the things from back home. And ashore, we went to Hong Kong. We went to Singapore. We went to Thailand two or three times. We went to Subic Bay a couple of times. On the way home, we went to Sasebo and again I'd mentioned Hong Kong.

[00:37:51.02] MARC HENDERSON: What were those in port periods like?

[00:37:55.01] JAMES HULL: I refuse to admit on some because it was a pretty raucous time sometimes, but you went out with your friends. And your friends took care of you, whatever. I mean, I won't say we didn't drink too much at various times, but yet I saw parts of the world. And Bangkok was a phenomenal city and learned things I didn't know anything about and went up the Klong and Phraya river.

[00:38:22.07] Hong Kong was one of the most beautiful cities I'd ever been to. We went to Singapore, which was still a bastion of high British royal military stuff and we stayed there. So anyway, it was-- you look forward to those times, and things were cheap. I remember one time

five of us rented a driver in Bangkok for two cartons of Lucky Strike cigarettes, which were about \$2.50 for a carton a piece and \$50 I think it was.

[00:38:56.60] And he drove us around and was with us the whole time. I spent money and bought some things while we were over there that some of them I still have today at home. So I bought my wife some jewelry and things that I wouldn't have bought back home, but you needed that every 30 to 60 days just to kind of, again, go spread out and get some fresh air off of the ship. And then you'd get back on and leave.

[00:39:22.76] MARC HENDERSON: The guys that were in-country Vietnam on the ground got R&R. Was that opportunity afforded to you as a ship's crew?

[00:39:33.56] JAMES HULL: No. You really were on the ship, and when you went in, you went in. But we went to all those different places. The Army guys would maybe go to Hawaii or there were-- Japan or someplace. But we did get that every several months or whatever where-- and great respect for the people that were in the jungles that weren't allowed necessarily to do everything I think they should have been doing.

[00:40:02.60] But they had a much harder time than we were. And Army helicopters would come out on the ship and we'd-- sometimes for ammunition or a home-cooked meal. So our experience was different, I would say, than the Army, Marine people in-country, so to speak.

[00:40:25.25] MARC HENDERSON: Your port visits were like little mini R&Rs as well?

[00:40:28.49] JAMES HULL: Absolutely, absolutely.

[00:40:36.09] MARC HENDERSON: Does any specific pop culture memories stand out for whether they be books or movies or music from that time?

[00:40:47.50] JAMES HULL: Music, obviously. It was the late '60s. So I mean, there's '60s on every channel, you know, Sirius XM today. Same music. And you went back to San Francisco where we left and it was all the smoke-filled wine bars and stuff at night. So there was music, but you were pretty busy. And remember there was no computers with books or anything else, so this was all hardcover stuff. So things got shifted around all over the place, and so you read a lot of different books.

[00:41:20.74] But you were gone and you got the news and you read it and you read books. And me I'm an action adventure type of guy, so I read a lot of that stuff. But in terms of culture or anything back home, you read about the pot culture. And things didn't get better while I was over there in terms of antiwar rhetoric or any of that type of stuff. So it was just a very interesting time, but we were pretty darn busy doing what we were doing.

[00:41:51.40] MARC HENDERSON: Did drugs ever find their way to the Rush?

[00:41:53.38] JAMES HULL: Yep. Not that I knew it, but on the way back, some guy had bought some heroin on the beach. And the doc noticed this guy with tracks down his arm. And

actually, he went through withdrawal. They just stuck him in the sick bay and he didn't get much help. But, you know, so there were some drugs and there were some others too. I mean, I found out later there was probably more than I ever suspected.

[00:42:22.42] One guy actually I found out later had brought-- hidden some on the ship someplace and brought it back. Does that surprise me? No. But we weren't allowed to use drugs or anything else, but the culture that was going on at the time in America enjoyed those fruits, illegal as they were. And San Francisco was pretty high on that list. But by and large, we never had incidents of-- that was the only incident, really, of somebody actually being on drugs. And luckily, we caught-- they caught it early and took care of it.

[00:43:02.41] MARC HENDERSON: You also mentioned a couple of holidays. You mentioned Christmas and Easter. What made those memorable?

[00:43:13.24] JAMES HULL: We made it different to try and make it like home, or we all had one present from home or something like that. I can't even remember all of it. But we'd all get dressed up and have a good meal, and the officers would serve the enlisted on the mess deck. And I took some of these back on my ships because I had to be underway later in my career over Christmas.

