

Rauch, Kenneth “Dutch” US Navy

[00:00:14.12] DUTCH RAUCH: I was born in Syracuse, New York in March of 1944. My father was of German extraction. My mother was Scot. Her maiden name was Bull, strong Scottish name. We were subsistence farmers up in Central New York. We actually had a farm up towards Watertown, land of 20-foot snows, and 20 or 40 below zero, which is part of what got me in the Navy. So we just worked as farmers. And worked with other farmers in the local area. Truck farms, grains, cow's milk, dairy, chickens. I went to high school in Baldwinsville, New York. So I guess--

[00:00:58.16] BRIAN KUMNICK: Baldwinsville?

[00:00:58.64] DUTCH RAUCH: Baldwinsville. Right. It's a place that's situated on the top of the Seneca River, the Erie Canal. 88 in my class. It was a small-- it was a farm community. Wasn't much there. It's big now. It's become a bedroom community for Syracuse, so it's a lot bigger.

[00:01:24.56] DUTCH RAUCH: My dad had bought a bulldozer, and I had to pick it up in Syracuse. So I took the truck down there, flatbed semi. And it was snowing, big time. It was cold. It was in January, I remember that. And the place that was going to deliver-- give me the bulldozer was closed when I got there. It was pretty early in the morning. So I found a place to park the truck in the city, and I was looking for a coffee shop. I found the coffee shop, and a place to park. So I parked the truck, and I'm walking towards the coffee shop.

[00:01:56.84] I went past a recruiter's office, and saw this kid walking down. I was a junior in high school at the time. And-- pulled me in. It was warm. It was nice. And the Marine gave me his bit, the Army guy. And there was a Coastie there. Then the Navy guy said, son, we only sail in the tropics. And I signed up. So I joined the Reserves and did my summertime training. And I had a chief petty officer who was really a bit of a hound.

[00:02:27.83] And I did very well in high school, so he wanted me to go to college. Well, I didn't have any money go to college. In fact, all the money I had I gave to my parents to put my sister through college. So he put a thing on the All Read board one day, which was typical. All the Sailors had-- we had to look at all the notices and stuff. So there was a notice for-- an application for the Naval Academy. So I filled it out and put it on his desk. I thought that would shut him up. About a week later, I had orders to Annapolis.

[00:03:01.34] BRIAN KUMNICK: Oh, that's amazing. So what year was that?

[00:03:04.43] DUTCH RAUCH: I went in the class of '66, so it was '62. I signed up for the Reserves in '60, and I went to the Academy in '62. There's a place in Bancroft Hall, which is where everybody lives, called Mem Hall, Memorial Hall. As you go into the entrance of the Academy, you keep going. It's all the way up the steps, in the back. Big, beautiful room. All marble with all the commemorative stuff from all the battles of all the years. And we had in there the blackboard. It was a big easel with all the names of all the Academy grads who'd been killed in Nam. So it was getting up close and personal, but we know where we were going.

[00:03:49.77] DUTCH RAUCH: I graduated in '66-- in June of '66. And I stayed on at the Academy for a few months to teach remedial math for summer school. And then I got my orders to go to flight school down in Pensacola. So I went to Pensacola. I flew-- I started in March. And I finished the day after Christmas, same year, '67. And then from there, I went to VA-125 in Lemoore, California to do type training in the A-4. I became an A-4 pilot. I joined a squadron, VA-23, that was home-based there at Lemoore. And we transitioned very quickly to go to Vietnam on the *Oriskany*.

[00:04:32.15] BRIAN KUMNICK: How about flight school? Had you ever flown before?

[00:04:34.94] DUTCH RAUCH: I had a neighbor when I was a kid that was flying Cubs. He bought Cubs when the war was over. They were-- Cubs were a dime a dozen. And he was flying people out of New York City up into Canada to go fishing and hunting. And I became his roustabout. And in the process of doing that, he finally taught me how to fly the Cub. That was good fun, but you didn't tell anybody you knew how to fly. Oh, no, no, no. Because they're going to teach you the Navy way how to fly, which I found out was very different than what I knew.

[00:05:07.01] BRIAN KUMNICK: How so?

[00:05:08.36] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, I was used to flying little taildraggers off of grass and mud strips. And now I'm in a T-34 with a 470 engine, big engine, and an airplane that's fully acrobatic, which the Cub actually was. But I mean acrobatic with a lot of performance. The 34 was a fun airplane. I loved flying that thing. I'd love to have one now. Flight training was broken into three phases. We had primary training, and that was the T-34, flying props. And then based on how well you did there, you got cut to whatever program you were going to go.

[00:05:47.45] Some guys went helicopters, some guys went multi-engine. And if you went jets, which I went for because I wanted to fly the A-4. And I wanted to go to Nam. I mean, that's what I was being trained for. So anyway, so I cut jets out of VT-1, the primary squadron. And then I went to Meridian, Mississippi. And went into the T-2, which is a straight wing. They called it the Guppy, looked like one. Very, very fundamental airplane.

[00:06:18.95] And did that. And then I went down to VT-4 back into Pensacola, Saufley Field. Or I'm sorry, no, it-- Mainside Field. And we did carrier quals and gunnery down there. So from there, then you went to Advanced. And that's the F-9s in Kingsville, and Beeville, Texas. I went to Kingsville, VT-21. That's where I got my wings, flying the F-9.

