

## **Hovis, Bobbi Navy**

[00:00:16.35] BOBBI HOVIS: I was born in Girard, Ohio in 1925. And my family members were my mother and dad and my paternal grandparents. But shortly thereafter, we moved back to Pennsylvania where we were originally from. And I always called myself a Pennsylvanian. And it was a small college, lake resort town, Edinboro, Pennsylvania. Very, very fine little town to grow up in.

[00:00:51.90] DEBBIE COX: And how old were you when you joined the Navy?

[00:00:55.29] BOBBI HOVIS: We had to be 21. I was just 22, 1947.

[00:01:04.76] BOBBI HOVIS: The Western Pennsylvania Hospital School of Nursing in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Standard nursing training, took in all areas of nursing. We were in a department there for a while and then we went to another department and another floor. And we just got a well-rounded training in nursing care.

[00:01:34.65] I never cared for medicine. I enjoy all the surgical aspects of emergency room, operating room, recovery room. And later in Vietnam, we had a triage area. That term was not even in use when I was in training, but that came into use I think during the Vietnam War. And where all the excitement was.

[00:02:09.44] DEBBIE COX: Was it called a direct commission or what was the process?

[00:02:12.74] BOBBI HOVIS: Yes, it was a direct commission. And I went to Pittsburgh where they had a recruiting office. And there, I was sworn in. And then shortly thereafter, my first duty station was Jacksonville, Florida, the naval hospital there at the naval air station.

[00:02:33.59] We were ordered to the various hospitals and it was called an indoctrination center. And so I was in indoctrination center in Jacksonville for eight months. And then I received my first set of orders. And that was to Key West.

[00:03:00.41] BOBBI HOVIS: I became a flight nurse, graduated from that school and then went to the Korean theater of operations.

[00:03:09.23] DEBBIE COX: What were your duties as far as flight nursing?

[00:03:13.91] BOBBI HOVIS: Fly in, pick up the patients and fly them out. And usually we flew them to Yokosuka, Japan, a great big naval hospital. And it was the hub for picking up patients to fly them back across the Pacific.

[00:03:31.88] And we island hopped. It was usually a 12 hour flight from there to Hawaii where we terminated and patients were taken to Tripler Army Hospital in Honolulu.

[00:03:47.33] DEBBIE COX: What type of aircraft did you serve on?

[00:03:51.59] BOBBI HOVIS: I'm glad you asked because they were all-- for the most part, they were all junkers left over from World War II. And many of them had coal dust in the deck as so many of those planes were used as the flying into Germany, the airlift to carry coal to Germany. A plane landed every 50, 60 seconds loaded with coal in Germany.

[00:04:37.32] BOBBI HOVIS: Seems like I was always interested in Southeast Asia and particularly in Hawaii. And I just decided somehow I had to get there and of course I did. But I read the history of World War II. I'm a history buff.

[00:05:00.08] And I read so much of the history of the war in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, the South Pacific, all the battles and the events that went on against the Japanese early in World War II.

[00:05:26.88] BOBBI HOVIS: I was the first Navy nurse to volunteer for Vietnam and the first Navy flight nurse to volunteer for Korea. Nothing could really prepare you for Vietnam. However, having had battle training and caring for battle injuries, I probably had a little bit of a jump on

[00:05:53.40] the other six Navy nurses as none of them had had wartime experience except me. And I was really glad that I had had that training. And as I say, living in Southeast Asia, you just cannot quite duplicate it anywhere else.

[00:06:21.36] The smells and the sights and the sounds particularly are just part of being stationed there in Southeast Asia. But I loved it and I would not have traded it for anything even though we had some hard times. But you just really-- a situation like that it's hard to totally prepare.

[00:06:49.45] You make do and you adjust and you figure out things. For instance, in the hospital in Saigon somehow or another, we always ended up with a ton of gladiolus flowers. Well, what vase would hold up a tall gladiolus, a whole bouquet of them?

[00:07:15.88] So then I got the idea that, well, I'll use those 105 millimeter shells as a flower vase. And they are heavy. Whoa. So I could stick my gladiolus in the shell casing and that was my vase.

[00:07:43.19] BOBBI HOVIS: 1963, and as I say, I was 38.

[00:07:47.72] DEBBIE COX: What rank?

[00:07:48.61] BOBBI HOVIS: Oh, lieutenant commander. We traveled from Travis Air Force base in California in a brand new World Airways 707, C model. It was a second flight. And it was heaven compared to those old junkers of Korea. And I was just thrilled to be flying on that new aircraft.

[00:08:17.87] DEBBIE COX: Which airport did you arrive into?

[00:08:20.63] BOBBI HOVIS: Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. When that main cabin door opened, we were just hit overwhelmingly with the heat. And we were in an air conditioned aircraft. And the heat just blasted into the cabin and it was really amazing that it had that effect on us.

[00:08:49.07] The famous smell in Vietnam was that they put on all their food. It was a fish thing called nuoc mam. And that just permeated the whole country I think. But it had such a characteristic smell that you would never smell it again probably. However, so many smells were really found in Southeast Asian tropical countries often.

[00:09:37.26] BOBBI HOVIS: The embassy had a section of it, had a few beds and about all they could do was dispense aspirin. And if someone felt bad, they could put them to bed. They had three or four beds. But they had an embassy doctor and nurse. And they were civilians.

[00:10:01.08] So they were there for the embassy staff. But we were not getting gunshot wounds quite yet. But then the war started to escalate and the Viet Cong were very sneaky and they would sneak around and throw a grenade into our buses. Just vicious things. And finally the Department of Defense decided that we needed a full facility hospital.

[00:10:36.57] So with that staff got orders to go out there and set up a hospital in four days. And they had already selected one of three old Vietnamese apartment houses. And our next day after we arrived, our commanding officer and chief nurse took us to the building that we were going to convert, in four days, to a hospital.

[00:11:13.42] Well, there were seven of us Navy nurses, and I think it was 80 corpsmen. And the commanding officer as much as I said well, have had it kids. So we had to scrub that thing, and the heads were just terrible. And we would find that we would get one all clean and shiny, and the next morning we'd go in and somebody had already been in there and used that head again.