[00:43:37.81] And you try to make it memorable, special. You couldn't be home, but you still could have turkey and gravy and all the trimmings and okra if you came from the south. And there was a combination of chiefs quarters and officers quarters and enlisted. And there was a camaraderie among all of us.

[00:43:58.15] And we were lucky that all three of those groups got along pretty well. JAMES HULL: I voraciously read all the news. And so you'd get like armed forces news would get printed out. I'd read that-- and I still read the news every day-- and see if it comported to what I was experiencing in Vietnam even though I was off shore.

[00:44:24.54] MARC HENDERSON: Did it?

[00:44:25.92] JAMES HULL: No, I didn't think it did. I remember being off of-- right near the Cambodian border and all the news says we're not doing anything in Cambodia. And there's about 45 Navy ships off there doing stuff. You know, Vietnamization, everything was safe. Well, we couldn't just stop every place. And then we had a guy come out in a helicopter that hadn't had an American cooked meal in six months. He'd been living in the jungle with the Vietnamese.

[00:44:56.61] And he got sick as a dog because he ate all the food he hadn't eaten for a while. So he had to kind of get better before we could send him back. But we didn't experience that type of stuff. But they said things were going well, and I couldn't exactly see how they were going well from what I could see from where we were.

[00:45:22.07] JAMES HULL: I remember-- and again, I went one of the safest ways I could go to Vietnam even though we got in Vietnam-- they didn't have destroyers. They didn't have mines

out there where I was. The aircraft carriers were all up north doing the bombing missions and all that stuff. And we were down south preventing end around or whatever it might be.

[00:45:41.48] We got involved with several-- it was UDTs in those days, not SEALs-- to try and rescue prisoners of war a couple of different times. And we'd work with the Vietnamese. Never worked. It was always blown and we never were successful because I think we told them and the bad guys knew.

[00:46:04.44] But anyway, so that was kind of an overall thing. And I remember going on a MEDCAP one day and-- medical CAP-- we'd provide medical assistance onshore. And very experienced military Jim Hull had his sidearm which I knew how to use and took my guys with their rifles. But this was supposed to be really safe.

[00:46:25.30] Anyway, so we go in, and this was a place that made nuoc mam, which is pressed fish that I'd never eat-- I've never tasted it after I saw how it was made. But anyway, we went in there and the doctor came in and really did great work and everything else. But right in the beginning, all of a sudden there's a whole bunch of weapons fire. And the ship's way out there, and I'm in here. And the ship that brought us, the boat, is gone.

[00:46:52.26] And I've got about six guys and whatever. Well, it was them setting up a perimeter around there. But that was kind of a tense 10 minutes in my life, but it ended up OK. But everybody kind of took cover and did whatever there for a few minutes till we figured out what-- they never told us what they were going to do, but that's what they did.

[00:47:09.84] So we did MEDCAPs around the different villages and whatever. And none of them were totally safe if you know what I'm saying. So I never felt like oh, I could go like an American city and it'd be safe, big, large or small. Weapons were everywhere, and this was down in the south, the Mekong Delta and that area.

[00:47:33.99] And then before we left, on the way home, we were going to a place called Zamboanga in the Philippines, southern Philippines. And my CO calls me up and says, hey, Jim, I want you to go set this trip up for us. Well, we were the first American ship since the Second World War to go to this place called Zamboanga, which is still in the news, so to speak, because it's where the Muslims and the Filipinos still have conflicts.

[00:48:03.12] But it was where the Huks and everybody went into the mountains and where MacArthur said, I will return. So anyway, I flew-- they dropped me off in this town, An Thoi, in southern Vietnam and left. And I'm in this place, and there's an airplane going to pick me up at some time. Well, Holy mackerel, here I am next to the Cambodian border. Here's Jim Hall. You know, I'm not trained in all this, but I had my stuff and talked to the people there and whatever may say.

[00:48:32.82] A day later, an airplane picks me up. Who's piloting the airplane? A guy that I was supposed to wrestle from the Air Force Academy but I had hurt my knee. But I had met him once a long time before, and he was the pilot on this plane taking us up to Saigon. So I'm on this plane, and we're going over the Mekong Delta and there's no real friendly area.