[00:06:43.01] So it was a jet. A-4 had a different engine, a lot more powerful than an F-9. And extremely acrobatic. I mean it was a very, very touchy airplane. It was known as-- Ed Heinemann is the guy that designed the airplane. It was famously known as Heinemann's Hot Rod. And it was. I mean, it had a roll rate of something like 720 degrees per second. It was fantastic. Yeah, I loved that airplane. Good airplane. And I joined my squadron right there in Lemoore, just moved to another hangar. And we did workups. Went to Fallon, Nevada and did a lot of air-to-mud bombing, just getting to practice. And off we went. Yeah.

[00:07:33.52] BRIAN KUMNICK: You were on Yankee Station.

[00:07:36.67] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. In the Tonkin--

[00:07:37.63] BRIAN KUMNICK: On the *Oriskany*.

[00:07:38.95] DUTCH RAUCH: --on Tonkin-- yeah, in the Tonkin Gulf.

[00:07:40.90] BRIAN KUMNICK: And that's where you were going to be flying from? You didn't actually land in Vietnam, and--

[00:07:46.66] DUTCH RAUCH: No.

[00:07:48.22] BRIAN KUMNICK: Okay. It was the whole squadron that went?

[00:07:50.02] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh, yeah. Yeah, the whole air wing.

[00:07:51.55] BRIAN KUMNICK: And how did they get them across the ocean?

[00:07:54.25] DUTCH RAUCH: We flew them up to Alameda, from Lemoore to Alameda. And then-- so we got every airplane aboard, they hooked them aboard with cranes and put them on. We had two F-8 squadrons, and three A-4 squadrons. And a Whale, A-3 Skywarrior, it was a tanker. And a bunch of helicopters. Yeah, that was pretty much it.

[00:08:16.45] BRIAN KUMNICK: How was the trip across? How long did it take?

[00:08:19.12] DUTCH RAUCH: To cross the Pacific?

[00:08:20.12] BRIAN KUMNICK: Yeah.

[00:08:20.38] DUTCH RAUCH: A couple of weeks. Wasn't bad.

[00:08:22.31] BRIAN KUMNICK: What were your quarters like? Had you been on a carrier before that?

[00:08:26.29] DUTCH RAUCH: No, just to do carrier quals to get qualified to fly off the carrier. But I'd never stayed on the carrier.

[00:08:34.18] BRIAN KUMNICK: How was that?

[00:08:35.08] DUTCH RAUCH: It was tight, very Spartan. It has no amenities. DUTCH RAUCH: In the Navy, well, we have collateral duties. So I was the legal officer. I was very junior officer. So I went to legal school, and became a quasi-- not really a lawyer, but back in those days, we didn't carry lawyers like they do today. So we had guys who were just pilots that were trained to be legal officers to take care of any legal problems they might have, discipline problems. That's what I did.

[00:09:14.46] BRIAN KUMNICK: Where was that school?

[00:09:15.90] DUTCH RAUCH: That was in Newport, Rhode Island.

[00:09:17.85] BRIAN KUMNICK: And what did they teach you there?

[00:09:20.52] DUTCH RAUCH: Military law.

[00:09:22.08] BRIAN KUMNICK: How long a program?

[00:09:24.27] DUTCH RAUCH: It was about three weeks-- or three months, I'm sorry. Very intense. I really enjoyed it. It was good for a lot of detective, forensic stuff. Researching cases, and trying to build cases for court. Doing mock court martials and stuff like that. It was good. I enjoyed it. First day we got to Yankee Station, we started right away. The new carrier always flew the day missions. And we were broken into cycles. So there was a carrier that was already on station, they would pick up the night. So we did noon to midnight, midnight to noon. And the oncoming carrier did nothing but daytime for a couple of days just to get in the saddle.

[00:10:02.79] My first mission was up in-- somewhere up near Ban Karai Pass. And we were working on the trail, the Ho Chi Minh Trail up there, bombing some truck routes that were coming down.

[00:10:16.96] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did you feel confident that your training had prepared you adequately?

[00:10:20.31] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. I got some darn good bomb hits on that day, I remember that.

[00:10:24.69] BRIAN KUMNICK: On your first mission?

[00:10:25.62] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah, got a truck. Yeah.

[00:10:28.02] BRIAN KUMNICK: You actually hit a truck with a bomb?

[00:10:29.30] DUTCH RAUCH: I hit a truck, yeah. It was good. That truck exploded. It was full of stuff. Yeah, it was neat. DUTCH RAUCH: Well, everything is determined by the flight schedule. So you wake up a couple of hours before you're supposed to brief for your mission. The briefs for missions-- if we're doing just individual stuff like going on the trail or working-- we did a lot of work in the very northern part of South Vietnam. And once in a while, this was after the bombing halt. So we were working 19th parallel to the south.

[00:11:05.09] BRIAN KUMNICK: What year is this?

[00:11:06.26] DUTCH RAUCH: '68, '69. That included Vinh. That was--

[00:11:12.44] BRIAN KUMNICK: Which is the south part of North Vietnam.

[00:11:13.88] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. So their big rail transshipment point and a big waterborne transshipment point in Vinh. They had a lot of guns. So we worked that, and we worked the trail. And then we worked troops that were in contact in South Vietnam, mainly our Marines, and the Army recon guys that were there. The Marines were recon too, I remember. So they'd get in trouble along the DMZ, and we'd go and help them out.

[00:11:42.35] All the missions came out of CVIC, which was the intel spaces on the carrier, Carrier Intelligence Center. So if you were one of the-- I was on one of the mission planning teams. So that guy is a JO. I mean, It was sort of, you know, not a good job. But I mean, all the junior guys got that, sort of doing your penance. So we'd go to the CVIC around one o'clock in the morning, and we'd get the target list that came out of DC. The guys that were in DC are smarter than us who had just seen the targets. And they were giving us targets with the target list.

