

Hogan, Tom USCG

[00:00:13.12] MARC HENDERSON: When and where were you born?

[00:00:15.31] THOMAS HOGAN: Mount Vernon, New York, which is a suburb of New York City. It's about 20 miles north of New York City. I actually lived in a-- two towns up, but that was the only hospital there was room for, so I was born in Mount Vernon, New York.

[00:00:33.55] MARC HENDERSON: Where do you consider your hometown?

[00:00:35.11] THOMAS HOGAN: Larchmont, New York.

[00:00:37.03] MARC HENDERSON: And what year were you born?

[00:00:40.00] THOMAS HOGAN: 1939. THOMAS HOGAN: I was the only child. My mother and father have passed away. I'm the last of that side of the Hogan family, but we have grandchildren now. And I had a son and a daughter, so the name is carried on.

[00:01:09.49] MARC HENDERSON: How old were you when you began your service?

[00:01:12.19] THOMAS HOGAN: 20.

[00:01:13.52] MARC HENDERSON: 20, and did you enlist or were you drafted?

[00:01:16.78] THOMAS HOGAN: Enlisted.

[00:01:18.13] MARC HENDERSON: And what was your sense of the draft at the time?

[00:01:24.17] THOMAS HOGAN: Nothing good. I was told that I was a gifted artist, and I tried to get a job with a well-known cartoonist of that era, and he said, I'll hire you tomorrow, but what about your military obligation?

[00:01:42.53] At the time, the draft age was 24, and I was only 20. And he said, well, sorry, I can't very well hire you if I'm going to train you and then lose you in four years. So I said, well, you know thank you for being honest and whatnot. And I left there and walked around to the Coast Guard recruiting office.

[00:02:01.43] I couldn't find him. He was out for lunch, and I don't remember the name of the bar, but I met him over there and pretty much found out the entire story of the Coast Guard while sitting there, and I enlisted because I had seen them in operation there on Long Island Sound where I lived.

[00:02:22.85] The Coast Guard was popular then, too, because of the draft, and everybody thought it was an easy way out rather than being drafted and go to Vietnam, ha ha. That was in the summer, and I eventually went to boot camp in October of that year.

[00:02:48.14] MARC HENDERSON: '58, right?

[00:02:49.49] THOMAS HOGAN: Yes, and I graduated from boot camp in '59.

[00:02:57.02] MARC HENDERSON: Where did you go to boot camp?

[00:02:58.49] THOMAS HOGAN: Cape May, New Jersey. I don't want to mention what I would call it. That was really the butt of the world down there, especially during the winter because it was so miserably cold, and your social life wasn't much to speak of anyhow. But to go through boot camp and weather conditions like that, it wasn't very enjoyable.

[00:03:21.65] I had spent all my formative years on the water. So a lot of the seamanship that they were telling me was old news to me, and some of the stuff got kind of boring. None of the harassment or anything like that. That was never an issue for me, but it certainly was nice to get out of there.

[00:03:52.73] Because back in those days, it was 13 weeks. Now I think it's only eight, and it has been that amount of time for quite a while. But it was an experience. Yeah, it was OK, but it was nice to go.

[00:04:10.43] MARC HENDERSON: Sure.

[00:04:10.55] THOMAS HOGAN: You know, your first duty station.

[00:04:12.26] MARC HENDERSON: Now, did you have a rating that you were going off to train for? Or did you go out to the fleet undesignated?

[00:04:20.28] THOMAS HOGAN: You leave boot camp as a seaman apprentice. And then in six months time or so, you're an SN, which would be the highest rank you can go in that seaman category. And when I went to a buoy tender, which is a great training ground for boatswain mates-- and so it was natural for me to-- what they called strike for a rate. They didn't have boatswain mate school back in those days, so you had on-the-job- training. And I left. I was on there for almost two years and left there. And that's when I went on the 82320, up to Baltimore.

[00:05:12.87] MARC HENDERSON: Which was the buoy tender? Which buoy tender?

[00:05:15.29] THOMAS HOGAN: It was the White Sumac, which was-- it was a great operational area. We spent half our time in Miami Beach and half our time in Key West, Florida. And we took care of all of the aides to navigation on what they called Hawk Channel, which runs from Miami to Key West. And that was definitely a learning experience. But it was a good background for a boatswain's mate.

[00:05:46.76] So when I left there and was transferred to the 82-footer, I was still a seaman, but I had a BM designator, which meant that I was training to be a boatswain's mate. And I made third class when I was on 82320, the Kennedy. And then I was transferred from there up to New York and just went on from there.

[00:06:16.02] MARC HENDERSON: Great. So you mentioned being on the 82-footer. Were you on the Kennedy until you went to Vietnam or--

[00:06:25.64] THOMAS HOGAN: No, no, I was a--

[00:06:27.47] MARC HENDERSON: --series of other ships as well?

[00:06:29.90] THOMAS HOGAN: When I left the Point Kennedy, I was transferred to base Manhattan in New York, which was port security. And there they had a whole fleet of 40-foot patrol boats that-- I was running one of those for the time that I was there. And then I had some-- I had a lot of TAD-- temporary additional duty-- jobs when I was-- throughout my Coast Guard career. One of them was a boating safety detachment.

[00:07:05.06] And then they said, how would you like to go to Lancaster, Pennsylvania? And I sat there and I'm trying to think, what body of water is in Lancaster, Pennsylvania that the Coast Guard would be there? And he said, no. He said it's not sea duty. He said, you'll be taking care of a Coast Guard Reserve unit. You will be called-- or what the job is called is a station keeper for a Coast Guard Reserve unit.

[00:07:35.36] So you went down there and babysat the civilian side of the Coast Guard. And I was there for three long years. And oh, I just said, this is not the place for a boatswain's mate. I said, I don't even-- the only time I see water is when I take a shower. Come on, get me out of here. And the commander up in New York said, no, Tom. We've got you trained now. We can't let you go. And I was dating a gal in New York City.

[00:08:05.66] And every weekend, I would drive up to New York. And that lasted for about a year. And I said, why don't we get married? This is crazy, living like this. So we got married and she then moved down to Lancaster, which made it a little bit more tolerable because it was definitely a very large Amish community. And all of the social mores were based on how the Amish family would conduct their living and whatnot, which really wasn't bad. Because it's not like they had control of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

[00:08:44.29] But you could certainly tell their presence in the area. So we spent two more years down there and I was-- throughout my time at the Reserve training center, I wanted out there so badly, every month, I sent in a letter volunteering for Vietnam. I got transferred from there to the Coast Guard Cutter Tamaroa, which is an oceangoing salvage tug that was stationed in Lancaster, Pennsylvania-- no, not-- in Staten Island, New York.

[00:09:21.94] And I was on there for six months, and got orders to go to Vietnam. So it caught up to me. It was not a good time because my wife was pregnant with our first child. And off I went to Vietnam. My wife and I had an apartment up in Riverdale, New York, which is the next small geographic area just north of New York City, north of Manhattan. And with her being pregnant, I didn't want her there by herself.

[00:09:55.01] So I moved her-- my wife-- my family lived 20 miles from there, up in Larchmont. So we found a place for her to live up there, which turned out to be right next door to my parents.

And so there was a fairly short period of time between getting her moved in up there and then me leaving for training. And so there were sad goodbyes, and what am I doing, and whatnot. I had-- definitely had second thoughts.

[00:10:31.63] But I was selfish, I really was because it was something that I, me, was going to do. And the training went from there to Alameda, California. And you had indoctrination there. They started doing medical makeups on you. We went from there to--

[00:10:58.33] MARC HENDERSON: What was some of the indoctrination training that they put you through?

[00:11:01.03] THOMAS HOGAN: Language, booby traps, POW, the code of conduct, which-- how you are to act if you are a prisoner and what your objectives should be if you become a prisoner. So the main thing is not to tell anybody anything, and do everything you can to escape. So from there, we went down to San Diego. We were sent to Coronado.

[00:11:34.39] And a bunch of short-haired, muscular guys took us out on the beach and just beat us to death. And they took us out and showed us different things that could be eaten that were right there on the shoreline. And from there, we went down to Camp Pendleton. And the Marines had us for small arms training and stuff like that. The most important part of the training was the SERE training-- Survival, Escape, Resistance and Evasion.

[00:12:07.45] And that was in Warner Springs, which is outside of-- kind of south and east of San Diego. And it's kind of semi-arid territory, the furthest thing from what Vietnam was like. But the idea of it was that they would try to wear you down and put you in positions that when you eventually ended up into the POW camp, you were hungry, you were thirsty, you were tired.

[00:12:43.12] And they said not to worry. It's not going to be any different than a rough football game. BS. It was a rough football game without pads and footballs. That's what it was. But that was all part of the game. So they tested you. They had limitations--

[00:13:02.50] MARC HENDERSON: You meant physically, it was rough?