[00:48:54.70] You would not want to get shot down there. And I thought we were too close to the ground to be honest. But anyway, again, the sense of the whole thing. But I was an adventurer and I was glad I got the opportunity. Then I actually was in Saigon for about five days. And you land at Tan Son Nhut airport, and it's miles of corrugated steel runway, thousands of Jeeps and trucks and tanks and all kinds of stuff.

[00:49:25.37] And then you go into town and-- very French colonial, lots of bicycles and everything else, but also sandbags and machine gun posts on corners and whatever. And it was a beautiful city but it was a city under siege. And Tan Son Nhut was just a giant place. And it was right after an offensive and I don't remember the name right now where there was a fire base. And it was Vietnamese on one-- our Vietnamese on one side and Army on the other,

[00:50:00.76] and some of the Viet Cong came up through the South Vietnamese side and started throwing satchels in the American side. And so it was a pretty tense period of time. It wasn't going so well for the Coast Guard-- or for the US government at that time in that particular situation because we wanted to work with the Vietnamese, but yet there always seemed to be lapses of information integrity.

[00:50:24.40] But anyway, I got on an airplane, flew to Manila. I'm 22 right now, 23 maybe, I don't know. And it's me with a satchel of that. We're going to come here in another three weeks. So then I get to Manila and I had to stay overnight. And that was a big, huge city, but I didn't get to see much of it. And then the next day I get on a small airplane with Mayor Brown, who's the mayor of Zamboanga or that colony down there.

[00:50:50.65] And I get down there and I'm the only American in the whole place. But they assigned me somebody from the mayor's office, a young guy like me. And the article was about to be mustachioed young officer coming to set up this ship visit. So anyway, the ship comes later. By the way, you could go down on the waterfront or in the place and you could buy a whole chicken for \$0.20. There was some of the best chicken I'd ever had in my life.

[00:51:21.82] The first night I went to dinner and I ordered lobster, langouste. I didn't realize I ordered a langouste with a tail about that big. It was for a family. But anyway, I ordered it, so I remembered it. The ship came, hosted thousands of Filipinos. There wasn't much brass left on the ship that was out in the open, by the way, when they left. We didn't realize that. But it was a very good visit, and it was, again, the first American ship from World War II.

[00:51:49.30] The most memorable part of it-- and here I'm talking about Vietnam, but it's the experience. The last night before we left, the guy I had worked with and some of the other people to help set this-- because we had some social functions, whatever, we were there three days I think-- invited me over to the house. And we sat around a table with about 10 people on it.

[00:52:08.92] And it was me and this guy and a couple of other people who I had worked with that were older than I was. And then these three or four really pretty old crusty guys with a couple of fingers missing and scars, they were all Huks in World War II. They had gone up in the mountains and were the freedom fighters.



[00:52:27.88] So I found out what squid ink was. I wasn't sure I wanted to eat it, but I had to. So anyway, it wasn't bad. But at the end-- and I'm getting a little emotional about this because I've never, never ever forgotten it-- one of these old guys goes up and there's a bottle of Johnny Walker Black on top of this chiffonier thing in the corner.

[00:52:47.47] And it's a dining room table kind of thing. He comes down. We all get a little shot glass. We all take a shot and toast America and our cooperation and then they put the bottle back up there. And that was from the Second World War. And those guys were the people who were up in the hills fighting the whole time when MacArthur and everybody left after that. So pretty significant event for Jim Hull.

[00:53:11.65] And anyway, so we did gunfire support. We did fisheries patrols that relate well. And I thought the Coast Guard acquitted themselves very well. The 82 footers when I got over there were already given to the Vietnamese, but they didn't have the wherewithal to keep them running. Most of them were apartments for the military because they couldn't get them to move.

[00:53:37.69] So you ask me how I felt about things. I wasn't a totally happy camper when I came back either, I'll be honest. One, for being gone so long, two, because I didn't think we were prosecuting-- from my opinion. You knew where the bad guys were and you couldn't go get them. Well, I never wrestled with one hand tied behind my back. So anyway, I would say that was a little bit of it. And I've read a lot more about it since that time. But I had great experiences in terms of life during that time.

[00:54:14.22] MARC HENDERSON: Can you talk about your leadership?

[00:54:19.05] JAMES HULL: Remember there were still people from World War II or Korean War or whatever. And when I was a captain in the Coast Guard, I thought I was old. I'm not old now. But anyway, you retire early even though I retired later than most. So your captain is kind of king. It was still the remnants of-- the best way to describe it is the officers were here and the enlisted were down here.