[00:12:17.72] So we'd go through the target list. And we'd figure out who could fly what-- what parts of the target list we could do. That planning started about 2:30, 3 o'clock in the morning, depending on when the list came in. They came in a big long message. It was ridiculous. So we'd be ready around 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. So the first guys were going out on the first-- first launch say at 6:00. We'd have them in there. They were already on a flight schedule because we knew we'd-- we were doing cyclic ops, so we'd start off with that. And we'd have all the stuff ready for them.

[00:12:50.04] So I'm doing all the planning for my squadron. And if we were just doing trail work and close air support for troops in contact, then we would handle that as a squadron issue. But if we were going up as an alpha strike where we had the whole air wing together, then we planned everything as a group there in CVIC. So that was it.

[00:13:12.83] BRIAN KUMNICK: When did you have breakfast? When did you sleep?

[00:13:16.73] DUTCH RAUCH: Whenever you could. Yeah. It was-- your life just went around the whole flight schedule. I mean, you didn't know if it was day or night until you went up on the flight deck and-- or looked at a clock. They had food on call for 20-- there were two wardrooms for the officers. There was a main wardroom for the ship's company. So all the ship's officers ate down there. They had to be in uniform, all cleaned up. And we had the dirty shirt locker, what we called the dirty shirt locker. It was the guys who all-- flight deck guys, and all the air crew. That's where we ate. We could eat in flight suits and it was chow line all the time, 24 hours a day. It was good.

[00:14:01.04] BRIAN KUMNICK: And how long would it take when you took off to get over to, say, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and back?

[00:14:07.19] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh--

[00:14:07.64] BRIAN KUMNICK: How long would that whole mission take?

[00:14:09.47] DUTCH RAUCH: About a 1.5-- an hour and a half. Wait a minute, let me get my logbook. My whole life is in here. These are all done in hours in tenths: 1.7, 1.7, 1.9, 2 hours,

1.9. The longer ops were night ops cause it took longer to get back, and do an approach to the ship. That was typical. 1.8. Here's a 2.4. I must have gone to the beach somewhere. No. So typical times.

[00:14:48.94] BRIAN KUMNICK: And how many sorties would you do in a day?

[00:14:52.21] DUTCH RAUCH: At least two, sometimes three.

[00:14:53.92] BRIAN KUMNICK: You, individually?

[00:14:55.64] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

[00:14:56.37] BRIAN KUMNICK: Wow. And how many would the squadron fly over the course of a day?

[00:14:59.95] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh, seven of us, 21 to 24 ops.

[00:15:05.71] BRIAN KUMNICK: That's amazing.

[00:15:06.59] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah.

[00:15:07.09] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did you get much downtime? Did anyone ever get to sleep?

[00:15:12.31] DUTCH RAUCH: No, not much. You slept in the ready room if you could. It was noisy, but yeah, you slept in the ready room if you're between ops. And sometimes you could get time off and go get a shower. And hit your rack for a while. But again, it was--

[00:15:24.91] BRIAN KUMNICK: If you ever got any time off, did you just sleep? Like, did you get to watch any movies?

[00:15:31.39] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, every night after the last recovery we had a movie in the ready room. I guess that's down time. But it wasn't sleep time. But every four or five days they'd take you off the flight schedule. And you'd have a day down.

[00:15:46.84] BRIAN KUMNICK: And what would you do on your day down? Write some letters?

[00:15:49.71] DUTCH RAUCH: I wrote a letter every day. And you'd go sleep. Go get something to eat, and go to bed. Get a shower, get cleaned up. Sleep for a while. We slept until you woke up. Yeah, it was good.

[00:16:03.94] BRIAN KUMNICK: Do you have any specific memories of the popular culture? Like did you have radios? And is there songs that you hear now, that take you right back?

[00:16:14.98] DUTCH RAUCH: No. It's funny. I've often talked about this with Helen or the boys. There's a whole part of my life in the '60s that was gone. I mean, it happened here. But we

didn't have it there. We had some news that was reported on the ship, but not much. So all the movies and all the songs that came out-- I mean, we came back to a totally different culture when we came back after our time in the war. Yeah. It was very different.

[00:16:42.23] BRIAN KUMNICK: How about the racial tensions, the social tensions? Any of that come over to the ship?

[00:16:47.51] DUTCH RAUCH: No.

[00:16:47.80] BRIAN KUMNICK: The *Oriskany*? There was no--

[00:16:51.04] DUTCH RAUCH: Nope. Our crew got along very well. We didn't have any problems. None.

[00:16:55.48] BRIAN KUMNICK: Were you there for any major holidays, Christmas, Thanksgiving?

[00:17:01.78] DUTCH RAUCH: On that particular cruise, no. But I was on the next cruise in '75. We were there for Christmas.

[00:17:08.89] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did they do anything special for dinner? Anything memorable?

[00:17:12.79] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh, we had turkey. I remember that. It was pretty good too. The two ships I was on were actually-- I'm sorry, three ships I was on were good feeders.

[00:17:23.29] BRIAN KUMNICK: What were the other ships you were on?

[00:17:24.34] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, I was on *Oriskany* for the first cruise.

[00:17:27.01] BRIAN KUMNICK: And how long was that deployment?