[00:13:04.21] THOMAS HOGAN: Oh, yeah. Yeah, they had limitations as to what they could do. And I did not enjoy the black boxes. I did not enjoy the pits and stuff like that. But fortunately I'm not claustrophobic. I did not enjoy the food that they were serving us, but this was only going to be for three days. And as long as you kept in your mind, they're not going to kill me. Sometimes, you felt like they were.

[00:13:33.79] So the final part of that was, they got us up. It wasn't anywhere as near as sunrise, and they had us all standing out there in formation. And this guy that played the commandant of the camp came out with all this pomp and ceremony and he was the most Chinese-looking guy you've ever seen. And he was born in this country, probably, but they had strategically placed Chinese fellows in the training camp there to lend some authenticity to it. And he started the same old BS. He was out there, beating on people and stuff like that. And he called everybody to attention.

[00:14:28.07] [EMOTIONAL GRUNT]

[00:14:29.51]

[00:14:32.85] Sorry because it's-- he made everybody turn around. There were two guys raising the American flag. We all started crying. We knew then that the problem was over, that this is possibly what could happen to us if we got captured.

[00:15:07.16] I'll never forget that part of it. The only thing that whole ordeal there convinced me of-- that I was never going to be captured because what we received was minimal compared to what the guys that were captured were going through. But it convinced me it was never going to happen. And I think that was the feeling of a lot of people that went through there. We were six Coasties in a group of 120 Navy people.

[00:15:43.16] So again, we had the opportunity to show them how good we were. Came back to San Diego and some more training back at Alameda. And then we went to-- I think we flew out of an Air Force base and it was a commercial airline. And we stopped in the Philippines. And what did not make us feel good was when they took us off the plane for a break in the Philippines, they brought us into a small hangar.

[00:16:26.10] And they said you will be staying in here until the plane takes off. And they locked us inside of that building. And I'm going, are you guys serious? Where the hell would we go? Is this a survival, escape, and evasion thing? And they locked us in that building because they were determined that they were not going to be short any people on that plane that was headed to Vietnam.

[00:16:51.99] MARC HENDERSON: What was your sense of the war before you went over there or while you were volunteering for this?

[00:16:58.35] THOMAS HOGAN: Most of the-- what we knew about the war was mostly taken up about-- by the people that were out there marching against it and calling us all kinds of names and whatnot. One of the biggest areas where they promoted their thinking was down at the draft office in Battery Park, New York. And when I was on the Tamaroa, I had to go past that office every morning to get on the Staten Island Ferry to get over to where the boat was over in Staten Island.

[00:17:36.27] And I made wide walks around those groups of people that were out there almost 24 hours a day because that was the induction center for the Army. And it didn't make any difference what branch of the military you were in, if you were in any type of military uniform-- because a couple of times I really felt unsafe to where I was being backed up against buildings and whatnot.

[00:18:08.91] And I remember one guard-- oh, he's OK. He's Coast Guard. Phew, got away with that one. But you really had to be careful where you went in uniform back in those days. Yeah, it was plain there were people getting killed over there. That would be 1968. And that was probably the worst defense of the Tet Offensive then. And it wasn't good. It wasn't good.

[00:18:43.08] But it was-- I don't know-- just something I had to do. And I did it. And it's probably one of the best experiences I've ever been through in my life. THOMAS HOGAN: We got to Saigon and we started circling around. And the pilot came on the PA system and he said, the runway is under attack. He said, I'm going to keep circling until I have a very quick moment. And he said, it's going to feel like your world is coming to an end because I'm just going to drop out of the sky and we're going to be on the runway. And that's what he did.

[00:19:23.85] And they hurried us off the plane and they put us into bunkers. So my first two days in Vietnam, I was inside of a bunker while some fools were out there throwing mortars at us. And then I finally got out of there. I was the only one that was on that Coast Guard flight. And when I got out of the bunker, nobody knew where I was supposed to be. And they said, well where were you supposed to go? And I said, well, somebody said Division 11, wherever the hell that is.

[00:20:01.12] And they said, well, you'll probably have to go to that little Navy shack over there. They fly down there all the time. So I had to lug all my stuff across the runway, go into this little building, and there's a guy sitting behind the counter. I tell him who I am. And he said, Coast Guard? OK, the plane's leaving here in a little bit to go down to An Thoi. So this pilot comes in and he said, come on, help me fold the wings down. What? Help me fold the wings down. We're going to fly down to An Thoi, which is on the island of Phu Quoc. And so he gave me a tour of the war in Vietnam on the way down and mostly--

[00:20:42.14] MARC HENDERSON: So just the two of you in this plane?

[00:20:43.39] THOMAS HOGAN: Yeah, yeah. It was an eight seater. I don't know what the designation on it was, but he flew at very low altitudes and he flew over the war zone to show me some of the damage that had been incurred from bombing and all the rest of the stuff, and the living conditions of the people, how they were packed together on the rivers and the canals and whatnot. And just-- you could just smell it when you were flying over it, the jungle growth, the water, the rot, and just the filth of the place.

[00:21:22.74] And then he said, OK, there's An Thoi or Phu Quoc, the island. And when he landed, he said, this is the end. They had a steel corrugated runway. And it was like, brrrrrr, going across a washboard. And I said, my god, you do this all the time? And he said, yeah. So I finally got off of there. And they took me out to-- the Coast Guard's home there was an APL, which is about a 200, 300 foot berthing ship, which was alongside of an LST, which was a repair vessel for the Swift Boats and the Coast Guard 82-footers.

[00:22:14.02] So they brought me out there, and it was probably late afternoon. And my indoctrination into Vietnam was, we're going to take you out on a patrol boat and we're going to put you on the vessel that you're going to. And that was the Point White. So they took me up in the one boat and they took me up to the Cambodian border, put me off onto the Point White. And I went up into the pilot house and I was up there and I was given information that they could put into the logbook.

[00:22:51.24] And the CO of it comes up and he said, oh, first class boatswain mate, you got any experience with these 82-footers? And I said, yes, sir. He said, OK, you got the watch. And he turned-- and he turned around and left. He left me in the middle of a war zone. And the only thing I had was a book that all ships have. They're called night orders. And the CO writes in there what he expects you to do or to take place during the nighttime hours.

[00:23:22.30] So if you have from 8 to 12 and 12 to 4 would be the dark hours. Those night orders would mostly apply there and he turned around and he left. And, OK, this is a war zone. So he did say, don't go any further than here, here, or here. He gave me parameters to stay within. So that was my first night in Vietnam. Fortunately, didn't come under fire that night, but I said, Jesus, what a way to start a war and just get dropped right in the middle of it.

[00:24:00.88] MARC HENDERSON: Tell us a little bit about the division, how they were divided, where they were in--

[00:24:06.64] THOMAS HOGAN: Well, you were tied up alongside of the APL, which was-- it looked a lot like Noah's Ark. And it had multiple decks on it, which were mostly all berthing area. They had a big mass area on it and there were barges that were alongside the APL. So there was a mixture of 82-footers and the 50-foot Swift Boats.

[00:24:36.40] Now, that APL and the repair ship was run by the Navy. We were under the Navy's control the whole time we were there. So we depended a great deal on getting support from them. So when we were not on patrol, we were tied up alongside one of those barges or we would go over and tie up at the stone pier that was in the village of An Thoi, A-N T-H-O-I.

[00:25:07.24] And there was an Army detachment there that was in charge of the North Vietnamese prison camp. And they had a bar. So that was our total liberty, was to go into this Quonset hut down there for a couple of hours and then turn around and take the boat back out to the berthing ship, unless of course, the place came under attack, and that always added a little excitement.

[00:25:32.89] MARC HENDERSON: What responsibilities consumed most of your time?

[00:25:37.55] THOMAS HOGAN: Preparation for war, really, because your boat was a means of doing what you were supposed to be doing over there, stopping contraband from entering into the country via waterways. And the maintenance on all the weapons, maintenance on the vessel itself. Our patrols were anywhere from 3 to 7 days, 3, 5 or 7. So you were always preparing for the next patrol.

[00:26:10.96] You might get two days where you were tied up alongside the APL, and the rest of the time, you were out on patrol. So you would go to a patrol area, relieve another boat. And that boat would go back to the APL. Saltwater is one of the cruelest elements you could put anything made out of any metal in because there's always maintenance on it, especially the weapons because they were very rarely covered up because it took too much time to get them uncovered, especially when you were on patrol.

[00:26:47.11] So there was constant problems with rust, and mostly maintenance on the vessel. In the Virgin Islands, they're a great boat to be on. Air conditioned. Well, I mean, what else could you want? The 82s were designed as a search and rescue vessel. The original crew had eight on it. It was a chief boatswain's mate was the officer in charge of that vessel.

[00:27:18.05] So you were sent to different parts of where the Coast Guard had jurisdiction. And you would be put at a base or a dock someplace. And you were a-- on recall 24 hours a day as a search and rescue vessel. In later years, they became heavily involved with law enforcement. But in the one that I was part of, the original crew, was search and rescue. You had eight men and you only had one man standing watch because everything was so automated, there were alarms for everything.