[00:54:48.02] Today it's like this. The chiefs, whatever, know more than the ensigns and JGs. They did back then, but there-- the structure was a little different. All the officers went to college. Nobody down below necessarily did. But on my ship, I told you I had lots of people no matter what-- for whatever reason. But it was a more hierarchical stay in your lane type of situation, not you got to do this because I tell you but you still work together.

[00:55:14.84] But it was not as integrated in terms of officers and enlisted. And chiefs stayed in the chief's quarters. The enlisted stayed back in the mess deck or down in the berthing area and we stayed in the wardroom or our staterooms. And then on various occasions, you'd do whatever. You'd have bingo nights or things like that on the mess deck and you'd all sit there and do stuff or you'd have cookouts.

[00:55:41.24] We'd have cookouts on the fantail on Sundays and things like that. So we all got together, but everybody knew where they belonged in the system, so to speak. And the chiefs helped all the junior officers because they were the experts in their particular areas. Like the

navigator helped me and the CIC officer helped me and the ASW chief helped me learn my job because although we were trained, we weren't trained in everything. And so we learned while we were over there.

[00:56:10.97] It's much more integrated in terms of today than it was then. And that was just the way it was. I'm a pretty open guy, and I always worked with everybody. But the CO of the ship was a good guy, don't get me wrong, but you asked how it was. I was navigator at the end, and you'd take him in the evening a little piece of paper that says, this is where we are, captain. We are going to get back to America when this is done. I'm going to get you there.

[00:56:39.35] But anyway, you'd go in and do that and he'd be sitting at his desk. Honest to God, I never went past that desk in my entire time. And I was involved in operations and all kinds of stuff. You'd either do it in the wardroom-- the only people that went in there were the ops officer or the EO, the XO and him basically, except when we came back from Vietnam and I still don't have orders for where I'm going.

[00:57:02.03] And he calls me in and sits me down, he and the XO, and they say, Jim, you're going to be here for another three months. I'm like, what? I thought I was leaving. Well, everybody's leaving, and month after we get back or a month and a half we got to go on a SEATO exercise, which-- with Southeastern Asian nations and whatever. And you're the only one that's ever done one of these, so you're going to stay and help.

[00:57:30.49] That was the only time I got past that front table. I will tell you when I became a CO, many people came into my room and I'd have them for dinner and whatever. But the captain was the god. Captain is still the boss today, but he's not quite viewed as the god that maybe in those days, you know, how it was.

[00:57:49.24] MARC HENDERSON: So on the Rush, was your captain a commander or lieutenant commander?

[00:57:53.20] JAMES HULL: Captain. He was a full four striper, so to speak. The XO was a commander, three striper. The ops officer was a lieutenant commander. The EO was a commander and then you had your chiefs and whatever. And you had a lieutenant weapons officer, a lieutenant CIC officer or whatever. And those were the jobs that I came up to.

[00:58:24.57] You asked about mentors. I'm going to drop back for one thing. Gary Butcher, the guy I talked about from Dartmouth who I still communicate with. And then I would say the EO, a guy named Pete Bunch, who's passed away since that time, made admiral by the way. Three of us made admiral that were on that ship, the captain, the EO and me. So I must have learned something in that process.

[00:58:50.01] But the EO was a good guy that I related to very well. The three of us would go someplace. And I was pretty junior, but they pulled me along with them anyway. JAMES HULL: LORAN was very valuable in those days that now GPS has taken advantage of it. But the ability to determine where you were was critical in many respects to go back to the point or you get-- we find somebody someplace you could get to it.

[00:59:23.73] And LORAN would do it. But I also found out that there was nothing, nothing when I went out there in the middle of the ocean. They had a couple experimental things that you tried. But if the weather was bad, you didn't know where you were. So it was star sites. So look where we are today. My phone is so advanced compared to anything we had in those days. But yeah, so navigation was one that they were working on, communications was another to get the different kinds.

[00:59:51.24] I wasn't the communicator, so I can't give you what all that was. We had an older fire control system, but I knew what the Navy had and I wish we had it. We still had torpedo too. So a lot of our technology was not the top of the line even though it was a brand new ship. We had top of the line engineering stuff and all that. But some of our weapon system could have been better in my opinion.