[00:17:29.59] DUTCH RAUCH: About six months. Yeah. So we came home in time for Christmas that year. And then I went back aboard in '74. I transitioned from A-4s to A-7s. So I did a tour as a test pilot down at Pax River. Went to test pilot school in England at the Empire Test Pilots' School. And then came back to the United States and served at Pax River as a test pilot. And I transitioned to A-7 at that time.

[00:17:57.07] BRIAN KUMNICK: And what's the A-7 do, different from the A-4?

[00:17:59.62] DUTCH RAUCH: A-7 is-- it's the same mission as the A-4. It's an air-to-ground bomber. I like the amount of ordnance the A-7 carried. It was more. But the A-4 was a workhorse. And like I said, it was very maneuverable. It was also a small target. It was hard to get shot. That was good.

[00:18:16.60] BRIAN KUMNICK: And the A-7 was bigger?

[00:18:18.07] DUTCH RAUCH: A-7 was bigger. Yeah.

[00:18:20.17] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did you get shot at? Were you being shot at in '74?

[00:18:26.12] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, no actually in '75.

[00:18:28.51] BRIAN KUMNICK: Really?

[00:18:29.23] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh, yeah. Yeah. My flight lead-- and there's a good story here. My flight lead got shot down in April of 1975.

[00:18:39.17] BRIAN KUMNICK: What were you guys doing there?

[00:18:40.86] DUTCH RAUCH: We were trying to protect the helicopters and the WBLCs that were coming-- WBLC is a waterborne logistics craft. So it was like a run-- you ever seen ants on water?

[00:18:51.47] BRIAN KUMNICK: Yeah.

[00:18:51.98] DUTCH RAUCH: OK. It looked like ants on water coming out of Saigon, trying to get out to the open ocean. Getting away from the North Vietnamese that came into Saigon.

[00:19:01.49] BRIAN KUMNICK: What ship were you on then?

[00:19:02.99] DUTCH RAUCH: *Enterprise*. April 29, two missions-- three missions, sorry-- in FREQUENT-- flying in FREQUENT WIND. Last flights this month worked the end of FREQUENT WIND, evacuation of Saigon. That was the saddest day of my life, aside from a couple of weeks ago.

[00:19:20.63] BRIAN KUMNICK: Yeah.

[00:19:22.25] DUTCH RAUCH: I mean, we had people-- like I said, it looked like ants on water. People fleeing-- and I mean, just taking every desperate-- how desperate you could be trying to get out of the country. And we got back to Subic Bay in the Philippines, which is the base that we used there at the time. And it was just packed full of all these waterborne craft, all tied together and rafted. And I went over. There's a place in the middle of Subic Bay called Grande Island. And it used to be a rec center, I think it was afterwards too.

[00:19:54.60] But anyway, they used Grande as the main staging point for all these refugees. And there were, I mean, thousands and thousands, mainly women and kids. And I mean, they had nothing. Absolutely nothing. And they were all just terrified, scared out of their wits. They just left everything they had, and got out of town. And it was terrible to see what happened to them. Some of the boats, people were stuffed on them so much that they couldn't stand. And they'd fall off. And people actually went in the water. It was terrible.

[00:20:26.60] BRIAN KUMNICK: So did you have refugees actually on the carrier?

[00:20:30.20] DUTCH RAUCH: Not on *Enterprise*. No. But *Midway* was there-- USS *Midway*-- she took a whole bunch of refugees.

[00:20:36.86] BRIAN KUMNICK: And did they take them up to Subic Bay or did they bring them back to the States?

[00:20:40.64] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, they offloaded them in Subic. A lot of them went to Guam. And then there was a place down in the southern part of Bataan. There was a big battle line back in the Second World War called the Orion-Bagac Line. There's two towns, there's a line between them. And Orion became a refugee-- UN refugee center. So we went down there. And this place, again, it was just packed full of all these people. Yeah, it was gross. Really bad.

[00:21:12.74] I went back there in-- so that was in '75. And I went back again in '81. I took command of a squadron there in the Philippines. And I just-- my squadron had helicopters. And we knew that the refugees were down there, and they needed stuff. And so the families were putting together care packages, you know, clothes, and food for the kids, and stuff like that, and educational materials. So we flew our helicopters down and delivered all the stuff down to those kids. And we went down and walked around the camp for a while. It was pretty bad.

[00:21:47.81] I've met a couple of people who went through that camp. One of them was a Navy dentist that worked on my teeth. And another guy was a doctor that was up in Bethesda. And another note in my logbook. Tom Gravely, ejected after flight 429, which I was his wingman. Suspect he was hit by triple-A from Vung Tau during evacuation escorts flights. We were coming back. We'd been up in Saigon. And our mission was anybody that shot at the helicopter, shot at the boats, we shoot at them. Try to suppress their fire.

[00:22:24.74] So we did that a couple of times coming out of Saigon. And we got down to Vung Tau, which is the end of the river, and-- a peninsula on the north side. And we were getting shot at by ZSU. It's a quad mounted 23-millimeter gun that's radar tracked, and optically tracked. So from where we were-- our indication in the cockpit, they were tracking us with radar. So Tom rolls in on the target. And I rolled in behind him. We had 500 pounders on board. So we dropped some 500 pounders, Mark-82s.

[00:22:58.19] We got the gun that was shooting at us. But what we didn't see was there was a second gun. No surprise. And the second gun started shooting me as I came off target. And Tom was back up high again. He says he's going after the other gun. And we had a quick discussion between the two cockpits saying, no, let's go. We're done. Because they weren't threatening the evacuation people, but they were shooting at us. Tom wasn't going to let it go. So he rolled in on the target, and they hit him.