[00:27:58.09] So you could have-- you can't expect one guy to stay awake for 24 hours. The thing had so many alarms, he could just sack out at his normal bedtime, and the vessel would be all right. Now, when the Navy was worried about the arrival of weapons, supplies, everything from the north by access of water coming down the coast and getting into the river systems.

[00:28:30.37] They asked the Coast Guard if they could have 26 of those 82-footers. The Coast Guard sold them, I guess, to the Navy. And the Navy said, well, we've got the boats. How about crews? Can you supply those? And that's literally how the Coast Guard got involved with Vietnam. They were there from 1965 to 1975. So they had a good 10-year service this time over there.

[00:29:03.09] They were-- now had 13 men. So it immediately became more cramped. But compared to some of the other living conditions that the military guys had, we lived pretty good. The boat was still air conditioned. You had all kinds of support in the area for us because you had Navy and Coast Guard vessels that were within 25 miles offshore.

[00:29:35.07] And we would be able to run out there. Our biggest problem was having enough fresh water and fuel and ammo. So we could always get that from those larger vessels offshore. So it was not uncommon for us to have to run out there and get resupplied because we-- there was many a time we chased down rainstorms trying to collect fresh water because we were so low on it. And we had a little 13-foot Boston Whaler that sat on the deck. And we'd chase rainstorms until we could get that little Whaler full of water. And then it would turn into a big bathtub.

[00:30:14.73] Not the place to be after 14 guys jump into it. But at least it was fresh water and it wasn't salt. So they were a good boat. They were not really considered a vessel for war because it was a steel hull and an aluminum pilot house, which a .22 would go through it. So the-- every structure above deck was aluminum.

[00:30:48.72] And there was an unfortunate incident where one of the 82-footers got shot up by an Air Force jet, and those 20 millimeters just tore up the superstructure that was above deck. So we had a lot of firepower. That picture there of me standing there with that mortar and the .50 caliber, that was up on the bow. That was what would be considered the main weapon because an 81 millimeter mortar is about that big around.

[00:31:22.20] And the round was about that long, maybe that much of it was tail assembly that gave it directional control. They had high explosive, Willie Peter or white phosphorus, or illumination. Then you had the .50 caliber that was mounted on top of it. You could not fire the .50 and the mortar at the same time because the mortar is not the typical mortar that you would see the Marines using. It sits on a base plate and it's on a tripod.

[00:31:59.34] And you see the guys dropping the shells and then turning their heads away. This mortar, you were able to elevate it and you were able to train it just like it was a machine gun. So you could fire the 81 millimeter round just like you would as if it were a rifle, or add elevation to it at precise angles. And on the back of the round, they were-- what gave it the propellant force was what they called an increment bag, and it carried 13 bags.

[00:32:32.48] And depending on how far you wanted that round to go, was the number of increment bags that you would have on it. So you could remove them, add them back or whatever. Then that .50 caliber that's on top of the 81, there were four of those back on the aft part of the boat. And so we had five .50 calibers, the 81 millimeter mortar, we had M60 machine guns, M16s and .45 pistols, hand grenades.

[00:33:07.78] So I don't know what the hell we're going to do with a hand grenade in the water, but we had them. We laughed at it at first, but as it turned out, they did have a purpose. But we were fairly well armed. And we carried a tremendous amount of ammunition. But it didn't take long to-- if you were in a serious firefight, it didn't take you long to expend your ammunition. You always had to remember to save enough ammunition to get out of where you were because you sometimes would get into canals that you weren't able to turn around, so you had to back out or you backed in to begin with.

[00:33:47.96] But you always had to remember to save enough ammo to get out of the situation that we were in because it wasn't good to leave the area without any ammo or protection or anything. And we'd beat feet offshore to a Navy destroyer or a Coast Guard cutter, one of the larger cutters that would be out there, and they'd resupply us. THOMAS HOGAN: The creature comforts made it almost tolerable because the--

[00:34:18.79] MARC HENDERSON: Talk about some of those. What were the living conditions like?

[00:34:21.92] THOMAS HOGAN: Well, if you stood still long enough, mold would grow on you. There was so much humidity over there. It could be 100% humidity and it wouldn't be raining, but you'd be soaking wet because you perspired so much. As long as you were down below where it was air conditioned, it was fine. But as soon as you came up on deck, within a couple of minutes, you were soaking wet. And you could always get some comfort going-- jumping off the boat and going into the water. But now you had the problem, you've got this salt all over your body and no fresh water to-- couldn't spare the fresh water to wash it off.

[00:35:02.05] A bad cook didn't last long on a boat, so we had good cooks. The Navy supplied us with all of our foodstuffs. And if we didn't like what they were giving us, we-- this poor guy, the storekeeper that was in charge of the food supplies, he had a great big ring of keys. And they had

these great big square freezer lockers and refrigerators that were just staggered out on-- packed up alongside each other.

[00:35:37.36] And he would take his ring of keys and we would have our food list. And he would open up the locker and we'd go in there and get what we needed. And he'd say, OK, we're going down to the next one. And he would never lock up the locker we'd just left. So we would have two or three guys collecting the food and we would have two or three guys going into the opened up lockers that we just left. We never ran out of food. But we were very generous with it. We'd given it to small units that were out in the field.

[00:36:08.53] And they'd kill for a great big 5-pound thing of baloney or liverwurst or something like that. So we used to get a lot of stuff like that to give to the guys out in the field. We had quite a bit of weaponry. We could easily-- there wasn't anything they had out there-- maybe some of the bunker systems would be hard to bust up because they were so well made.

[00:36:39.16] They were made to not collapse. The only way you could really destroy one was to blow it up from inside because the way they were structured, it was to keep everything out. So unless you were lucky to land a round right in the door of it, that you weren't going to-- that 81 millimeter mortar, you'd have to put 100 of them right on target to destroy some of those bunkers. And the .50 calibers just made everybody duck. But we had some pretty good weapons on board. And the .50 caliber today is still a well-thought-of weapon. And that's been around for 100 years.

[00:37:22.91] MARC HENDERSON: Can you talk about the composition of the crew?

[00:37:25.33] THOMAS HOGAN: All nationalities, all mixed sizes, all different personalities. You become a family very quickly. The fact that you're in a war makes it happen that much quicker. You find that you-- friends come very easily, but you just-- you're holding back because you don't want to come that close and then the guy is gone. Fortunately, nobody on either one of the two boats that I was on got killed when we were out on patrol. But we did lose some people that were on different boats. But the-- all walks of life.

[00:38:10.84] MARC HENDERSON: What about the positions?

[00:38:11.93] THOMAS HOGAN: Hmm?

[00:38:12.31] MARC HENDERSON: So you were a boatswain mate. What were some of the other--

[00:38:15.22] THOMAS HOGAN: You had engineers. Enginemen were very important because they're the ones that kept all-- kept the boat running. We had an electronics technician that took care of all the radars and the radios. We had a cook. We had two chief petty-- excuse me-- two chief petty officers. The makeup of the crew was, you had-- a lieutenant JG was the CO and maybe another JG that was the executive officer.

[00:38:48.67] Under them, there were two chief petty officers, a chief boatswain's mate, and a chief engineman. They were the initial under way OD watchstanders. Not the engineer, but the chief and the two officers, chief boatswain mate, and myself because of the experience that I had and I was qualified to be an underway OD watchstander. So out of that, those four, all the rest of them were either-- they were E6 and below.

[00:39:22.79] So you had an assortment of enginemen, and you had the cook, you had the ET. And the rest were assorted seamen and firemen. And that was-- oh, we had one Vietnamese liaison that did all the interpreting when we either got prisoners or when we boarded the junks to make it clearly understood what we were looking for and why we were there.

[00:39:51.29] MARC HENDERSON: So you mentioned earlier back in the States, you talked about the social turmoil that was going on there. Did any of that make its way over to your crew or over to Vietnam that you saw?

[00:40:05.95] THOMAS HOGAN: The information or-- was made known to us was on-- believe me, it was on the up side. It was not on the down side. In Oakland, California, right around the corner from Alameda, California, was the big spot for the Hell's Angels, the original Hell's Angels. And there was a connection between-- why, where it came from, I don't know--

[00:40:38.52] there was a connection between the Hell's Angels and the Coast Guard. There were, over periods of time, guys that were in the Coast Guard were members of the Hell's Angels. We got a letter from the Oakland chapter. They wanted to know how we were doing and they prayed that everybody was safe. And the next hippies they beat the shit out of, they were going to dedicate to the Coast Guard. How could we lose?

[00:41:12.67] And that was so out of place compared to the news that we were getting about what was going on there. And I didn't have to face it till I got home. So I'm sure there was a lot of news that was kept from us. Armed Forces Radio and television network was mostly full of, hooray, boys, keep up the good work, and blah, blah, blah.