[00:11:51.60] And we nearly just turned and nearly set our hair on fire to get back to Tan Son Nhut and go home. But of course, we couldn't do that. So we did get the job done and we were commissioned US Naval Station Hospital, Republic of Vietnam in Saigon.

[00:12:18.34] BOBBI HOVIS: We had all types of combat casualties mostly. But we had many, many malaria and other tropical medicine diseases. And none of which we had seen before. We had heard of and read of in our training and things like that. But it was dengue fever, for instance, caused by a mosquito.

[00:12:49.39] We had never seen dengue fever before. And they were sick and one our nurses got it. And she was so sick we had to send her home. But that's the type of thing that we had besides wartime casualties, was the medical aspect.

[00:13:13.29] The Diem government did not allow the United States to build a new hospital. Our flag can only fly over the embassy. We could not fly our own flag over our buildings or where we operated from, anyway. They weren't our buildings, but that's where we were operating out of.

[00:13:36.16] And consequently, we had all this old stuff that we acquired with one exception. Diem allowed us to build the emergency room, the operating room, and supply room. And that was it. That was a new cinder block building. And that was what we were given as far as new. The other stuff was just awful.

[00:14:12.39] BOBBI HOVIS: Well, I was the most experienced. So I got the intensive care unit. And I helped out in the OR and recovery room and triage. When we'd get a number of patients in at once, I did some triage. And so mostly all trauma. Of course, we didn't have traumatic patients admitted every day.

[00:14:48.00] A battle had to occur somewhere, or somebody had to be blown up, maybe a bus had to be blown up on the street or something like that. But then we had, as I say, a lot of medical things like dengue fever and malaria. Malaria accounted for more people being off duty than any other thing in Vietnam.

[00:15:15.54] BOBBI HOVIS: Excellent. The government took over Vietnamese buildings that were like hotels or BOQs or something like that. And we four Navy nurses-- the other junior three nurses were at another building, but the four of us were at what was called the Ham Nghi BOQ. And it was on the seventh deck and it was-- overlooked all of Saigon.

[00:15:53.80] And we had window air conditioners, which worked probably less than they functioned, but we stuck it out as far as that heat and air conditioners go. And of course, we had to boil all our water. But then the government hired Vietnamese civilians, and we had three, and just the nicest little Vietnamese older ladies.

[00:16:31.55] One had worked for a rich Frenchman when the French had Vietnam. And they would shop and clean and cook for us. But we were the ones who paid them. And they came at dawn and left at dark. And we just adored those ladies, except one time I came home and I found the third one who we never trusted-- I didn't ever trust her-- and she was going through my desk.

[00:17:07.74] And I told one of the other nurses there to call the MPs-- or SPs. And she had of course no right going through my desk and drawers. It turned out she was a Viet Cong agent and she was trying to find any information she could about we Americans.

[00:17:31.98] So she was carted away and we were left with the two, Thi Be and Thi Hai where their names. And I just hated to leave them. They were so wonderful.

[00:17:50.58] BOBBI HOVIS: Well, I grew up on Lake Edinboro. I was a lifeguard. I was a sailor. My dad and I built small boats. We fished together. I was just water oriented all my life. I could not think of any other branch but Navy.

[00:18:13.61] My whole being was geared toward joining the Navy Nurse Corps, but I knew, of course, that I had become a nurse first. So then I picked my hospital and I did a lot of research. And the Western Pennsylvania, we called it West Penn, was the-- one of the very best hospitals in the state.

[00:18:37.39] And, as I say, it was in Pittsburgh, 100 miles from my home. So I selected West Penn and I was fortunate to be selected by the people who selected their student nurses. And just I never thought of anything, but Navy because I was so water oriented.

[00:19:06.54] BOBBI HOVIS: A nurse goes through nurses training and does what she was trained to do. A flight nurse does the same thing only much more high tech. You must remember that from Japan to Hawaii, the highest trained person in charge of that plane load of patients was the flight nurse.

[00:19:35.55] And we were a mixed group. We were Air Force and Navy together. It's the only time they ever had a combined squadron like that. And we were the 1453rd Medevac Squadron. But we were trained to do as high tech a procedure as a tracheotomy. Who's going to do a tracheotomy at 12,000 feet? That was before we could fly much more than 12,000 feet.

[00:20:09.83] Who was going to do the tracheotomy? Who was going to make that cut in that throat and open that trachea? Nobody but the flight nurse. I almost had to do one, one time. Not quite. I got him going and I didn't have to. But I was mighty worried that I might have to. We were even taught to do it with a fountain pen because you don't always have a scalpel in your hand when you have to do this.

[00:20:46.99] So the difference is just the level of training. We went through a combined school of flight surgeons, student flight surgeons, and student flight nurses. We went to school in Alabama. And it was supposed to be a 12 week course. And because of the war, they shortened it to 9 weeks.

[00:21:16.50] So we even shortened on our training, which made it not any easier really. But we got through it. And we never had a death on-- for five years in 1453rd Medevac Squadron. We had a very unusual thing. We had a polio patient that had to be placed in an iron lung. And, of course, the plane's electrical system had to be converted to 37 volts.

[00:21:59.65] And they converted the whole airplane so that the iron lung could hook up and run while we were transporting that boy back to Hawaii. So the answer is just more and more higher levels of training. And when you graduated from that and you became a designated, we called it-- designated naval flight nurse, it was an exciting thing.

[00:22:34.52] And I had already done a lot of flying. I had my own plane in Key West, a Piper Cub. And that was my second duty station. And here I was, an ensign, flying my own plane out of Key West Airport

[00:22:51.95] and up the Keys to Miami. And I had an aunt and uncle who ran a lovely old resident type of hotel on Biscayne Bay. And I would fly up on Friday. And if their sailboat was not in use, I could use that. If their power boat was not in use, I could use that. And it was just-- on Biscayne Bay to do these things with their boats.