[00:23:27.23] After we'd come off target, we always did a check with the two airplanes. So you know, the wingman would come and he'd go underneath and check the lead plane, then swap and do the same thing. When I checked Tom's airplane on the starboard side of the airplane, back below the wing, there was a big hole. And a little while later it started turning brown. So it was burning, something was burning. He got 12 miles from the ship. And he had to eject because he lost control of the airplane. So-- yeah.

[00:23:56.80] Luckily we knew he was in trouble. So the helicopter-- he got the helicopter out there. I don't think he got his socks wet. He was in the water such a little time. But I got to land on the ship. He got to be brought aboard wet in the helicopter.

[00:24:17.50] DUTCH RAUCH: The trail was a very, very rough area. It was hard to get guns in there. But in the North, we saw 80s, 85s. Big caliber guns. And SAMs. We saw the same thing below 19 in Vinh. But up in the trail area where we did most of our work, they had ZSUs, 23-millimeter. But they're pretty deadly. So that was about it. And we were just looking-- we were working with FACs, forward air controllers. They were mainly Air Force guys, flying O-1s and O-2s. Bird Dogs. Yeah.

[00:24:54.61] So they knew the country very well. And they flew it every day, hours of every day. And they knew if somebody moved a twig. So they'd watch what was going on, and then we'd we check in with them. We'd get airborne. And we'd come across the DMZ, and go north into-- up north of the border on the Mekong River. And then they'd control us. They'd have troops that they'd seen, a troop concentration, or a supply area. And we'd go in and try to break it.

[00:25:26.87] BRIAN KUMNICK: So if you got called in to support troops that were actually in a battle--

[00:25:33.31] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah.

[00:25:33.94] BRIAN KUMNICK: --you're flying pretty fast. Do you actually see what's going on, or are you just dropping where you're told by the FAC?

[00:25:41.80] DUTCH RAUCH: You're pretty much dropping where you're told. It's hard to see troops on the ground--

[00:25:45.82] BRIAN KUMNICK: You couldn't see much of anything because you're racing right--

[00:25:47.59] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, you rolled in at about 10,500 feet. And you dropped around between 3,500 and 4,500 feet above the ground. But the FAC would mark a target area. They had white phosphorus rockets, and they were pretty good. Good shots. And they put the Willie Pete round in. And then they'd just describe the target relative to that point. And if we were actually working with the-- if we had comms with the troops, they used smokes-- different color smokes, so we knew where they were. And they would direct us. Yeah.

[00:26:23.83] BRIAN KUMNICK: That's just astonishing.

[00:26:25.14] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. Sometimes we got pretty close to them. Yeah.

[00:26:30.10] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did you say you guys in the F-4s dropped the electronic sensors on the trail?

[00:26:34.90] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. Well, they look like a Mark-82 bomb, the 500 pound bomb. But we had snake-eye fins that slowed them down, high drag. So they didn't hit-- they weren't going really fast when they hit.

[00:26:50.02] BRIAN KUMNICK: But you just dropped them where you were told to drop them, and didn't see anything?

[00:26:54.64] DUTCH RAUCH: Right. It was the FACs that were telling us where to put this-- we called them seeds, where to put the seeds. Now, some of them were listening devices. Some of them had magnetic sensors. And some of them were mines, so that when something like a truck came along with a little bit of magnetic signature, it would blow up. So we did that.

[00:27:14.21] BRIAN KUMNICK: And how often did you drop those kinds of things?

[00:27:16.81] DUTCH RAUCH: A lot.

[00:27:17.29] BRIAN KUMNICK: Like thousands, and thousands, and thousands of sensors?

[00:27:20.11] DUTCH RAUCH: A lot of them. I hated those missions because-- I mean, just dropping stuff in the jungle, nothing happens. You want to see secondaries. You want to see troops running, things you destroyed, cause that's stuff that was moving down to kill our guys. That's why we were trying to stop that.

[00:27:37.31] BRIAN KUMNICK: So you were a junior officer, and most of the guys in your squadron that were flying were junior officers. What did you think of the senior officers, how were they?

[00:27:46.77] DUTCH RAUCH: They were good. One night, I came back. And I was finally-- I got to be a flight lead. So I had a section, and we were working the trail. And-- excuse me. There was an outfit out of Da Nang. They were flying A-3s, Skywarriors. Black Whales, we called them. The airplane was called the Whale because it's a big airplane. And these were Black Whales that were painted black. And their mission was to go up on the trail at night. And they had all kinds of sensors.

[00:28:21.70] And we'd put seeds in the ground, which were little acoustic listening devices and they had magnetic sensors on them. These guys would go up and they'd listen for all the sensors that we'd landed, or put in the ground there. And then we'd fly with them on the wingtip. And they'd mark a target. And from-- then we'd roll in, and try to destroy the target. Well, we were down-- and this is mountains, karst mountains there-- so you didn't have a good way to know where you were because we were navigating in those days with TACANs, which are direction-finding things.

[00:29:00.56] There was a TACAN in Da Nang, and one in Tchepone, which is over in Laos, that we could use. But we were down so low we couldn't tell where we were. So we were flying one night on these guys, and we rolled in on a target that they marked. And got some great secondaries out of it. So it's something that really exploded. Came back to the ship, and the

Whale gave us the coordinates of the target. Got back to the ship, and I debriefed in the CVIC, the intel center of the ship.