[00:41:44.05] They're not going to give us doom and gloom. You would hear letters from home and stuff like that, that some of it would get out. But your family at home was soon to realize they don't want-- they don't need to hear this-- hear this crap. And you'd get it when you got home.

[00:42:02.26] MARC HENDERSON: What were your impressions of your shipmates?

[00:42:08.72] THOMAS HOGAN: You put 12 people together, there's no guarantee that you're going to like all 12 of them. And the personalities are going to dictate that-- how you're going to-- most of the time, they're put aside because you had a job to do. It's not a normal job like you go to work 8:00 to 10:00 or 8:00 to-- 8:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon. And you go home with your family. And you spend the night there and you go back to work the next day. You're living in very close quarters with these people. And if you can't find a common ground, it's not going to work.

[00:42:42.54] So any difficulties you may have had with one or two or none, it's kept real low because you don't want to ruin that cohesion that you have with the crew because your life can depend on it. You just kind of put that stuff aside. Now, if you go out on liberty and there's-- sometimes dislikes of certain things would end up there and somebody throws some punches.

[00:43:16.79] The next morning, it was all forgotten about and-- wait till the next time we go out on liberty. But that didn't happen very often. Also, the Australians, they-- the Australians are absolutely crazy. I mean, they're out fighting battles day and night. And they want to go out on patrol with us and get shot at. I mean, come on, guys. They want to give you a break, but they were really anxious to get out there and do what they went over there to do.

[00:43:46.49] MARC HENDERSON: How much time did you have to yourself?

[00:43:49.07] THOMAS HOGAN: None, unless you went off somewhere. My favorite place was grab a bottle of something and walk out on the end of the pier and stay-- sit out there all night. And you just tell everybody where you are so they don't think you got hauled away or anything like that. But that's really about the only thing that you could-- place you could go to be alone to think about things, to think about your family. And when I say with a bottle, that's-- the thing that I remember most about Vietnam were the highs and the lows.

[00:44:28.55] You'd get into some kind of trouble out there and the shit is flying all over the place, and it's gone. Now you have to come down off of that high. Then you sit around and wait for the next one. So you were like this all the time. So, I've never used drugs in my life, but there was an abundance of alcohol over there.

[00:44:53.42] And you would just get your bottle of something and whatever you're mixing it with, and you just got-- you didn't sit right on the edge of the pier. You didn't want to get drunk and fall in the water and drown, but you'd find-- try to find that private little place where you didn't want anybody around you, where you could think it all out. And I'm not saying you'd get up refreshed after your-- whatever you drank, but it held you together for another week or two.

[00:45:21.26] MARC HENDERSON: Were there folks there that used drugs?

[00:45:23.18] THOMAS HOGAN: Oh, shit, yes. The younger guys, that's how they-- that's how they coped with a lot, especially the guys out in the field, and the god-awful things that they saw out there. And the stuff was all over the place. You could buy a package of cigarettes that still had the cellophane wrap around it and still had the seal on it, and you could not tell where it was open and those cigarettes were solid marijuana. \$2 a pack. And all of the hard stuff that you can handle was out there for you.

[00:46:08.48] And the seniors can't say they didn't know it was going on. It was obvious that it was. But these guys, these young kids performed day after day after day after day. And they'd come back and sit in their hooches and smoke that crap and inject those drugs and whatnot. But they would still perform. And it stopped them from going loopy. I didn't really-- before I went into the military, we didn't have anything like that when I was growing up, you know, of high school age, a problem with drugs or that.

[00:46:46.52] We worried about where we were going to get the next beer. That was fun for us. But I don't not-- do not remember anybody my age doing anything with drugs until after they came back from the war. And they were so used to having it over there that they just continued it when they got back home. And that was their placebo because some of the mental issues they had because of the war, they relied on those drugs to make them feel better. So it was just a continuing circle that they were running around in. But I don't do drugs. I never have. I have a hard enough time taking penicillin. I don't--

[00:47:33.61] MARC HENDERSON: So I think you just answered this question, but I'll ask it anyway. What did you do for off-duty recreation?

[00:47:40.72] THOMAS HOGAN: Drank.

[00:47:41.38] MARC HENDERSON: Yeah, and--

[00:47:42.61] THOMAS HOGAN: Pretty much.

[00:47:44.11] MARC HENDERSON: Any R&Rs?

[00:47:46.72] THOMAS HOGAN: I went to one in-country R&R, and that was in Vung Tau, which is at the mouth of the Saigon River. That was known as the Riviera of the East. It was predominantly occupied by the French during their stint there. They still had great French restaurants.

[00:48:15.79] The only thing that they'd left the Vietnamese was how to make the best French bread you've ever tasted in your life. But that's where all the in-country R&R was, and you got three days. So you'd go in there and find some little hooch to sleep in and you'd stay down there and just party for three days and then go back to the boat. You also had available to you 10 days of R&R. You'd go to Thailand, Hawaii, Australia. They wouldn't let you go back to the States.

[00:48:44.65]

[00:48:46.12] There was one other place. I don't remember where it was.

[00:48:48.37] MARC HENDERSON: Hong Kong?

[00:48:49.25] THOMAS HOGAN: Huh?

[00:48:49.62] MARC HENDERSON: Hong Kong?

[00:48:49.99] THOMAS HOGAN: Hong Kong, yeah. And I didn't go on one of those. I said no. I said, let's do this shit and get it over with. Because I didn't need to go out there and pretend it wasn't happening only to turn around and go back to it.

[00:49:05.04] MARC HENDERSON: You say that, but I seem to remember that you extended to stay over there.

[00:49:10.15] THOMAS HOGAN: Because of monetary reasons. Because when you were over there, there was no income tax on your salary. Now, when I shipped over-- that would have been the second time that I shipped over. What money I had left would have been tax-free when I shipped over, which just meant a little bit more money. That was the only reason I did that.

[00:49:40.96] MARC HENDERSON: For when you re-enlisted?

[00:49:42.49] THOMAS HOGAN: Hmm?

[00:49:42.91] MARC HENDERSON: When you re-enlisted?

[00:49:44.14] THOMAS HOGAN: Yeah.

[00:49:44.68] MARC HENDERSON: Yeah.

[00:49:45.70] THOMAS HOGAN: When I was over there in Vietnam and re-enlisted. When I went into the Coast Guard, my base pay per month was \$76. When I retired out of the Coast Guard 20 years later, my base pay was \$600 a month. We weren't making a whole hell of a lot of money. When you were in Vietnam, you got \$100 a month combat pay plus your regular pay.

[00:50:18.54] Well, that was-- that was all. I kept \$100, and everything went to the wife and the new baby. So that little bit of extra money meant something. So that's the only reason I shipped over early. Not early, late, actually. But--

[00:50:41.91] THOMAS HOGAN: Probably the most song-- and I still hear it in my head today-- We Gotta Get Out Of This Place. I don't remember who sang it, but I remember hearing that. Every time you turned around, somebody was singing it. I was kind of lost in the '60s. Here I was, I was six years in the Coast Guard before I was married. So I was free and just living high on the hog.

[00:51:13.67] How bad could it be in Puerto Rico and Saint Thomas and all those neat places and whatnot? And I couldn't tell you anything-- if I heard them, I could say '60s. But remember the names of them, any of the songs or anything like that, I don't really-- didn't have time for it.

[00:51:34.91] MARC HENDERSON: Are there any holidays that stand out in that 14 months?

[00:51:43.95] THOMAS HOGAN: No, not really, not more than any other. One New Year's Eve stands out more than another, but the cooks did everything that they could to make it like a meal like at home. And the provisions for like the Thanksgiving dinner with the turkey and-- everybody was sure to have turkey on Thanksgiving dinner. The other holidays they would-- the cook would do a little extra.

[00:52:12.06] Well, like for my birthday, he didn't have any candles. I don't know what the hell he used to decorate the cake with, but in place of candles, he had pieces of dry spaghetti standing up stuck in the-- in the icing. They were candles. The cooks did stuff like that to make it a little

bit more joyous and festival and whatnot. New Year's Eve was just big drunken brawls and whatnot. I did try to--

[00:52:48.63] MARC HENDERSON: Do you remember which year that was?

[00:52:50.25] THOMAS HOGAN: Huh?

[00:52:50.76] MARC HENDERSON: Do you remember which New Year's Eve that was, which year?

[00:52:53.09] THOMAS HOGAN: Well, it would have been '68, '69 because I only spent the one there. I tried to blow up the Vietnamese shit house.

[00:53:00.24] MARC HENDERSON: Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

[00:53:03.96] THOMAS HOGAN: Where we had to go to get to our boats was across a-- you had to land and there was a steel bridge that would take the weight of a Jeep or an ammo carrier to go across it. Once you got across that bridge, there was a concrete pier with a gangway that went down to the floats where we tied up. Well, about half way out, built up on stilts about 20 feet in the air, was the Vietnamese outhouse.