[01:00:23.04] JAMES HULL: It was a personal thing. My work job and whatever was really pretty good. I can't complain. I mean, I didn't like everybody necessarily as well as some other people. I kept learning new jobs, so that was good. But I remember in Hong Kong on leave and I was with Pete Bunch and Gary Bucher. And I'm getting pretty tired of being gone and not seeing my wife and the whole deal. And it was-- I don't remember. It was one of the last port stops before we headed home.

[01:00:54.81] And we went over from-- you know, you anchored. You didn't go up to a dock so you had to go in. And then we took a boat over to Kowloon and went someplace and I remember drinking too many Bloody Marys, coming back and saying-- throwing pennies. And these guys are saying, hey, come on Jim, you know, let's see. What I did I drank too much and they took care of me.

[01:01:18.21] Well, the next morning I had the first watch. And I wasn't quite in as good of condition as I would have liked to have been. It was the only day I missed quarters in my whole life. Anywhere. But I had to have the watch, so I went up there and drank coffee. And by the way, there was no motion. There was nothing on the ship. It was the people on watch and nobody else, but if you've ever gone out of Hong Kong--

[01:01:46.04] But why did you say it was the worst day? Because I really missed home. And I had talked to my wife I think that day or bought things. And it was just kind of a building up of my own personal life and saying man, I'm ready to go home or whatever. And those guys took care of me like I had taken care of some other guys. But I would say that was my emotional low. I had many high days and many normal days. So I always believe the glass is half full. So I was just giving you a personal experience.

[01:02:18.65] Professionally, we seemed to do very well in the things we did, and so I reveled in that aspect. JAMES HULL: I would say when we sunk that first ship. And we did not necessarily pick up the bodies that we had killed and/or had taken care of, but we were successful. Our training worked. We weren't perfect, let me tell you. When we started getting fired back on, there were some elbows and other parts of bodies moving around quickly on the bridge and whatever.

[01:02:56.91] But we all did our job, and we ordered people to do things. And at the end of it, we did exactly what we were supposed to do. We saved people's lives by not letting these things into country, so we did our job. In a sporting event you win the game, you feel really good. You don't win the game, you don't feel so good.

[01:03:20.46] Another high day. I took over for the 12:00 to 4:00 watch. I went up and took over the guy and he has the chart on the table. So I look at it and everything else. I say, any contacts out here? Yeah, there's a couple over here, blah, blah, blah, so you do all this. And I'm up there 15 minutes and I open up the chart because we were close to the end of the chart. I open up the chart, and on the other part of the chart are all these uncharted pinnacles.

[01:03:48.44] Stop the ship. And remember, I'm again a real seasoned 22-year-old guy, a year and a half in the military. And I called my boss up. But you have to understand one of our sister ships had left a mission, was late getting to their R&R in Hong Kong. And he went over an area of uncharted pinnacles and lost all except for two blades on his ship and had to get towed to the Philippines to get fixed and was out of commission for six months. So that's a pretty big deal, end of a career in some respects.

[01:04:19.94] But anyway, I opened up the chart and there were these pinnacles. My boss never forgot that, never forgot that I stopped the ship. And then we proceeded and we were able to do it, but I always learned to look at the-- past the crease and the fold on the chart. You want to really know where you're going not just the next 25 minutes or so. But that was a good day.

[01:04:47.13] JAMES HULL: Not much. When we went into other ports, there may be some. But you notice the ports I went into, it was Japanese ports or Hong Kong. We never really went into Cam Ranh Bay. We stayed out of there. That was up north by the demilitarized zone. And we had some communications with the Australians and the British, but not too much with anybody else. I don't remember doing joint operations per se, but there was involvement of those but we weren't that close to them.

[01:05:28.18] MARC HENDERSON: Did you have much interaction with the local population?

[01:05:31.90] JAMES HULL: Only in the MEDCAPs, and when I went ashore and then we went ashore after we had these operations that were successful, they wanted to make some press conferences. But we also had Vietnamese liaison officers on board. And I was always very interested in those particular people.

[01:05:49.54] They were people that their country was under siege, and I find-- he was a young guy but gave us advice on various things. And I became friends with one and we went to Singapore and he says, here, why don't you come with me? He took me back through-- I don't know where I was, but all I know is if something would have happened, nobody would have ever found me again as long as I live.