[00:29:28.30] And-- using the coordinates that I had written down, that the Whale gave me. And they plotted it-- and they plotted it on top of a Marine Recon unit that was supposedly up on the trail. So all of a sudden everybody goes nuts because they thought we'd just went blue on blue, and bombed a bunch of friendlies. This is going-- I mean, it's chaos in the center because now, it's just a really bad event. And I'll never forget the chief of staff-- we had an embarked flag officer-- I'm sorry, an admiral, a two-star admiral.

[00:30:04.60] And the chief of staff came out, and he's all upset. And I'm getting accused of doing all kinds of bad things. And my day is going south real quick. And the admiral walked out. A few minutes later, because there's a lot of commotion out there, he came over to me, and he said, what did you see on the ground? I said, I don't know. If it's a Recon outfit, they didn't have the amount of explosives that we saw secondaries from. So I thought that was wrong. So he said, it's OK, son. Don't worry about it. Go get some coffee, come back later.

[00:30:35.47] So a couple of hours later, I get a phone call. I'm in my stateroom. I told the skipper what happened. I get a phone call in my stateroom, go down to CVIC. And they had replotted it with the Whale. And sure enough, we'd hit a slope ammo dump. So I felt a lot better about that. But I mean, the admiral and the rest of the leadership were going to make sure we got-- they protected me until we found out what the actual facts were, so it was good. It was good.

[00:31:04.88] The other thing was that all the senior officers, I mean, they took the hot missions right alongside the rest of us. In fact, they were leading us most of the time. So they were good, very good. I don't know what the situation is today. Talking to my son, it's definitely not the same. Hot missions got flown by the JOs when he was on Nimitz, flying the Hornets. So it's a different Navy, very different.

[00:31:36.27] I'd love to go back, but I don't think I could. We spend more time looking at diversity stuff than we do about trying to perform a mission. And I think it's hurting them. But I'm not there right now. So this is my speculation. DUTCH RAUCH: I got hit one day, 16th of July. Sorry. Chu Lai, got in here Chu Lai, which is down south, working troops.

[00:32:12.98] BRIAN KUMNICK: What did you get hit by?

[00:32:15.56] DUTCH RAUCH: I think a 23. Here's another one, starting right here. 24th of June. Vinh. Got hit in Vinh. I got a round come up in the cockpit, and ricocheted around. And for some reason, it didn't go high order. It just burned. So I had a bunch of white phosphorus in the-- Willie Pete burn in the cockpit. Got that, got this.

[00:32:42.62] BRIAN KUMNICK: Is that what you got your Purple Hearts for?

[00:32:44.33] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah.

[00:32:45.56] BRIAN KUMNICK: That's a little scary.

[00:32:46.89] DUTCH RAUCH: It was.

[00:32:47.27] BRIAN KUMNICK: White phosphorus bouncing around.

[00:32:49.25] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. And little pieces of the bullet.

[00:32:51.32] BRIAN KUMNICK: Oh, my God.

[00:32:52.00] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah, screwed up the airplane pretty bad too. But I got it back aboard ship, so that was good.

[00:32:58.79] BRIAN KUMNICK: That is good. Now, when that happens, do you get a couple of days off?

[00:33:03.20] DUTCH RAUCH: Until the medics say you can fly again.

[00:33:05.27] BRIAN KUMNICK: How long was that, in that case?

[00:33:06.59] DUTCH RAUCH: A couple of days.

[00:33:07.46] BRIAN KUMNICK: A couple of days?

[00:33:08.16] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah, I wasn't hurt that bad.

[00:33:09.83] BRIAN KUMNICK: Well, it's not just a question of hurt. How about the-- what does that do to your mind for the next time you have to go up?

[00:33:15.65] DUTCH RAUCH: You're pissed off. You want to go get the guy who shot you. I mean, it's simple. And another time I was working troops down around the DMZ, and took a round in the wing. All the fuel in the A-4 was in the wing. We had a tank in the hump right behind the pilot, but most of the fuel was in the wing. So I got hit in the wing, put a big hole in it. So all my fuel's pouring out of the airplane. I went to Da Nang. I had to leave the airplane there to get it fixed.

[00:33:45.53] BRIAN KUMNICK: How long were you in Da Nang?

[00:33:47.30] DUTCH RAUCH: A couple of days.

[00:33:48.62] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did you get to wander around the town at all?

[00:33:51.05] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh, no. Stayed on the base. Yeah. DUTCH RAUCH: There were a lot of Vietnamese people inside the base. Yeah. They even had food stands inside the base, which was good. They were very nice people, very nice.

[00:34:11.56] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did you sense that they were glad we were there?

[00:34:14.77] DUTCH RAUCH: I think so. I think so. They were very generous to us. Yeah. I had to leave the airplane there. The Marines had a detachment in Da Nang, and they were going to repair the wing. So I left the airplane there. And I got on a COD, Carrier Onboard Delivery airplane. In that case, it was a US-2. And they flew me back to the ship.

[00:34:36.67] BRIAN KUMNICK: And they were the ones who brought the mail, and that kind of thing?

[00:34:39.06] DUTCH RAUCH: Yes.

[00:34:45.44] BRIAN KUMNICK: How often did you get mail?

[00:34:47.20] DUTCH RAUCH: Every couple of days, but it was sort of spastic. I mean, the kids now-- my son, just before he retired, finished a cruise on Nimitz. He was in the Gulf War and stuff. And I mean, they've got FaceTime, and internet connection, so that he talked to his wife every night, and talked to the kids. We had letters, and that was it. We had to number the letters, so that they got opened in the right order. Because if you got them in the wrong order, sometimes the news wasn't good.