[00:53:35.07] So they would go out there and they would squat. When they pooped, it just fell into the mud that was below the outhouse. And this thing was probably 15, 20 foot square. Could have been 6 holer, 10 holer, I don't know what. At low tide, the stink that came out from that thing was just absolutely atrocious. So there was only one way to get rid of it, and that was to blow it up. And on New Year's Eve when somebody said 10, 9, 8, boom, up it went.

[00:54:05.10] And they still haven't figured out who blew it up. So they had to build another one. That one was tied-- there was a piece of cable went from the-- around the piling that was kind of buried in the mud. And it went out to a padeye that was on the back of a small oiler that came to deliver fuel for the Swift Boats. And somebody snuck over there and they secured the other end of the cable on this padeye. When the oiler got underway, it took the outhouse with them. So the was-- that was another time that it disappeared.

[00:54:44.97] I mean, it was perfectly normal to them. That's their lifestyle. But that doesn't mean we have to sit there and smell it every day because it was absolutely terrible. New Year's Eve, you probably remembered more. Christmas and Easter, you would-- those were sad holidays because you weren't with the family. But New Year's Eve was no holds barred.

[00:55:09.14] MARC HENDERSON: So you were on two different ships-- Point Clear and the Point White-- and they were in different locations, right?

[00:55:17.27] THOMAS HOGAN: Right.

[00:55:17.63] MARC HENDERSON: Can you compare the two experiences? The leadership, the locations. THOMAS HOGAN: Well, the loc-- An Thoi was a-- on the island of Phu Quoc,

which was maybe 20 miles-- 25 miles off-- well, Phu Quoc, on the-- let me orientate myself. The west side of it was the Cambodian border. It was almost right up against the shoreline. The other side of it was the Vietnamese border.

[00:55:51.62] There really wasn't much on the island. The only thing of real interest there was a huge POW camp where the VC were put. And that brought the Quonset hut that had the beer in it because the Army was there to oversee that POW camp. The only foodstuffs-- we could never get milk. You would kill somebody for what we would consider fresh milk. But actually, it was reconstituted milk. But it was only-- only came so far south in the country.

[00:56:30.62] We could get all the booze you wanted, but we couldn't get milk. So we would trade booze. Anything that came by that may have had milk on it, we'd trade booze for milk. I had my wife sending me-- I'll never forget the name it-- was Alba, and that was a concentrated milk that you added water to. And she sent me every one known to man, and that was the only one that actually tasted like milk. I don't even know if they make it anymore.

[00:57:01.25] When we left there, we went up to Cat Lo, which was just maybe 15, 20 miles from the in-country R&R center. And then 45 miles the other way was Saigon. We had a huge Air Force base, all kinds of medical facilities there. There was big exchanges that were available to you. You were given a ration card. You could only buy so many bottles of liquor a month. You could only buy so many cartons of cigarettes.

[00:57:37.16] You could only buy two refrigerators. Refrigerators were a hot item. The Army snatched them up as quick as they could because they'd get them into their little hooches if they had electric, and they'd keep stuff cool. Air conditioners were a hot item, but they were pretty well stocked like an exchange we'd have here in the States. There were clubs. There were USO shows, but they were never quite close enough for us.

[00:58:10.19] I never did see a priest the whole time I was there, even though you would hear that they're around. But you might have been out on patrol and they were back on land. So there was no way that you could get around it. But all those things were available to you, depending on what your job was. So the-- Division 13 in Cat Lo would have one that-- was the one that would have had more social things to do in your spare time.

[00:58:41.85] But we would-- we'd be on patrol for 3, 5 or 7, and we'd spend, out of the two days, we're resupplying, repairing the boat, and that was-- your day to go out and do whatever was that one day, but you couldn't do it too hard because you got underway at the crack of-- the rooster the following morning. And there was never any-- never any drinking on the boat that I remember.

[00:59:08.39] MARC HENDERSON: How about your leadership? Can you compare your leadership on both boats?

[00:59:14.00] THOMAS HOGAN: Killer Carr, I remember him saying one time that-- all right, boys, I guarantee we'll all get purple hearts this patrol. What, are you crazy? He was a go getter. He didn't let any grass grow under him. I had a lot to say to that man on some of the things

happened that I ended up doing. All of the COs were academy graduates. This was a big stepping stone for them. The CO on the Point Clear was the CO of a Coast Guard 95-foot cutter, which was search and rescue. He was unusual.

[01:00:09.35] MARC HENDERSON: In what sense?

[01:00:10.94] THOMAS HOGAN: That he had prior experience with that type of a cutter. It was what? 13 feet longer than the 82-footer, but it was the same basic configuration, the same job that they were initially built to do. The ensigns were-- I don't think there were any Reserve ensigns. I think they were all active duty. Some of them probably were academy graduates.

[01:00:46.25] They were good. They were good. I had a great deal of respect for the two different ones that I had. I just didn't agree with some of the philosophy of the one guy. I didn't join the Coast Guard to be a ground pounder out in the middle of a rice paddy. I didn't think that was my place to be. And there were a few other nighttime things that I was left hung out to dry, and I didn't care too much for those and he knew it because I didn't-- I wouldn't care if you were an admiral, I'd have been in your face the same way I was with him.

[01:01:22.91] MARC HENDERSON: Did they have similar missions in the two different locations?

[01:01:26.66] THOMAS HOGAN: Yeah, they were all the same. It was to stop-- the interdiction of supplies, men for the enemy into South Vietnam, see, because you had the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which they never did successfully stop that. Then you had all of the access from the water side, especially in the Delta area, there were so many canals and whatnot down in there that it was very hard to stop them.

[01:01:56.06] MARC HENDERSON: So you were operating as part of Operation MARKET TIME, right?

[01:01:59.36] THOMAS HOGAN: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. The biggest hint that you had that somebody was trying to sneak in-- I don't know if you've ever seen any of the Vietnamese junks, they have eyeballs on the port and starboard side, up on the bow. The rounder the eye, the further north that boat is from. The narrower the eye, the further south that boat is from. So the best indicator to you that somebody was sneaking something in was if they had a round eye on the boat because they came from up north someplace.

[01:02:36.59] So that was-- that was a dead giveaway. The trawlers and whatnot, they didn't have eyes on them, but the sampans and the smaller vessels did. So your job was the same. The gunfire missions were the same, which we got called a lot on for Army, Marines, SEAL teams, Marine Recon. We inserted and extracted a lot of those guys. If you had teams that were out in the field, they may get caught short somewhere and they would call us up for gunfire support.

[01:03:13.80] And that's where the mortar would come in. Now, here we're 8,000 meters away and you're on a platform that's doing this, and you're trying to be very precise with these rounds. And they're giving you increments of 50 yards. They want you to come closer. So the only thing-

- we would just take the boat and run it up on a mud bank. Then we had a stable platform. And they would be able to have better control with the mortars.

[01:03:44.21] So there was a lot of that. H&I-- harassment and interdiction fire-- somebody back there in the brain factory would give you certain coordinates to-- at so and so hours in the middle of the night, drop rounds on the ground out there just to screw with the enemy. To me, it was just a waste of ammunition. It may have done something. I don't know. We would have no indication. It was just another 50 rounds left the boat, and we don't know if it hit anything or not.

[01:04:15.11] MARC HENDERSON: So I assume on a typical patrol, you would do a little bit of every one of those--

[01:04:21.32] THOMAS HOGAN: Oh, yeah

[01:04:22.01] MARC HENDERSON: --actions you just described.

[01:04:24.68] THOMAS HOGAN: Well, you never knew when somebody would be calling in for gunfire support. There was an intel meeting before every patrol. And the Navy would get together with the powers that be with the Coast Guard and whatnot, and they may want fire in certain areas where they know there's activity. So we may have some of those missions, may spend more time in one specific area.

[01:04:56.51] See, what you had were 12-hour and 24-hour free fire zones. So for that 12-hour period during daylight, if there was anybody in that area, you could shoot them. A 24-hour free fire zone, nobody could be in there 24 hours a day. But what happened is, unless you were shot at, you just couldn't blatantly open up with a .50 caliber and start shooting a bunch of people that are around the shoreline.

[01:05:30.27] The Army controlled the land. The Navy controlled us. So if we saw enemy activity in a free fire zone, we would have to-- all of our messages were sent in code, but they were all done by hand. And the code was a five-letter group code. Now, one group could mean one letter, one group could mean the, or it could mean a series of words.

[01:06:02.25] So you could send a 500-group message that you had to do by hand. And then whoever you called, you had to say each one of those groups 500 times. They, in turn, would have to go to the book and translate it. They, in turn, would have to send whatever they're going to send to the Army because they're in charge of the land.

[01:06:31.53] Well, by the time anything got back to us, the war was over. So what I had was a message that was made up. Receiving small arms fire from position-- and that was left blank. Returning fire unless otherwise directed. Because if we waited for somebody to give us the OK, like I said, the war would be over. So that was how we solved a lot of those problems.