[00:23:22.67] And most of those people didn't use the boats. I could use anything. And It was great. They would meet me and then take me back. And I'd hop in my plane and fly back to Key West. And I was 20-- late 23 or 24 when I was in Key West.

[00:23:49.02] BOBBI HOVIS: Air Force covered Vietnam, flight nurse-wise. And she flew out Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. And sometimes she would be so overwhelmed that they had to turn down patients that needed to be medevac'd.

[00:24:08.91] So her CO talked to my CO. And my CO allowed me to, whenever this happened that she could not make a flight, he would write me orders to take that flight that she couldn't make. And so I got three flights in that way in a C-137.

[00:24:40.29] And it was just great getting back to medevac flying from Tan Son Nhut to Clark in the Philippines. Then I had a couple of medevacs in a helicopter, a Huey helicopter. An embassy person was up in the highlands and needed to be brought back down to the hospital.

[00:25:07.87] And so I flew two fixed wing aircraft medevacs to the Philippines, and one helicopter in country in Vietnam. And I was pleased beyond the words.

[00:25:29.73] BOBBI HOVIS: And when I had a day off, I knew a lot of the flight personnel at various stations. And when I had a day off, I would call the flight center in this particular base whatever I chose to call. And say, you have any 123's going north? Say, Pleiku? Or any choppers going south to the delta? And they'd always put me aboard if I wanted that particular flight.

[00:26:10.37] So I would just jump on a chopper or a 123, a fixed wing, and fly in Vietnam on a day off. And that's how I got exposed to Agent Orange. And then fly back and go to work on my ICU the next morning.

[00:26:38.38] BOBBI HOVIS: Security was made up of Vietnamese military, ARVN troops. And our compound had a little watchtower on each corner, four corners. And then we had-- one would patrol on every side on the ground. And so we had eight guards as a rule.

[00:27:07.97] BOBBI HOVIS: It was for Americans only with some exceptions. The VIPs, General Westmoreland, Henry Cabot Lodge, General Khanh, who commanded-- who was the commanding general in the big coup d'etat. When the Diem government was overthrown, General Khanh took over the country. So we had those people.

[00:27:40.64] But mostly Americans. Now, we had two little Vietnamese boys who were hit by grenade shrapnel right outside the hospital. So we had to take those little boys in. And the shrapnel, it was a minor thing, and we had them a couple of days and then they were discharged.

[00:28:01.16] But essentially, our hospital was for VIPs and American troops. And any foreign national soldiers that might be-- we might take care of them. It had to be decided by the commanding officer.

[00:28:25.71] BOBBI HOVIS: We overlooked the city square, so to speak. That's when the monks were getting so rambunctious. And they were resenting everything and the Vietnamese government was very hard on them. So self-immolation occurred on several occasions. And one time I was on my balcony, I looked down and here was a monk.

[00:28:55.11] He got out of what was a motorized little bicycle type of thing called cyclo pucelles, and they-- that was the main form of transportation in Saigon. He pulled up to the city center of town right below us so we could see everything that went on there. Then he got out of the cyclo, he took a can of gasoline, poured it over his body, and set himself on fire.

[00:29:30.30] And I couldn't believe what I was seeing. And people just stood around watching him. And he just burned to death. And that picture of him-- I took that-- is in my book.

[00:29:51.80] BOBBI HOVIS: I was on duty, but we were sent home because they knew this was going to be a big thing. But in any event, it all started for me when-- my corpsman had gone to lunch around noon. And he came back and he said, hey, you've got to go out on the street. They're setting up machine gun nests right there on the main street.

[00:30:21.23] And I went out and there were tow .50 caliber machine guns, one on each corner, surrounded by barbed wire. And I watched all this happen. And then I went back in because I didn't know if they were going to start firing those .50 calibers or not. Well, soon enough, the coup started and they were firing and airplanes were bombing the city.

[00:30:46.64] And airplanes were dog fighting. All this right in my line of sight. Really exciting. And that went on. And then finally, our commanding officer said, well, girls, you go on back to your quarters. And just stay there and we'll see what happens. So the Viet Cong shot the CNO of the Vietnamese Navy down on the Saigon River which was not far away.

[00:31:19.22] So they shot him. And things then really began to escalate. And we were under heavy, heavy fire for 16 straight hours. And they were firing 105 millimeter howitzers from the edge of the river, which was not far from us. And they were firing these shells into Diem's palace. And we made it home. And I had a little shortwave radio that I took with me. So I listened to that.

[00:31:57.65] But the gunfire got so heavy. We went and sat on the stairwell in the middle of the building where there would be more material for that 105 shell to penetrate. Well, we were as I say under this heavy, heavy fire for 16 hours.

[00:32:22.55] And when daylight came, we saw the Vietnamese flag had been pulled down from the flagpole at the presidential palace. And everything was in shambles. Amazingly, we did not have any real casualties from the coup.

[00:32:49.19] All the casualties were amongst the Vietnamese people and soldiers and a lot of them were killed in the coup, especially around the presidential palace, which was the target of the 105's out on the edge of Saigon firing those big shells into the city and at the Diem palace.

[00:33:16.34] Well, the next day, two of us walked over to the palace. And walked in and we just could walk through it. And it was really shattered with those huge 105 shells.

[00:33:40.16] BOBBI HOVIS: I was on the top floor of our hospital on the balcony. I didn't want to miss anything with that coup going on. So I went out on the balcony and-- along with one of our chief petty officers. And he and I were watching it from the fifth floor. And I looked down and across the street, at a 45 degree angle it turned out, and I was just watching this fellow with a rifle.

[00:34:18.49] And he pointed the rifle at me. And he fired it. And I could actually see the muzzle flash when the rifle fired. And this bullet came up and hit just 3 inches below me on the balustrade of the balcony. And then it ricocheted up at a 45 degree angle. And it hit the overhead and it fell at my feet. And I picked it up and it was quite hot.

[00:34:53.20] I later went down in the street and got the shell casing that matched the caliber of the bullet. And that missed me by 3 inches. And Winston Churchill said one time, there is nothing so exhilarating in life than to be shot at and missed. And that's what happened to me.