[00:35:21.33] BRIAN KUMNICK: Did your family write about things that weren't good news?

[00:35:25.14] DUTCH RAUCH: No.

[00:35:26.34] BRIAN KUMNICK: You said you wrote every day. What would you write about?

[00:35:28.44] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. You had to be careful of what you said. Yeah.

[00:35:31.65] BRIAN KUMNICK: So what did you say?

[00:35:33.12] DUTCH RAUCH: Just a little about the routine on the ship, and what you had dinner. It was very bland, very bland. I had a son, at the time. He was about two. And we did tapes-- these little cassette tapes. So I had a little tape recorder that I'd make a tape, and send it to the kids, so they could hear the voice. And then they sent it back. And Ken, my oldest son, the one who was two at the time says, Daddy on the boat. Daddy on the boat. It was sort of cute. And sort of sad listening to him sometimes, but that's the way it was. We had-- we didn't have comms. There was no internet, of course, back then. Yeah. Totally different.

[00:36:23.25] DUTCH RAUCH: I mean, we were a pretty tight group. We were flying with each other all the time. And watching each other's six. Yeah. So you did a lot of things you probably wouldn't do for somebody else. Taking care of your buddies.

[00:36:37.00] BRIAN KUMNICK: Have you stayed in touch with those guys?

[00:36:38.96] DUTCH RAUCH: Oh, not too much. No. It's sort of funny. I mean, what do you talk about? The same thing? Well, when we came back, most of the guys in the squadron went back to civilian life. They had fulfilled their obligation. All the JOs did. And I stayed in the Navy. But I was the only one the stayed in the Navy out of all the JOs that were in the squadron.

[00:37:05.71] DUTCH RAUCH: In the end of '69. Sucked. We came underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. And up on the top of the bridge were a whole bunch of protesters, and they had all the signs and stuff. They had a bunch of garbage cans up there full of garbage. And as the ship went underneath, they just dumped them on the ship. It was pretty bad. We went into Alameda, on the eastern side of San Francisco Bay. And we were told-- we had stickers on our cars, to get in and out of the base. We were told scrape our stickers off our cars, and not go out in uniform.

[00:37:40.64] But it was pretty obvious who we were. We've got a short haircut, and young family. Cars full of stuff that just got off the ship. And they were at the gate throwing eggs, and stuff at us. Luckily, nothing hard, but eggs, and tomatoes, and garbage, and stuff. My car was just wiped out. First thing that I had to do was find a car wash to get all the crap off it, so I could drive-- go back home.

[00:38:07.69] BRIAN KUMNICK: And where was back home?

[00:38:09.70] DUTCH RAUCH: In Lemoore.

[00:38:10.51] BRIAN KUMNICK: When did you go to Patuxent?

[00:38:12.58] DUTCH RAUCH: I was in Pax from '72 to '74. Then '74 to '77, I was in Lemoore again, flying off *Enterprise*. Flying A-7s at that time.

[00:38:25.70] BRIAN KUMNICK: And that's when you went back over for '75, for the-- what did they call that operation?

[00:38:29.92] DUTCH RAUCH: FREQUENT WIND.

[00:38:30.76] BRIAN KUMNICK: FREQUENT WIND.

[00:38:31.48] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah.

[00:38:32.77] BRIAN KUMNICK: That's an amazing deal.

[00:38:34.15] DUTCH RAUCH: It was-- caused a lot of jokes.

[00:38:37.08] BRIAN KUMNICK: I'm sure it did.

[00:38:38.14] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah. We did Cambodia, EAGLE PULL. And then right after, Saigon was FREQUENT WIND.

[00:38:43.57] BRIAN KUMNICK: And what was Cambodia? What were you doing-- what was the mission there?

[00:38:48.19] DUTCH RAUCH: Same thing. DUTCH RAUCH: Getting shot at changes your life a lot. When you damn near get killed it changes your outlook a little bit.

[00:39:02.49] BRIAN KUMNICK: White phosphorous in your-- white phosphorous in your cockpit is just-- I can't even fathom that.

[00:39:08.34] DUTCH RAUCH: Yeah, it's pretty stinky. It was. Yeah. But I was protected. I had a mask on, and stuff. So it was OK. Just got burned. That's all right. Screwed up the airplane. But you know what, that was minimal to compare to some of the guys like Charlie Plumb, and some of my buddies that wound up going in Hanoi Hilton for six, seven years. Sheesh. And my roommate got killed. I lost a roommate there.

[00:39:36.09] BRIAN KUMNICK: Which roommate? From--

[00:39:37.89] DUTCH RAUCH: Stan Smiley.

[00:39:39.51] BRIAN KUMNICK: From the Academy?

[00:39:42.03] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, Stan was an Academy grad. I didn't know him then, but--

[00:39:45.60] BRIAN KUMNICK: Oh, your roommate on the ship?

[00:39:47.49] DUTCH RAUCH: Well, I was the JG. He was in our bunk room for a short time. And he was a lieutenant, so he got to move out of the bunk room. Got a nicer room because of seniority. But Stan went down one night, working the trail. And hit the ground. We don't know if he punched out or not. But it was sort of weird. I guess I can talk about this. I was in the Pentagon, late '80s, early '90s. And I had a guy come in that had a funny credential. I don't know if he was CIA or what.