[01:07:02.52] I'll give you a for instance. We had one of the few Starlight scopes that the divisions had over there. And we were down in Phu Quoc Island. it was pretty hilly country. On the side of one hill, we could see lights traveling vertically on the side of the hill. We didn't know

if there were any friendlies up there. So we get on the radio and we get a hold of the Army. And in regular voice transmission, we ask them if there were any friendlies up in so-and-so area.

[01:07:44.47] Well, 15 minutes later, came back, they said there's no friendlies in the area. So that 81 millimeter mortar can be fired drop fire or it can be fired trigger fire. We ran it aground and we had set up the coordinates to the right elevation and everything like that. We had 20 high explosive rounds in the air before the first one hit. When the first one hit, a five star cluster went up in the air. And that was immediate cease fire. There's friendlies in the area.

[01:08:19.84] The Army didn't even know anybody was in there. Fortunately, we didn't kill anybody. We destroyed a small hamlet, but we didn't kill anybody. So you always-- you always had this, not battle, but turf wars. Well, we're the Army. We're in charge of this. We're the Navy. We're in charge of that. And we were stuck on the ass end of this thing trying to figure out, well, what do you want us to do? So we had to sometimes compensate to accomplish what we had to do. But that was the same throughout the division.

[01:08:56.38] We were pretty single minded, I think, in the fact that we had a job to do and we were going to do it. We don't have time for all this political fooling around. That's the way we did it. We never got really in trouble for it, but we got along good with everybody. And I say this with pride. The Coast Guard were a special group of people. They had their poopy together every place they went and everything that they did. And when we were dealing with the Marines, the SEALS-- and this was true over in Vietnam, that we were very well thought of by the other branches of service because we were no nonsense.

[01:09:45.79] I'm not saying we looked for ways to make the Navy look bad. They did pretty good on their own, but we-- there was that animosity between two naval services. We were the last ones in the food chain over there. The Navy was fair game. I mean, if we didn't have it, we got it.

[01:10:08.56] MARC HENDERSON: Sure.

[01:10:09.52] THOMAS HOGAN: But we had good relations with the other services. Also, the Australians. The Australians are absolutely crazy. I mean, they were out fighting battles day and night. And they want to go out on patrol with us and get shot at. I mean, come on, guys. They want to give you a break, but they were-- they were really anxious to get out there and do what they went over there to do. We had a code that nobody else had.

[01:10:41.43] We had a piece of radio equipment, was-- I don't know who designed it or whatever, but it was called a Prick 39. And it was a-- it had an infant-- unbelievable number of frequencies for it. And it was an Army radio. It was about this big, like so, about that deep. And it was carried by the troops. And you just had unlimited frequencies that you could call on.

[01:11:12.09] These things had been captured out in the bush and whatnot, so you still had to be careful. We had a code nobody could break. And I would have given my life not to give away where that code came from. And it was the goofy grape code on the back of a Kool-Aid package. And that's how we used to communicate with the other boats. And it was so much simpler than

going through and cracking up all those messages. And we would send stuff-- when the higher ups found out about that, they said, you guys are crazy. But it works, so-- but it was the goofy grape code from Kool-Aid.

[01:11:51.33] MARC HENDERSON: You showed me a picture of a trawler that had run aground. Do you want to tell us the story of that?

[01:11:57.21] THOMAS HOGAN: One of their attempts to get contraband in-- and they came under fire offshore. And in their dying breaths, they just-- they tried to get the trawler in there to the people that were on shore to get off as much contraband as they could. And they were stuck there. They couldn't move so they were an easy target. And I forget how many rounds of 81 millimeter mortar were dropped on that thing. I don't know if there was anybody left alive over there.

[01:12:35.19] We didn't even know what damage we had done until somebody gave us a copy of that aerial. And we never heard-- we very rarely heard about anything-- what the end result was. And at short side, I was in a 13-foot Boston Whaler, came around a point in the canal and was taking fire from a bunker position. And I was a couple of hundred yards offshore.

[01:13:07.38] And I called back to the 82-footer, who was still back around the corner. And I told him, I said, receiving small arms fire. He said-- and all of a sudden a Navy destroyer comes up on the radio and they say, hey, Coast Guard, do you need help? So my CO jumped on that. And so they had me over there calling in gunfire. The thing that scared me the most about that was these were all rounds that were left over from the Korean War and the 5 inch 38 rounds were notorious for being short rounds.

[01:13:43.77] I was between the good guys out here and the bad guys there. And you could hear those things coming over your head. Now I'm sitting there with a pair of binoculars and I can see every round that's hitting in the area. We received an after-fire report. The Navy was in a different war than I was in. And this was done by everybody. The numbers were so inflated to make everything-- to make the grand picture look bigger because the numbers that were set in by them was nothing to do with what I was directing them to do. But that happened all the time. The Coast Guard was guilty of it too.

[01:14:33.72] When I left the country, I was in the CO's-- the commodore's office, and I'm looking up there and I see, number of rounds expended, KIA, MIA, all this stuff. And I thought-- he said, well, Tom, what do you-- what do you think about your year in Vietnam? What are you going to leave here with? And I told him, I said, you can knock that shit off. I'm going to be a taxpayer the day after tomorrow. I said, you're just wasting a lot of money shooting that ammunition all over the place with no end result to it.

[01:15:08.31] Everybody was doing that. And that was to keep the numbers up to make it look good to the-- for the people at home, I guess. But that was-- it wasn't doing us anything in the way of morale, but it was making it look good back home. Well, look what the boys are doing. And they were just wasting ammunition. THOMAS HOGAN: Starlight scope. The first ones

were-- they were about this long and they were about that big around and they probably weighed 15, 20 pounds.

[01:15:44.91] And they were actually mounting these things on M16s. What it was is just the same principle as the night vision that you have on scopes today, but certainly today, the newer ones are better. And it gathers any available light and it makes anything that's moving-- anything looks green. So if somebody was puffing on a cigarette, you will actually see that cigarette flare up and you'll see the smoke go up. But everything's in a green hue.

[01:16:22.17] They were unbelievable. They were able to let us know there was movement in the canals or up on the hillsides and whatnot. Medical treatment must have improved tremendously because of that war. Thankfully, I didn't see a lot of that. That stuff was all done inland. Technology, to us, was a radar and a radio and a brand new rifle that everybody hated and a machine gun that was 50 years old.

[01:17:01.47] That was all new to us because we didn't have-- well, we had radar and radios, but the Coast Guard was not known for weaponry on their boats, not on the small boats anyhow. So the Starlight scope and the medical advances, I really can't-- C-rats were terrible. Even today, I don't know if the MREs are that good. I've never had any of those. But the C-rats, we had them, because we could have been out on patrol and had no food.

[01:17:35.17] And the cook would cook something up with the C-rats. But that's about the only thing I can think of. THOMAS HOGAN: Well, it was my own fault. I didn't find out I was a father until two weeks after the baby was born. And I felt bad that day because I wasn't there to help. But that was my own fault because I volunteered to go over there. Myself and my other crazy companion, I referred to them as sitting duck operations.

[01:18:12.84] We had a 13-foot Boston whaler that was painted like a dark gray. And there was-- a Navy Swift Boat was going up into an area, there hadn't been any intelligence come out of that area for Lord knows how many years, probably since before the beginning of the war. And they wanted me and Herbie to go up there in this little Boston Whaler. And we had an M60 machine gun and a couple of M16s, .45 pistols, and enough ammunition to ensure that we could remain pretty safe.

[01:18:47.92] The Swift Boat-- we were tailing the Swift Boat. We went up. This was right on the end of the canal peninsula where you come down the coast and then you turn west and you go over towards Cambodia. There was a canal that kind of went behind the point at the canal peninsula so that you could go in this end and come out the other end. This Swift Boat went in there. I can't think of the name of the town. They were going in there to stir up shit, was what they went in there for. And we tailed behind them.

[01:19:21.27] And Herbie and I set up on the side of the canal to offer support to them if when they were leaving the river, that had-- we would help them get out of there. We didn't have any radar. We had a radio and a pen flare, which shot up red, green, white, and yellow. The Swift Boat came storming out of that canal and flew-- well, they didn't even know where we were, to

be honest with you. They flew right past us. Now, they had a radar. They left me and Herbie up in that canal.

[01:20:04.08] And I bet I was 14 hours before I found that 82-footer. I couldn't raise the 82-footer on the radio, so I basically patrolled around the South China Sea till I finally found that 82-footer. I was scared to death that night. And that's one of the times that I got on that one lieutenant and I was really scared that night. But that's not the only time that we were out on what, like I said, they were called sitting duck operations. We went out there basically to sucker the VC into firing at us so we could find them.