[00:35:25.95] BOBBI HOVIS: I have lived through seven coup d'etats. Seven, yes, to answer your question.

[00:35:36.43] DEBBIE COX: A lot of turmoil.

[00:35:38.65] BOBBI HOVIS: Uh huh. Always. Everything was roiling politically. When the Diem government fell, Diem and his brother who was a villain, to say the least, the opposition, his opposition, they shot them right in an ambulance.

[00:36:00.91] Both men. Shot them dead right there in that ambulance. They were bringing them back from Cholon to Saigon. And they just executed them in the ambulance. So, yeah, a lot of exciting things happened.

[00:36:23.39] BOBBI HOVIS: I came on duty one morning and I had a new patient. He had come in during the night. He was wounded, but not severely. And so I always went to visit the new patients, if they came in overnight, first thing in the morning when I went on duty. And I saw I had a new boy and I went up and talked to him.

[00:36:45.68] And he told me that they were in an intelligence group and they got word that a high level Viet Cong group were meeting at such and such south of Saigon at such and such an hour. They got that tip off.

[00:37:03.89] So they were taken down by chopper and then dropped off so that they could walk into this hut where the Viet Cong were meeting for a high level strategy-- so they thought. And they got to the hut and they went into it. And they found that the Viet Cong probably were tipped off that they were coming.



[00:37:33.59] So the teapot was still on the little single burner stove. The cups were set on the table for tea. And it was obvious they made a fast exit because somebody told them that the Americans were coming down. And, of course, we wanted to catch them because they were high-- pretty high level intelligence people. At least that's what the report was.

[00:38:02.27] Well, my patient, they looked around the hut and saw this flag tacked to the wall. And he just went over, the boy that was wounded just went over and pulled it off and stuck it in his pocket. And then he ended up in my ICU. And he said this is the Viet Cong flag. And I oohed and aahed. And he said, well, if you want it, you can have it.

[00:38:45.52] So I took it and the Viet Cong flag in that time of era was half blue and half red. And the idea being that when the Viet Cong won the war, the whole flag would be red with the gold star. So this is-- just is really a treasure. But there it is, and I've had it since 1964.

[00:39:15.44] BOBBI HOVIS: During World War II, the pilots operating in the South Pacific, Navy pilots and Air Force as well, were issued nautical charts made from silk. And this is Southeast Asia ocean areas. And the reason they were made from silk that if they had to ditch their aircraft into the ocean paper charts would just disintegrate.

[00:39:52.67] So if they could manage to get in a life boat, with their little life raft from their airplanes, this was just like a paper chart of this particular area of the Pacific. And every Wednesday in Saigon, they had like an open air market. And I used to, on my day off, it was Wednesday, I used to like to go downtown and walk downtown not that far from where I lived,

[00:40:24.65] and just walk through the things on the table for sale. Well, I saw this on a table. And it cost me 10 piasters. The Vietnamese money was at the time a piaster. And 10 was probably one cent. I've never seen one before or since. And I think this is a true treasure.

[00:41:00.13] BOBBI HOVIS: The Green Berets had not been in Vietnam very long. And it was kind of hush hush that they were there, because they were kind of like commandos as you know. The Navy SEALs and the Green Berets were similar. Well, they were highly classified top secret and above, being in country.

[00:41:23.56] And they operated up in North Vietnam on the Chinese border. And they were making secret incursions into China gathering intelligence. Well, this one boy was wounded in some sort of a firefight. I'm not sure what it was now, but anyway he ended up in my intensive care unit.

[00:41:48.46] He had to take off all of his uniform because it was muddy and bloody and wet. And we had to-- his wound-- he needed to be medevac'd to the Philippines because he was injured badly enough. And I always made it a point of when we put them in the ambulance and took them on a gurney out to the ambulance, I always walked with them and held their hands,

[00:42:24.40] walking and talking to them and wishing them well all of that. And this boy said to me, Ma'am, he said, I have nothing else to give you, but I would like you to have my Green

Beret. And he had nothing else. He had hospital pajamas on. And so all he had to his name, but his Green Beret because they're trained don't lose that beret.

[00:42:51.37] They're all made in Canada. They're a special, special thing to have. To be a Green Beret is like being a Navy SEAL. And so I treasured this. And now that was in '64. So you could see how old all these things are. And as time passed how I forget some of the conversations and things I had with these kids that were the greatest patients in the world.

[00:43:22.27] And in my time out there, practically all volunteer people, and they were there for a purpose. We were there for a purpose. And we weren't out there to smoke dope and things like that that they did later on. And in any event, this Green Beret is very, very special. That's their symbol, a sword and an arrow.

[00:43:59.44] BOBBI HOVIS: Oh my goodness, that building that the elevator was in was at one time an old French apartment house. And I don't think any of you even remember the elevators, that the controls went like this, this way to go up and this way to go down. And the doors-- they were all enclosed in open wire cages. And they didn't work very well in that old apartment building.

[00:44:41.62] And I took a gurney and I needed to go up to the second deck to get a patient to take him down to X-ray. And I pushed the gurney on the first deck, went up to the second, but I never got that far. I got halfway and the elevator stopped. And I was caught between floors.

[00:45:04.01] Well, that was no problem because I could just yell up or down to a corpsman and say, see if you can open the door and get me out. Well, they got the doors opened on the second deck and a corpsman could get down and on the roof of the elevator.

[00:45:26.46] And there was a trap door there, so he could open that trap door. And he could pull me up by my arms. He's standing on the elevator top and he's pulling me out through the escape hatch if you will

[00:45:42.17] And that was really a riot. Everybody just thought that was the funniest thing. It even made the paper, Stars and Stripes. And patients and people would come into the hospital and they'd say, are you Miss Hovis? Are you the one that got caught in the elevator?

[00:46:01.01] Well, I tell you that lasted for a long time, that story. So we had a lot of humor as well as other things. But we had a lot of fun.