[01:06:14.14] But I found he was as professional as he could be. But I have to say that my interactions were more on an operational basis. And I never felt things worked well when we went with them because it seemed like the missions were always scrapped at the end. JAMES

HULL: We returned home, and I don't know the exact date right now, but in the fall of 1971. We returned and then literally, we got back and--

[01:06:53.85] MARC HENDERSON: What was the trip home like?

[01:06:55.92] JAMES HULL: Quiet, quiet. There really wasn't lots of discussion. But we had lots of motorcycles, lots of stereo equipment, lots of jewelry, lots of junk.

[01:07:08.09] MARC HENDERSON: You had motorcycles on board?

[01:07:09.74] JAMES HULL: Oh yeah. When we got to Japan on the way home, boy, people bought motorcycles, bought-- those were the days of all the radios-- there was always music, but everybody could buy high-end stuff for cheap prices. So we packed the ship up with all that stuff. But the people were quiet if you kind of get my sense. Everybody knew their jobs. Nobody really wanted to talk too much and you wanted to come back.

[01:07:34.70] For me, I didn't know what my next assignment was. And I was going to see my detailer before I saw my wife. And I got my orders when I got back. I didn't want to do certain things, and I held my guns and I was lucky because I went as XO of a ship. But I still was on there for three more months.

[01:07:53.83] But it was a relief. And a whole bunch of people got out early, all the Reserves. And I'm talking about when we got back. But it was anticlimactic. We came back, the fire boat. You guys really did a good job. Here's a few words, go do your thing. And so I got leave right away, but then I came back and many new people came aboard and whatever. And we had to get ready for this exercise.

[01:08:21.69] So I learned a lot during that too, but I was also very ready to get off of the ship by that time. But I felt very good about the ship in terms of I thought we did our job. We didn't have any real incidences. People got along, and we were professional in what we did, so. JAMES HULL: You got to know people very well. And I found out that people are fallible but that doesn't make them bad people.

[01:08:53.33] And when you're gone for a long time, people can make some mistakes. But it doesn't make them bad people. It's part of life. And the bottom line is families are so important, camaraderie, trust. Everybody has good parts, and what you want to do is bring out the best in people. You don't concentrate on the worst. And you treat them-- it sounds like I'm dictating, but I want to be treated right from above even if I make a mistake. And I want to treat the people below me right.

[01:09:26.96] But I hold people accountable. And I think that was part of my growing up and learning even though I always felt that way from athletics. On a ship like that where you become very-- you expect people to do the jobs that they're supposed to do and you tell them if they don't. But you don't want to repeat those things. But I learned a lot probably more about people and operations were my big things I got out of there.

[01:09:57.29] But also anecdotal if anybody ever watches it, you know, I told you about my wife-- my experience. But then my ops officer, we got a new ops officer. They actually got rid of the ops officer right before we left for Vietnam because he wasn't quite up to speed and we got a new one. Well, he and his wife had never been able to have children. Well, he found out two months into our patrol that his wife was pregnant for the first time.

[01:10:23.30] So that's how I became ops officer on the way back because he went back for his child being born. And I'm glad he had a child, and I'm glad I got to go. But things like that happened. And families weren't taken care of back home as much and didn't get paid as much. Remember it was G.I. Bill, so you were in.

[01:10:43.63] You got paid what you got paid. And there were people that didn't have enough money. And you found out people that had problems at home. And you'd get a letter four weeks after something happened, and that's where you hung together as well. But the personal dimension of this was significant.

[01:11:03.82] And I told you we still have the Rush crew that's still alive, which is not-- out of the 100 and, say, 30, whatever, that were there the whole time, there's 25 or 30 or more passed away at this point in time. But the yeoman sends us notes every once in a while. And I told him about the commemoration committee, and most of them have pins right now, so I've been glad. And when I finish this, I'm going to go back and do that.

[01:11:33.44] But operations, how to do operations, how to work with them, how to work with DOD, and that helped me through the rest of my career, reading op plans and op order because nobody can plan like the military. And if you haven't been in operations like that, you don't have plans that are quite planned out. We don't do it as well as DOD, but we do it better than any of the civilian side in the government. And I learned a lot about that.

[01:11:58.08] MARC HENDERSON: Did your combat experience change or affect your life afterward?

[01:12:02.31] JAMES HULL: Yup, I'd say it always affected my life. It took me four years to go to the Vietnam Memorial. And still to this day, it's an emotional event for me and I wasn't out in the jungles. But so many people, 50-- you know, 60,000 Americans, people my-- basically my generation were killed.