[00:40:21.17] But anyway, he flashed something at me. It looked sort of like a badge. And he wanted me to go out in the hallway and talk to him. So I went out in the hallway and talked to him. He had some 5 by 7 pictures. And one of them, I swear to God, was Stan Smiley. And there was a picture purported to have been taken in Laos a couple of years before this guy was showing me the pictures, so in the '80s. And Stan went down in '68-- I'm sorry '69. And I don't know. So we never saw an ejection when he hit, but he could have ejected at the last minute. And it was a hot target area. We were getting shot at. 23s again. So I don't know

[00:41:06.67] BRIAN KUMNICK: How many of you were on that mission? How many planes?

[00:41:09.79] DUTCH RAUCH: Four of us.

[00:41:11.53] BRIAN KUMNICK: And none of you saw anything except that he went down?

[00:41:14.74] DUTCH RAUCH: No, we saw a fireball.

[00:41:16.03] BRIAN KUMNICK: Yeah.

[00:41:17.49] DUTCH RAUCH: In the middle of the jungle at night, it's like a cave. I mean, there's no moon, there's no nothing. It's dark, real dark. And we just saw a fireball. Started trying to call him on the radio, he didn't respond. Never heard a beep, or anything else from the ejection. So I don't know what happened to him. Went back there the next day in daylight, took a look at the area, and it was just a big hole in the ground. And they sent a chopper in, and they said it was such a mess they couldn't even find a body. So I don't know. I don't know what happened to him.

[00:41:48.00] BRIAN KUMNICK: How did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans returning from combat today, from the battlefields?

[00:41:56.58] DUTCH RAUCH: When you get shot at, you've got a lot of respect for people who get shot at. I mean, to live through that.

[00:42:03.79] BRIAN KUMNICK: And you had trash thrown on your ship coming under the Golden Gate Bridge.

[00:42:07.42] DUTCH RAUCH: I'm still pissed off about that. I always will be.

[00:42:10.87] BRIAN KUMNICK: So what do you think about the guys that are coming home today? Are you glad for them?

[00:42:15.79] DUTCH RAUCH: They're being treated a whole lot better than we were. Yeah. Not jealous of that. I mean, finally, we're waking up and taking care of our people. Long, long overdue.

[00:42:30.00] BRIAN KUMNICK: What do you think the war meant to you and your generation?

[00:42:34.90] DUTCH RAUCH: I think we came to better appreciate global politics, and what the communists were trying to do. I really believe that. That carried through in the Cold War too because I flew in the Cold War for the next 20 years. Steeled, I think we would say. More purposeful. And more willing to go back to sea, and do what we had to do because we knew there was a cause that was worthwhile.

[00:43:14.70] BRIAN KUMNICK: And how do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today?

[00:43:18.06] DUTCH RAUCH: Not very well. I know you guys are trying to do something to have a proper commemoration. But it's something most people want to forget. All they think about Vietnam-- all the news will portray is things like Kent State, and stuff like that. And all the opposition, and all that stuff. Cassius Clay, and all the crap. And we took out 58,000 guys. I got

four buddies that got their names on the Wall down there. You know, I like to think that they served a purpose. Yeah.

[00:43:58.48] BRIAN KUMNICK: Are there lessons that you took from Vietnam that you would want to pass on to this, or future generations?

[00:44:05.32] DUTCH RAUCH: We had good leadership. Politics were screwed up. The target list thing-- I mean, the guys in Washington thought they were smarter than the guys that were actually looking at the target areas. That was absolutely insane. Got a lot of guys killed. That ticked me off. A lot of us are still bitter about that. But we're doing the same thing again. And we did the same thing in the Middle East. The same thing in Afghanistan. Now we're screwing around with the Ukraine.

[00:44:34.29] Politicians are not war fighters. I wish the hell they'd realize that. They don't have a clue what's going on. Our very senior leadership in DOD right now I think is failing the military because they're not standing up to the politicians. They should stand up to the politicians. When we did the Afghan thing I couldn't believe that nobody left. I mean, there should have been stars on the table over that one, definitely.

[00:45:04.29] And before the evacuation happened, we knew it wasn't going to go well. And yet, nobody that was in the chain of command in uniform would say that I'm going to put my job on the line. We're not going to do it that way. But we did it. So we got people killed.

[00:45:25.62] DUTCH RAUCH: My Academy roommate is on there, Ray Daley. He was a frog driver-- H-46 driver, got killed his third day in country. He was up by the Rockpile doing an insert of troops, and ammo, and medical supplies. And they got hit as they hit the LZ. Got hit by rockets and mortars. Destroyed the airplane and him. I had seven classmates that all died. My class had the highest number of Marines-- the highest percentage of Marines I think in years that went in. Unfortunately, most of those guys were on the Blackboard, up in Mem Hall. But you've got to hope that what they did was worthwhile. I think it was. But I just wish people would realize that.

[00:46:33.60] DUTCH RAUCH: I think it's great. It's really great. Ron Gay was the guy that introduced me to that. He came down one day to the hangar. And we were working on our airplanes there. And he had these stickers-- the stickers on the back of my truck, he had the stickers, and some pamphlets, and stuff that he gave us. So it was nice. Then I found that guys are going to interview him, which was fantastic. I mean, he's a real warrior. Very much a Marine's Marine, good guy.

[00:47:03.33] BRIAN KUMNICK: That's awesome. Did you get a Vietnam lapel pin?

[00:47:09.48] DUTCH RAUCH: No.

[00:47:09.93] BRIAN KUMNICK: Veteran's lapel pin? Can I put one on your--

[00:47:13.32] DUTCH RAUCH: I'd love one.