[00:46:16.84] BOBBI HOVIS: Grey ladies were auxiliaries. They did things in the hospital that took some of the load off we nurses. They would take care of the gladiolus in the shell casing. And they would run errands. And they would read to the patients who may not-- have lost their vision, or something to their sight.

[00:46:41.08] And they would sit and read to them. And whatever they could do for those patients, they did. And many hospitals-- even civilian hospitals had grey ladies. Mrs.

Westmoreland headed up that group. And of course General Westmoreland was the senior military man in country.

[00:47:04.45] And General Throckmorton was deputy to General Westmoreland. And his wife-- those two ladies just did so many wonderful things for those boys.

[00:47:25.76] General Khanh was the commanding general. And he took over at the first coup d'etat when the Diems were overthrown. He became the head of the country, and-- a very nice man and his wife was very nice. And they invited we nurses out of their quarters for tea one time. And it was kind of formal, to say the least. But anyway, General Khanh and his wife were very, very nice to we Navy nurses.

[00:48:04.28] DEBBIE COX: What was wrong with their daughter that she needed to-- ?

[00:48:07.85] BOBBI HOVIS: She had a huge purple birthmark on her face that covered half her face and went up her forehead and into her scalp. And she was a beautiful little girl. And then to have this horrible birthmark.

[00:48:27.12] So our surgeon was able to contact a plastic surgeon in New York whom he knew. And our government sent him out to Vietnam to operate on that little girl's face, and see if they could not help her. And I believe his name was Dr. Smith.

[00:48:54.36] And he came out and we had her as a patient. And then she was an inpatient. And we had a little private area where there was a private bed. And she was in there for a while. So we took care of them. And, of course, they had a lot of relatives. And we had a stream of top level Vietnamese people coming to that hospital. And that was in my intensive care unit.

[00:49:23.42] So it was kind of frazzling to have them, but it was an honor too. We had 12 security men, Vietnamese men guarding our hospital. So they doubled it. And then we had the VIPs like Raymond Burr. On his own, without any fanfare, he came out to Vietnam. And he just went around visiting the various units in the field.

[00:49:58.41] And I loved it when he came. And he came back a second time. And I was on duty, that just happened. And he said, Bobbi, are you still here? And he gave me a great big bear hug. So we had a lot of VIPs visiting, for whatever purpose, their own or to do good. And Raymond Burr really-- and he was so big that they couldn't find a flight suit to fit him.

[00:50:27.63] And they had the call around to various squadrons to see if they had one jumbo size. And sure enough, they found one for him. But he was just a big man. Not fat, but just a big man. And you wouldn't realize it, I didn't realize he was so big just watching him on the screen. And I never missed Perry Mason. Oh, that's my favorite.

[00:51:02.60] BOBBI HOVIS: We had a zoo. And I'm a big animal lover. So any time that I could-- I had a bicycle, I bought a Vietnamese bicycle, and I would ride that bicycle to the zoo. And if I had an afternoon off, I'd spend that afternoon.

[00:51:21.98] And boys, young men, they like animals too sometimes. And every now and then, we'd have one show up at the hospital who needed care for some reason.

[00:51:42.54] And he may have a little monkey on his shoulder or a sun bear or something like that. And this one boy showed up. He had a little monkey. And the monkey just hugged him and held on, held to him. And the little man, the Soldier, couldn't get him off his shoulder. So he just stepped into the shower with the monkey.

[00:52:08.46] Well, that monkey came to the hospital with him. Well, I decided, OK, we have baby animals that need to be fed. So the top floor-- the fifth floor, the fifth, sixth floor of the hospital was a convalescent ward. And that's where the animals went that came with the patient.

[00:52:35.21] Well, I talked our commanding officer into letting us have that little zoo. It would give the kids something to do rather than go out on the town and get into trouble. And so many of them enjoyed that, taking care of those animals.

[00:52:52.13] Well, one time a Soldier said, Ma'am, I have a baby python. Can I bring that to your zoo? And I said, well, I don't care. I am not afraid of snakes. I can pick them up and not bother me. But I said, I am not sure about our commanding officer.

[00:53:18.20] So I had to tell him. And he said, that's it, no more zoo. And he never should have done that because the kids-- it gave them something to do and take care of the animals. And they kept the place clean.

[00:53:39.51] So I have a picture in the book. I'm holding the baby sun bear in my hand just like this. And that was the one that was up in our zoo.

[00:53:56.40] BOBBI HOVIS: We were combat casualty hospital, which meant combat casualty. You did not have time for long duration types of patients, like psychiatric. A combat casualty did not have a psychiatric unit. If a psychiatric patient came, we got him out immediately on the plane to Clark in the Philippines.

[00:54:25.50] We also did not keep fracture patients, like a fractured femur in traction, because they had to be in traction for who knows how long till that bone healed. And we could keep a patient 30 days, but preferably not over that because we couldn't fill our beds with those types of patients.

[00:54:50.52] We had one boy, he was a Japanese Hawaiian, and he was a favorite of mine. And he had a fractured femur and he was in a fracture bed. And his name was Ken Fujimoto. And he lived on a big island of Hawaii and his family were farmers and into various crops.

[00:55:12.27] And when he got home-- his wife was also a nurse. So we wrote and we exchanged letters. And one day I got a letter from Ken. Ken said, Bobbi, can I come to Annapolis with my granddaughter I'm going to pick up at Wright Patterson in Ohio where she's with my son who's on active duty there?

[00:55:38.88] And he said, I'd like to come to Annapolis and visit you. And oh, I was so thrilled. And he and a little darling girl came, 10 years old. And they spent four days. And it was just great fun seeing Ken as an adult.

[00:55:59.73] He had just turned 19. He was a door gunner on a Huey helicopter. And he took a round from the ground right through his femur and just fractured his femur. But he recovered. Although he still had some after effects that bothered him to some extent. But then his wife-- I never got to meet her, but we did exchange letters frequently.