[01:12:35.51] And today one person gets killed and you get all excited about it, but there are 50,000 who never got to experience life like I did. And one of the guys on my ship when they did the Vietnam Wall was there. And I remember being in my house and watching the ceremony and crying, getting emotional like I am right now.

[01:13:02.68] And I vowed if I ever got involved in that stuff, I would make sure that people had the right training, the right equipment. And I'd take care of the families so that the person that was going to war or going into combat or going to whatever it was didn't have to worry about his family to the extent I could so he could concentrate on his situation. And I always wanted to be transparent in what the motives and objectives and whatever.

[01:13:28.63] And I'd never sit silently by if I disagreed with actions or events. And I had people's lives in my hands. And I didn't want to abuse that power, which I felt some of that was abused in the Vietnam War. People were sent without the guidance that I think they needed or the ability to win.

[01:13:51.70] MARC HENDERSON: How did your experience in combat affect the way you think about veterans returning from combat today?

[01:13:58.00] JAMES HULL: It always affected me the way it was in California when I came back. I can't talk about other places. I only read about them. But there was maybe a little article that said the Rush came back. But I also was there with four aircraft carriers. And one Christmas there's three aircraft carriers and I had little-- and I'm sitting down there behind these aircraft carriers.

[01:14:24.62] And we'd even go to the officer's club on Friday night, which was one hell of a wild place. And I didn't understand that. But then when you later learned that 30% of those pilots didn't come back, I'd be crazy on Friday nights. And I maybe appreciated death and the risks people took a little more after that.

[01:14:47.96] So I always wanted respect for military people. And when they first started saying thank for your service and everything else and the all voluntary service and everything else, I really appreciate it. I don't want a callous thank you for your service because it's like a handshake. I want somebody to actually know what it means. And today, everybody can say it, but not everybody in all segments of society are represented in our military.

[01:15:19.40] I would count on probably one hand the number of Dartmouth graduates-- I'm not picking on Dartmouth-- that are going to go into the military today. But you need it. I told you that one of the best officers that I ever had was a guy that didn't want to be there, but he was a professional. And you learn how to get along with people in the country. And that's one of our issues today. So I respect the military.

[01:15:42.22] I want people to follow orders. I want them to respect intelligence that there are things that you don't know everything about and it's restricted in certain ways. But at the end of the day, you may have to go into harm's way, and you deserve the full benefit of America to respect what you're doing and to take care of you and your families and your medical situations, not minor things but major medical or mental things afterwards.

[01:16:11.18] MARC HENDERSON: What did the Vietnam War mean to your generation?

[01:16:13.79] JAMES HULL: I was fortunate enough to take my ship to the 50th Anniversary of D-Day, and I witnessed parents taking their kids, and the emotional effort of really explaining what war meant, and going to a cemetery and seeing the white crosses and green grass that war is not cheap. Our democracy is not cheap. It's different and ugly, but you-- it's the best there is I think.

[01:16:43.79] So for my generation, I think some of it is just coming into we're at that point now. The 50 years, the 60 years, we're coming out and telling people about the experiences right, wrong or whatever. I would say my generation felt it was-- they did what they were supposed to do. They're sad at the number of deaths that had to be lost. They're not sure maybe totally what the gains are.

[01:17:16.71] Again, from my Normandy experience going back and then I went back to the 60th where kids took their parents. And the generation would tell one generation-- they'd skip a generation to really be personal about what went on because it was too personal for their kids for them to tell them, especially people that were in really difficult situations.

[01:17:38.98] So I wanted to go back to Vietnam just like people wanted to go back to Normandy or whatever it is, Iwo Jima, wherever the place is because of friends lost, to pay respects, or to see if it was worth it. Maybe that's another question. So I went back, and I didn't get to go to all the places I went there, but the first place was Hanoi.

[01:18:05.49] I didn't know totally what to expect, but there's many Vietnam veterans going back to that part of the world right now. And I went on a river cruise on the Mekong Delta. So I get to Hanoi, and our guide is a-- parents were NVA, Viet Cong, whatever. But I found out-- and I went to the Hanoi Hilton. I went to the presidential palace where decisions were made and listened to all that stuff. Never did I felt-- they felt pride in the fact they won the war, but we think this is a gigantic deal in America. And I don't mean to underplay that.