[01:20:44.25] And we were just very lucky because there was one fireman-- Hernandez was his name-- in one of the divisions-- I don't know if you've heard anything about him. That's how he got killed. And that's how the two officers got shot up, was out there doing those silly patrols in those Whalers to try to find out where the enemy is. One guy, one of the officers literally got his ass shot off of him. And Hernandez was killed. And the other officer, I forget what happened. So there were stupid things like that that I didn't really care for.

[01:21:30.39] MARC HENDERSON: You had mentioned it was a bad day when you got news of your son being born.

[01:21:35.91] THOMAS HOGAN: No, well, it was bad in the sense that I wasn't there to help.

[01:21:39.30] MARC HENDERSON: How did the word make its way to you?

[01:21:41.67] THOMAS HOGAN: Supposedly, through the USO. Somebody up at-- in the squadron came down and told me. I never saw a telegram or anything like that. Somehow, somebody got in touch with them. I had a problem with a family issue when I was over there. And Commander Gatto, who was the commodore of Division 13, the landlord tried to kick her out while she was pregnant. And that's against the law. That's against the Soldiers, Sailors and Civil Relief Act.

[01:22:26.31] And I didn't know they had a telephone. He called right to Washington and he told the legal office in Washington what was going on. And the Coast Guard sent up-- and I was really upset about this. The Coast Guard sent up a team of lawyers and descended on the landlord like a wet blanket. And the man-- his head's probably still spinning. And they basically saved my wife from being kicked out on the street, even though she was living right next door to my mother and father.

[01:23:01.32] The idea that he was going to kick them out because he wanted to turn it into a condominium type thing. I don't think condominium was even a word back then. He was going to take two apartments and turn it into bigger apartments or whatever. So the one she was in had to be vacated. So that was-- I was really upset about that because you feel so helpless, you can't-- they had the MARS station, I don't know if you're familiar with that.

[01:23:32.52] MARC HENDERSON: The HF radio system.

[01:23:33.87] THOMAS HOGAN: Yeah, yeah. Women do not understand, over. Because you'd say, over, and you didn't know what was going to happen next. But I used that a couple of times. But you might as well just-- you could have dug a grave there and waited till your turn to get on the radio itself. But it was-- it was good. You got mail constantly.

[01:24:06.00] My dad used to send me six packs of beer because the rumor was the beer had formaldehyde in it so it wouldn't spoil. I believe that that war put PBR back on the map because that was the only beer that still tasted like beer. I drank PBR for years when I came back from there, and there was a lot consumed over there. Because it just sat out on piers in 100 degree sun. And so they said they put formaldehyde in it.

[01:24:37.20] Well, Dad would send me a six pack of beer. And I got an attempt of a-- I forget what the cake was for. Well, it wasn't much-- the whole cake was there, but it was kind of squished. One guy got a birthday cake and it was-- it looked like it just came out of the oven. The wife got a box-- you remember the cake boxes that had the clear cellophane on the top of it and you could see the cake? That's how she mailed that cake over there. And there wasn't a bump or mark on that box because everybody could see what it was.

[01:25:15.84] And it was all like, Happy Birthday Joe, From Your Wife and what-- and it was like precious cargo. And it got there and it was just perfect. Of course, it was stale, but the idea that she sent a cake like that. But yeah, you'd-- the mail was good both ways. The MARS-- other than that, that was pretty much about it.

[01:25:46.66] All your mail was censored. Hi, honey. Where are you? [MUMBLES]. You couldn't tell her. It was the same old stuff, very bland stuff. Writing, you couldn't say where you were or anything like that. You couldn't give away any state secrets or whatever.

[01:26:11.81] THOMAS HOGAN: When I left. [CHUCKLE] The best day was when I got there because I was determined that I was going to go there. The other best day was the day that I left because I was going-- I got home the day after my son's first birthday. He was a year old on the day they landed on the moon. When I got at the airport, everybody was glued to-- in San Francisco-- everybody was glued to the televisions. And this is where I first got the feelings of people in our country.

[01:26:44.75] For some reason, the Coast Guard allowed me to travel in civilian clothes, which was unheard of. So when I left Saigon, I was in civilian clothes. But when I got to San Francisco to continue the flight, I had to put a uniform on. What's the reason for this? I was sitting at a bar with four guys, and everybody was glued to the TV watching the landing on the moon. They had no idea that I had just come from Vietnam.

[01:27:17.73] So I was sitting there and it was getting closer and closer to me to have to go put a uniform on to get on that plane to fly to New York. And I said, guys, save my seat. I'll be back in a little bit. When I came back in uniform, they weren't my friends anymore. The shit that came out of their mouths was just unbelievable. And I would not have stood a chance if I got up to defend how I felt because there were four of them and one of me.

[01:27:47.63] And I just-- I had to put my tail between my legs and walk away. I went down to the USO and stayed there until I got on the plane. I never saw four people change so quickly as those four guys did. It was like I was something from outer space. And then when I got to New York, I've got my one-year-old son in my arms and some guy walks up to me and addresses me as a baby killer.

[01:28:18.15] I did not-- nah. I was ready to go ballistic then, but my wife was there and this guy was with other people. And I said, no, you know better than that because you got the baby and your wife is here. They could get hurt or whatever. But, oh, Jesus, I was never-- I was livid, livid.

[01:28:48.40] THOMAS HOGAN: The Coast Guard, when we came home, we were returning heroes because the only way you could go over there in the Coast Guard was to volunteer to go. So when you reported back to your next duty station, you were treated like a hero. All of the Coast Guard-- most of the Coast Guard stations are very much a part of small communities. You were treated like a hero from them.

[01:29:20.23] It's not like the guys over at the Army base or the Air Force base or the Marine Corps base, they're behind a great, big chain-linked fence. Liberty is granted, they come out through the gate, and here's all these idiots out there with sticks, stones and whatnot, just beating these poor guys to death. They could never get away from it, where we kind of just melted into the background. We weren't like the big services where we were out in front of God and everybody.

[01:29:49.52] That part of it, we never really got that much because we were the Coast Guard. What the hell is a Coast Guard doing over there? Half the time people didn't believe it. And for the longest time, a lot of people didn't even know we were over there. But that, that upset me, that stuff. No, no need for that.

[01:30:16.70] MARC HENDERSON: Is there anything about your experience in Vietnam that you'd like to talk about that we haven't already?

[01:30:23.32] THOMAS HOGAN: Lifetime friends that I still-- there's two guys that I still keep in touch with on a-- almost on a daily basis. One of them is in Mexico, and the other one's-- lives south of me and in Venice, Florida. Some of the closest friends I had over there, unfortunately, have all passed away, relatively short period of time after we left over there.

[01:30:54.66] Yeah, those were lasting friendships. I looked at the list of people that are coming to this reunion, and I saw-- I saw one name in there. He was an officer that was a classmate of one of the COs I had. He wouldn't remember me because I wasn't over at the O club and stuff like that. But I recognized the name. So there's a connection there, but not like your buddies that were on the boats with you and whatnot. It was a lifetime experience.

[01:31:34.73] Before even going there, that SEER training, to this day, I think every man should go through that SEER training because it teaches you so much about yourself and how you applied that when you were over there and how much it did help you to-- well, it convinced most of us that we would never get captured, but it helped you cope with what was going on over there

because you had some preconceived idea of what it was going to be like from these guys that were beating the hell out of you over there in the training and whatnot. It would be the people that I was there with that I would have the fondest memories of.

[01:32:22.94] MARC HENDERSON: So after you returned home, did you have any difficulty adjusting to life after combat?

[01:32:30.86] THOMAS HOGAN: Loud noises. 4th of July. Too quick to act because something startled me or there was some type of a threat that really wasn't a threat, but it seemed like it. Many years later, the VA asked me, do you have-- have you had any issues with coping with what you had over there? And I said no, not really. Not that I'm aware of.

[01:33:08.51] I may be a little bit more short tempered than I was over there, but I've got the temper of an Irishman anyhow. So that could be normal. But yeah, that was-- that's about it. I don't really remember-- well, loud noises, I think, would startle anybody. But under the conditions that I just came from, it was maybe-- to me it was a little bit more serious.

[01:33:39.69] I never threatened anybody. I never went after anybody for anything that-- the fact that people were calling me all kinds of different names and whatnot, but not as-- I was minor compared to what some of the other guys in the military got.

[01:33:59.13] MARC HENDERSON: How did your experience in Vietnam affect your life afterward?

[01:34:07.59] THOMAS HOGAN: I am probably one of the most easygoing guys you'll ever meet in your life. I always look for the good things. I don't want to waste my time dwelling on the bad things. I'm going to find a way to make it a good thing. I still think about it, but not in the same vein that I did when I first came home. Now I think, well, it was something I did. And that's the end of it.

[01:34:36.12] When I came home, of course, it was a little bit different. But I don't-- I really don't-- what did I gain out of it? How stupid war can be. How screwed up is the political system? I could probably go on forever about stuff like that. But on a more personal level, I just-- I'm all right with it.