[00:56:33.74] BOBBI HOVIS: And people would come and visit and bring flowers and bring candy and bring things like that. So, as I say, probably the most useful was the vase for the gladiolus. And then I used the IV bottles for drinking with the IV tube for water on the bedside locker.

[00:57:01.29] I used the IV bottles for that, which was kind of effective because-- big enough that it wouldn't turn over. And they could suck it through an IV line just like a straw.

[00:57:21.74] BOBBI HOVIS: On one of my flights to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, our nurse anesthetist and OR nurse, she made me a list of equipment that she needed for her OR and emergency room. And so, I went to Clark, I was on Clark and I had a medevac anyway.

[00:57:47.15] And so I found their OR nurse. And I said, can you give me this equipment? And she went down and, yes, I came home with everything that our nurse anesthetist required to resupply her stock.

[00:58:12.98] Getting our supplies was rather erratic, when considering the supply base was in Oakland, California, and they had to get all that equipment from Oakland to Saigon. And you had aircraft failures. And they had to go down on some island and take a while and repair that engine, say.

[00:58:38.90] And so our supply line was somewhat erratic, but it got better. But that was the sort of thing that we had to depend on. And then I had to catch a flight if there was a flight going, or not. Maybe a flight wouldn't be going for two days or three, and she would be out of equipment.

[00:59:05.62] So it was all-- of course, I enjoyed the flight to the Philippines. I love the Philippines anyway. And then to get a chance to go. Another thing that was very interesting along those lines, we had Navy SEALs up on the border, Chinese Vietnam border.

[00:59:31.62] And one day our commanding officer called us into his office and he said, that was our nurse anesthetist and she was the supply-- and she kept supply and ordering and things like that.

[00:59:49.25] And he called us into his office and he said, girls, as of now, you have a top secret clearance. And you may not ever talk about this 10 years from now. But he said, we have Navy SEALs up on the border and they're making incursions into China and gathering intelligence.

[01:00:14.81] If a Sailor shows up at the OR door and hands you a list of medical supplies, you look at it and you give him whatever he wants. He is a Navy SEAL and nobody knows that Navy SEALs are in country. And one time he did-- one of the Navy SEALs showed up.

[01:00:40.79] So we had to also give them supplies of ours and it would cut us rather thin at times. But it all worked that way and. We did it. I don't think for 10 years I ever mentioned that operation.

[01:01:05.57] I was so ingrained with the importance of a top secret clearance that I would have bit my tongue off of me before--

[01:01:13.25] [CHUCKLES].

[01:01:18.58] BOBBI HOVIS: It's always hard. It's always hard, especially if you're holding his hand. And I had a case where we had a big push and patients kept coming in and coming in and it was-- I had the triage business there. And we had sawhorses that we set canvas litters on. And this was our triage area. We had to find out who would survive and who wouldn't.

[01:01:52.00] Well, I saw this one boy and he was, I could tell he was an aviator, helicopter pilot no doubt. And I went over to him and I took his pulse and I got his last pulse beat and he died with my fingers on his pulse. Well, then I had to find his wallet and get his ID and I did that in one of his pockets and pulled out this picture of a-- just a pretty girl and a young child.

[01:02:27.85] And I assumed it was his wife and child and there he died right there in my fingertips. And you have minutes like that. But there was so much else to do and you had to move on to somebody else to take care of.

[01:02:47.62] And those were the heart rendering times when that happened. But we didn't lose too many. It was really amazing that we-- they got them to us so quickly because of the helicopters. That was the key.

[01:03:09.31] BOBBI HOVIS: Saigon and Cholon are two separate cities, but they adjoin. And you don't know you're out of one and in the other, except you begin to notice the Chinese influence in Cholon. And that was the Chinese town and yet they join right together.

[01:03:31.67] There were little tiny wooden shacks along the sidewalk. And there were various artsy craftsy people there that made very, very gorgeous things. And we used to just love to go to Cholon and walk among the little Chinese people who were making this and that.

[01:03:56.57] And I noticed this Chinese jeweler, or at least he was working with gold. And they used gold in Vietnam.. Gold was the standard there. And they had sheets of gold that they'd put around their bodies under their clothes rather than money. And this ring is my Navy Nurse Corps collar device. And prior to '48, it was an anchor superimposed on-- an oak-leaf superimposed on an anchor.

[01:04:37.39] And the oak-leaf is the insignia of the Navy Nurse Corps. As is this one. And this is what I wore on my uniform collars when we left the anchor, oak-leaf. And, boy, we all hate to lose that anchor.

[01:04:53.65] But anyway, this was the original collar device. And I gave it to him. And I could hardly speak English, he didn't speak-- I didn't speak Chinese, he didn't speak English. But he had others there. And I picked it up and I said, could you make one?

[01:05:15.76] So he said, yes. And he made this of solid gold. And it cost, this ring cost \$12. And it's just a very, very special ring. And I have a picture of him making it. And there's a rough surface that the anchor is put on, and the tiniest little mallet, and the tiniest little-- sort of a pick instrument. And he would tap like that and he made this rough area with that.

[01:05:57.05] And it was so fine. And this was a telephone booth sized workshop. And I went to Cholon one day just to see if the ring was ready. And there he was working on it. And this ring now is 54 years old.

[01:06:16.43] That ring is a treasure. And so is this one. This is a story. This is a Vietnam service ribbon. I had a patient, I would go in and talk to him. He was in the ICU. And he was wounded all right. He told me that his parents, for three generations, had jewelry stores in Georgia, as I recall.

[01:06:44.18] And he said that they make rings and they do everything. He said, I worked in jewelry before I came in the Army. And I went home. But this boy was so nice. And I never forgot him. And I am a shooter. So I always got a shooter magazine.

[01:07:12.23] And I saw this ring. And it is the Vietnam service ribbon. And it has a double V here meaning Vietnam veteran. It has the Navy insignia here, a full rig sailing ship. It has a V type things that represents the Wall in DC on both sides of the ring. And inside it has your name.

[01:07:45.58] And he said that his parents made these rings. And I asked him if they would make a ladies ring because a man's ring was just huge. So when I saw the magazine article after I got home and I looked at the address, I realized that it was the same family.