[01:18:47.01] We were just the last stop in their independence. And that's when I read back on the history of after the Second World War, they thought they were going to be independent and were not. Truman and de Gaulle said, OK, you get-- I don't know what we got, I forget. But they got Indochina and Ho Chi Minh is their George Washington.

[01:19:10.86] But I did not get an animosity towards Americans. We were-- either in the South or the North. They're proud of their history. They respect what we did. After the war, he did not allow the destruction of their colonial past. So Ho Chi Minh City is a lot-- most of the French buildings and everything are there. He didn't want to destroy their culture.

[01:19:38.04] I knew he'd lived around the world, but he lived in China, he lived in Brooklyn, and he lived in Paris. And you can see some of that stuff. And anyway, the bottom line is the Hanoi Hilton were only a small part. It was really the French and all this stuff. Then I go to Saigon and I go to an NVA camp 20 miles from the city, all the underground bunkers and everything else. So it was eye-opening to me.

[01:20:04.38] But Saigon, it's a modern huge city. There's only a couple of buildings. The-- I think it's a newspaper building is the only one left. I tried to find the street I was on. Well, it's all big buildings now. But coming down the river, coming to Saigon because we went up and came down through Cambodia, which is that's another whole story, but we got there and we stopped on this island and it was a guy that was-- I thought he was-- I thought he was actually a VC guy.



[01:20:36.25] He was a South Vietnamese army sergeant or whatever. And after the war, he was rounded up. But he was only held for a month or something like that and then released to go back. That was the policy. They wanted to unite the country. But at first I said, what's he going to feel like? Here I was bombing his villages and everything else. But actually, he was a comrade in some respects.

[01:21:00.90] But it was a lot of emotions in this. And the takeaway is everybody thinks we lost the war. You go to the other countries down there and they all say thanks because if we wouldn't have been there, they'd all be communist. I went there because of the Domino Theory. But then when you go to Bangkok and other countries around there, there are people very grateful. And yeah, we might have quote, "lost the war," but we might have won the battle.

[01:21:33.40] I don't know how you want to put that. But I felt pretty good coming back about the whole deal, sad about the people that lost their lives, but it reiterated the fact that we really try to-- we don't have staying power like other places do. But we did the right thing, and I'm hoping that the events that I've been involved in will have the same effect later on for those veterans. But anyway, I thank you for the opportunity to give you my story, how little it is and what small a part of it is, but it's part of America. So thank you very much.

[01:22:11.28] JAMES HULL: About time, and glad I could be part of it. I was humbled by the people that I was fortunate to be on the commemoration committee with some true heroes, to be honest, and people I respect greatly. The grunt Army guy that becomes a governor and Director of Homeland Security, Alvarez who was a prisoner of war. And I'm in the group. And the mothers-- the POW-- the lady that runs that organization. Everybody wanted to recognize and do some healing of America.

[01:22:49.20] In the brochure it says 6.1 million people, and we've reached 3.1 million. And there's another three or four million, six million of families that haven't been touched. But we've affected 3.1 million. And I put those little pins and I give them to people when I see their Vietnam hats or whatever. I ask them if they've gotten it. I've never had anybody not want it. I've never had anybody look at it and kind of give me a, yeah, what the hell. And I don't mean that in anything other than I said. There's a real pride there.

[01:23:22.89] And I think we have mentally helped many people deal in a way that they're respected wherever they were during that period of time because it is irrespective of where you were. Obviously, those people that fought over there deserve, in my opinion, a little more pat on the back for putting their lives on the line. But no matter where you were you got treated the same when you came to America in your uniforms.

[01:23:54.22] So people are glad they wear uniforms. Look at the number of Vietnam hats people wear, veterans. Again, going back to the World War II. It's the time for us to do it, and people aren't afraid to talk about it anymore. And we've helped people understand a little better. So I applaud Congress for doing it. I applaud the people that have gotten involved, and I hope you go right to the end and continue to get people.

[01:24:26.17] The National Football League, the National Baseball League, all of them have stepped it up to the bat. So long-winded answer is, about time, I think you've made a great service to our country, and you've made people feel better and respected for what they were involved in. And they're going to tell their kids that. And that's the most important part.

[01:24:45.22] MARC HENDERSON: Admiral, thank you so much.

[01:24:46.66] JAMES HULL: Thank you.

[01:24:47.35] MARC HENDERSON: Appreciate it.