[01:35:06.40] MARC HENDERSON: How did your combat experience, or did your combat experience affect the way you think of veterans returning from combat today?

[01:35:22.11] THOMAS HOGAN: You missed your chance with me. Don't be coming up to me and saying welcome home and thank you for your service. You're too goddamn late. I'm still bitter about that. I'm just tired of hearing it, I really am. I think what you did for the guys that were coming home-- but the more I saw of it, the more upset I got. And that's what these guys need when they come home like that.

[01:36:01.90] You didn't sign on the bottom line and personally send them over there, but they came from this country, your country. You should take care of them. And I'm glad to see that

that phase of humanity changed. And I hope it stays that way. I just, nowadays, I say to myself, what in the hell are we doing over there? Just like I did after Vietnam.

[01:36:34.18] It's a political war. Some fool in Washington is sending these boys, men, whatever, over there to defend some ideal that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. And they just keep doing it and doing it, doing it. Now they're going to walk away from all that crap over there and how many people died over there with no reasonable outcome in our favor? Just more people hurt or killed. And it's nuts. So I don't know who we're going to fight next, but I'm sure they've got them lined up. Now I've got a grandson I have to worry about. He wants to be a pilot. [CHUCKLE] Good for him. I just hope he stays safe.

[01:37:18.79] MARC HENDERSON: So did you take away from Vietnam any lessons that you would like to pass on to future generations? Your grandson, for example.

[01:37:27.79] THOMAS HOGAN: [SCOFFS] Don't volunteer. Pay attention to your seniors in the sense, not so much of a-- because the guy has got gold on his sleeve, but there's a lot to be learned. And I told this to my son when he graduated from the academy, I said, don't forget your chiefs, those are the people that run that outfit.

[01:37:58.99] And if you've got a problem, you go to the chief because-- and if you're honest with him, he'll straighten it out with you. And I would tell AJ the same thing. Be honest with yourself. It makes no sense to put you or anybody else in harm's way. You just have to be careful how you do it because disobeying a direct order is not going to work. So it takes a lot of effort to do something like that and hope you don't suffer any consequences for it. But you just can't take your principles and hide them under a rock someplace.

[01:38:39.78] So those are the things that you have to deal with. And at the same time, try to do what you were told without causing any more difficulties or people getting hurt or whatever. If I never saw you before and you said something to me that upset me, I would tell you where to go in a heartbeat. I've always been that way. As long as I told you, I forgot about it the second the words came out of my mouth, and I'll go about my merry way looking for something to smile about.

[01:39:12.78] I would tell him not to-- not to be like your grandfather, to be as outspoken as I was. And I don't think he will because my son wasn't that way. It would really take a pile for him to get mad. And AJ's either-- he's more smooth sailing than his father is so-- no, he'll be all right. So we'll see how that-- I just want to be here when he graduates. I got \$1 coming to me.

[01:39:45.66] THOMAS HOGAN: Cried almost the whole time I was there. And I know there's a lot of people that have never been there, but that was probably the most healing thing that I did because of that war, was to go there. It was on the 25th anniversary. And we had a reunion there in Washington. And we had quite a turnout for that one. And that was-- that helped me a lot.

[01:40:21.04] That was the first time I saw it. I'd never even went to one of the miniature ones which came through wherever I was, a couple of times in different areas. I didn't want to face it. And of course, there was one guy that I knew that was on the Wall, and that was Hernandez, the

one that got killed in the river. And so that was the idea of the 25th anniversary thing with the Coast Guard combat vets was to go to the mall and to see it and that's-- that's something. But it made me feel better that I went there and got to touch-- that was-- there was a connection there. But time goes on so--

[01:41:25.90] THOMAS HOGAN: I don't think the Coast Guard has ever blown its own horn loud enough. In my mind, it felt as if the Coast Guard was to do everything possible to pretend it never happened. To this day, I don't know if there's-- and I'm going to ask you this, and if you would write it down, to try to find the logbooks from those 82-footers over there so that I can look up-- well, it's difficult.

[01:41:58.49] As a matter of fact, there's a guy here today who signed me in when I went to Cat Lo Division 13. He worked for the first class yeoman that was there, Anderson. And he's almost like a walking encyclopedia of what happened in Cat Lo. But I always felt the Coast Guard never wanted anybody to know that we were over there. It was kind of, we're going to keep it close to the chest. Because I was really upset that it took that long to get all of that stuff taken care of and documented and put into wherever the hell they put it.

[01:42:37.97] Throughout my career, if it wasn't for the local newspapers of all the rescues that I made over the years, if it wasn't for the local newspapers, nobody would know anything about it. You would never get anything from the Coast Guard or whatever. The only confirmation that you did a good job was when you got your marks twice a year, your performance and everything like that. You may see one tick up or something like that on performance, but you never really got anything from the higher ups says, hey, you guys did a good job, blah, blah, blah.

[01:43:15.86] Well, I felt the same way about the Vietnam War. The fact that I don't like it, this welcome home stuff. That, I don't like at all. But this here, I really haven't heard much about it, but I like it because everybody's had a chance to realize what you did to these people. And you're trying to recognize what they did now because the numbers are getting smaller and smaller. I don't know how many Vietnam vets are left. But I'm 82 and I was 30 years old there. So the guys that were 20 are 72 years old.

[01:44:00.79] MARC HENDERSON: Yeah, the VA says more than 500 a day are passing away, Vietnam veterans.

[01:44:06.36] THOMAS HOGAN: Wow. So yes, I think it's a good thing. I would just like to have a-- well, there's a couple of things. And I was talking to that ex-yeoman out there. I said, there's-- I want to find out when I left the Point White in Division 11 and went to the Point Clear in Division 13, because there were medals and awards that were handed out for different things at different times.

[01:44:41.51] And for the life of me, I can't remember. And their record keeping-- unless I can see a log someplace as to where I was, there may be stuff that I-- I really don't care anymore, but I'm just upset if I was to get it and I didn't get it.

[01:45:01.52] MARC HENDERSON: Sure.

[01:45:02.30] THOMAS HOGAN: So I don't know. I--

[01:45:03.41] MARC HENDERSON: Credit where credit's due, right?

[01:45:05.02] THOMAS HOGAN: Huh?

[01:45:05.36] MARC HENDERSON: Credit where credit's due, right?

[01:45:06.74] THOMAS HOGAN: It's not like it's going to give me more on my retirement or anything, but it's-- yeah, I'd like that.

[01:45:12.86] MARC HENDERSON: Absolutely.

[01:45:14.00] THOMAS HOGAN: I'm only going to wear my uniform once more, so I might as well be in the proper uniform when I get buried or burnt or whatever. Yeah, I think it's a good idea, but just not the way this whole thing with welcome home and all-- that meeting at the airport, I think-- I thought that was great. That took a lot of organization to find out when these kids were coming home and to have total strangers and families there welcoming them home, I think was great. And I know that those kids appreciated it.

[01:45:51.62] But we never saw anything like that. And I'm not afraid to say that I'm still bitter about it. Probably the thing that I would tolerate more than anything is welcome home because we were never recognized as-- when we came home. That would mean more to me than this thank you for your service. That was 40 years ago. If I had to do it all over again, I would do it all over again. And it was good to me. It was good to my kids, good to my family.

[01:46:33.26] The only tough part was when I was-- when I was in Vietnam. But the Coast Guard-- I will say one thing. The Coast Guard was very good to me when I came back from Vietnam. Tom, where do you want to go? And they made sure if I said-- they got me there, to the next duty station. That, I think, was done because of the service over there. So I got some pretty choice duty. It was all search and rescue, which was what I was trained for originally.

[01:47:06.62] But I got some pretty-- when I retired, I was in charge of the station at Clearwater, Florida. That's like beach day! Beach party! No, not really. It was one of the busiest stations in the seventh district, but it was a good job. A lot of people wanted that station because of its reputation and whatnot. But yeah, so they took-- they took care of us. Coast Guard was always good about taking care of your family when transfers came.

[01:47:39.33] They would do everything they could not to interrupt school for the kids, that all of the transfers would happen during-- out of the school year and whatnot. And a lot of that was taken into consideration. Well, our detailers were-- they couldn't get people to call them. So the detailers developed the policy that if you don't want to tell me where you want to go, I'm going to send you where I want you to go.

[01:48:09.68] And they did everything they could to have these people call up and say, hey, how about this? How about that? Whatever. So it took the detailer thing a long time to catch on with

the Coast Guard. But that was the first thing I did when something came up. I kept with them, called them twice a year. What's coming up? What stations are available and whatnot? And it pays off. But no, they were good to me. I don't care.

[01:48:38.24] MARC HENDERSON: Chief Hogan, thank you for sharing with us.

[01:48:40.04] THOMAS HOGAN: Well, thank you, and thank you for putting up with me.

[01:48:43.03] MARC HENDERSON: No, thank you.