[01:08:04.60] So I wrote them a letter and I asked them if they ever made a ladies ring. And I told them I'd taken care of their son and all that. And they wrote back immediately. They said, send us your ring size and we will make you a ladies ring.

[01:08:26.05] BOBBI HOVIS: I was in a combat zone and I did my work in the combat zone and did it. And certainly having been through Korea I knew something of what to expect. When we were in Vietnam, we did not know that Agent Orange did what it did to us, how toxic it was.

[01:08:49.79] And I got exposed. One of those times that I got onto an airplane and flew up somewhere just on a day off, I flew out on a C-123 up to Pleiku, which is northern South Vietnam. And there were three blue 55 gallon drums attached to the wall right behind the pilots in the aircraft. There were brackets that they can fasten to.

[01:09:23.89] And I was sitting in the jump seat, one of the jump seats. And I looked at the-- just I happened to gaze at the blue-- one of those blue barrels. And one of them was leaking and I watched it leak for a while and I wondered what was in it. Didn't say it what was in it. But I saw. And I got up and I said, well geez, the pilots had better know about this.

[01:09:49.90] So I went up forward and went into the cockpit and I said, hey, one drum has a crack in it and is really leaking out on the deck and in the aircraft, in the cabin. And he said, that's all right we'll be in Pleiku in 15 minutes and they'll take care of it. Well, see, he didn't know how toxic it was.

[01:10:14.35] And here while I was walking through it and it was up over the soles of my shoes and that's probably where I got my most exposure. But when you get mass casualties in and they've been out in the field, most of them had been exposed to Agent Orange just from going through the foliage in the jungle and that kind of thing.

[01:10:39.62] And so I would say that my heaviest dose was in that airplane. But cutting off those uniforms soaked in whatever, I'm sure I got more, plenty of Agent Orange. I think probably considering what some of the men-- and I read the medical journals all the time, and particularly when I see anything about Vietnam or Agent Orange or anything, and I pay attention. But I believe that's where I got it.

[01:11:21.16] BOBBI HOVIS: Believe it or not I think my worst day was the day I left. And to leave Thi Be and Thi Hai-- and I walked away and tears were streaming down my face and I was very ambivalent about-- I hated to leave Vietnam, but nevertheless I had to go home and back to my new duty station. I never cried at all but that day, and that was my last day in Vietnam.

[01:12:07.82] BOBBI HOVIS: Oh, I had so many best days. The days in the zoo. I'm such an animal lover that I liked that a whole lot. And you know we went on R&R, rest and recreation. I went to Cambodia, Phnom Penh and some of those towns in Cambodia. And then another-- we had two R&R trips. And then I went to Hong Kong. And I just loved Hong Kong.

[01:12:46.01] And went-- got a speedboat and went down to Macau. And this was a huge gambling area and a huge flat bottom boat that the gamblers came from all over the Far East. And they played mahjong. Now this afternoon, mahjong is going to be played in this room. Those were the days, places that I had always wanted to go, I got to. But I could spend a lifetime in the South Pacific.

[01:13:24.83] BOBBI HOVIS: Yes, I do. I keep in touch with Darby, but now she lives up in New England and we're in touch to this day. And she was my junior nurse. And she retired as a captain, a chief nurse. And she has many, many problems. She was in the BOQ when the Viet Cong blew it up, and the four nurses were blown up. She was the worst injured.

[01:13:59.63] And she to this day is-- has many things wrong from that. Another girl who was Air Force, I said we had combined Air Force, Navy flight nurses in the Korean War. And she was sort of my mentor and she was just terrific and we corresponded for a long, long time.



[01:14:25.76] And she was a private pilot, too, so we had that in common. And she and her husband owned a big tobacco farm in Florida and Virginia. And I went by and spent the day on the farm with her. And-- but she has since died.

[01:14:50.05] BOBBI HOVIS: Very little because we were there so early. The allies hadn't come yet. All those people from the other countries had not come yet. So I had very little.

[01:15:06.90] BOBBI HOVIS: Their way of life was so different from ours. And I was kind of overwhelmed at some of the things they did, but then that all became part of life in Vietnam and you never even thought about it. And as I say Thi Be and Thi Hai, I just love those little old ladies. They were just so sweet.

[01:15:40.48] And I so hated to leave them. And General Khanh and his wife, they were so kind to the Navy nurses. They invited us to their homes, a Vietnamese general. They didn't do that with women in Vietnam, let me tell you. But I guess they were grateful for the care we gave their daughter maybe. But we cared for her well. She was a lovely little girl.

[01:16:16.79] BOBBI HOVIS: My mother was great at writing. And I was a great letter writer so I told her early on to please keep my letters that I-- keep them all. Keep all of my correspondence because I wanted to look back on it when I got home. And she did that. And lo and behold, there were 60 letters.

[01:16:43.72] 60.

[01:16:44.91] I have them to this day, tied up with a ribbon. But that-- those are what I use as material for my book. When I reread those things I said, this has to be in a book. This is exciting.

[01:17:03.32] So the Naval Institute Press felt the same way. And fortunately they published it and it has been a huge success. And thanks to those letters, I could be very concise. And memory was not lost at all because I had written it.

[01:17:25.61] And it was great to have those letters to write that book. I didn't tell them about the bullet missing me until much later. Things like that, no. And the things that we went through during the coup d'etats. I didn't tell her some of the dangers that we were exposed to.

[01:17:49.04] But of course they all-- I have a wonderful family. We have 13 cousins and I was the oldest and to this day we cousins keep in touch. But they're diminishing. I mean, I'm out living them all. I'm the oldest one.

[01:18:19.22] BOBBI HOVIS: Quite a lot. My mother was a good letter writer, too. She was a schoolteacher at one time. And so she wrote. And her mother, my grandmother, she wrote for our weekly newspaper. Although she was a farmer she was very literate.

[01:18:39.02] And for somebody in those days she went to our State Teachers College there in Edinboro and she graduated in a 1898.

[01:18:55.03] BOBBI HOVIS: When we were there it was practically an all volunteer group. We were there for a purpose. The guys were there for a purpose. They were not smoking marijuana through their shotgun barrels, like they were later on. After '65, after McNamara-- I guess it was a draft, those guys came into the service needing hernia repairs, needing knee repairs. Their dental status was so poor that they had to have a lot of dentistry.

[01:19:39.29] And they were not good, a lot of bad people that we got. And that's what went to Vietnam. And those are the guys who smoked the marijuana through their rifles, shotgun barrels. And fortunately I didn't see that, but of course I followed the war so closely every day, news and papers and whatever because I was so still so vastly interested in it.

[01:20:09.92] And when I went to Portsmouth Naval Hospital I would get medevacs in from Vietnam and of course they were just special to me.

[01:20:25.36] BOBBI HOVIS: We had an anesthesiologist in Portsmouth Naval Hospital. He got orders to Vietnam. He had a patient with a head injury and knowing he would have to come back to the States. Then he found out that the patient was coming to Portsmouth Naval Hospital. So we would have medevacs come into our helicopter pad twice a week.

[01:20:56.27] And if I could I would always go down on the helicopter pad and meet those guys. And walk back with them and talk to them and things like that. And when he found out this boy was coming to Portsmouth-- the doctor found out he was coming to Portsmouth,

[01:21:18.25] he wrote my name down and said, you look for Commander Bobbi Hovis. And she's in Portsmouth Naval Hospital. So you find out where she is. Well, I was in ICU where I always was. But-- and she will buy you the thickest milkshake you had. That's what he wanted in Vietnam. That's all he talked about.

[01:21:44.49] So I didn't know when he was coming, but I knew roughly. So I went down and met every chopper. They came in about 4:00 o'clock, right when I was getting off duty. I would go down to the helicopter pad. Well, somehow he got up and placed in bed, and I didn't find him till the next morning.

[01:22:11.04] And I did find him and I went down to the PX, what we called the Gedunk, which is the soda fountain, and got him-- I said, make it a double chocolate malt, everything you can put in it. And I took that up to him and I said, I'm Bobbi Hovis and you're looking for me. And I have something for you. Well, that kid nearly fell out of bed. So the connections were ongoing and amazing.

[01:22:48.11] BOBBI HOVIS: Tweety, she was probably one of the best nurse anaesthetist the Navy ever heard. And she came back from Vietnam and went to Portsmouth Naval Hospital. And she was tasked with setting up a school of anesthesia for nurse anesthetists.

[01:23:12.33] Navy sent their nurse anesthetists to civilian schools because we didn't have any. So they saw a need for our own and the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery saw a need for our own school of anesthesia. So Tweety was tasked with coming back to Portsmouth and setting that up.

[01:23:42.69] BOBBI HOVIS: It was just beginning, the hatefulness and the nastiness toward people in uniform was just beginning. And we were told that we could get out of our uniform into civilian clothes if we wanted to after we got to the States and before we got to our next duty station.

[01:24:10.65] So some of the people would just get out of their uniform into civilian clothes. I just went and got on the airplane and flew home and in my uniform because I didn't have that much with me. And I had shipped it all. I never was called a baby killer or things like that, but I saw it all around me.

[01:24:37.01] And I had two Navy nurse friends who got orders to the University of Virginia for their degrees, their bachelor's degrees. And the Vietnam veterans that were going to school there, their records were kept in a certain area.

[01:24:59.50] And one time these people that didn't like us got into that building and threw all of the records on the deck and poured chicken blood over all of their records. That's the kind of thing that they did to us.

[01:25:21.29] They also-- a favorite trick was to cut our car tires parked in the parking lots at the hospital. They would puncture or cut the tires. That was one of their favorites on college campuses now I'm talking about. So yes, it was very hard. And then, too, that's when

[01:25:46.59] so many of them were using marijuana and other stuff. It was a bad time for the military, but we lived through it and now it's behind us. And now the military is so respected and it makes you feel good.

[01:26:10.28] We have that meeting up in Baltimore of the Vietnam veterans every year at one of the big hotels and that is such a joy to go to and now well received.

[01:26:26.92] And they even take a group of midshipmen up there and the midshipmen meet us. And we talk to them and they said, we thank you for what you did, and all that kind of thing that goes on now. It's so different.

[01:26:50.27] BOBBI HOVIS: I came back to Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Virginia. I was in charge of the big intensive care unit. And I was now a senior nurse so I would be senior nurse on PM duty and night duty. And just general Navy nursing now. I always liked intensive care.

[01:27:19.18] I worked in intensive care a lot and I retired from Portsmouth intensive care. And I had submitted my retirement papers for such and such a time and I got a phone call from the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery where they were meeting for promotion board.

[01:27:53.95] And one of my friends was on the promotion board and she called me and I was still in ICU, I hadn't gone home yet. And she said, Bobbi you've been selected for commander. I am holding your retirement papers in my hand. Do you want me to submit them for you or are you-- or do you want to go ahead with your retirement?

[01:28:16.98] I said, well, I already have a house lined up in Annapolis and things like that. And I said, I would just love to go on, but I said, no, I've got too much and I'm involved in too much now to try to continue my career in the Navy because I know I'd get orders to somewhere far off. And I said, no, go ahead and pull them. So with that when I retired from Portsmouth Naval Hospital I moved to Annapolis and I've never been sorry.

[01:28:57.03] BOBBI HOVIS: I was a sailing coach in the big boat sail program. I was a port warden for the city of Annapolis. I taught sailing to other groups. I had my own sailboat tied up at my dock in my back yard on Back Creek in Annapolis, which is just over the hill here. And life in Annapolis has been everything I expected it to be.

[01:29:26.85] And I just love living here. The only thing now I don't have my car because I gave it up and I'm kind of restricted in what I am able to do because I have a lot of pain and discomfort with my Agent Orange. But I live with that and I get along with it and you have no choice.

[01:29:49.17] So you make the best of it. And then to give up my house and move to a place like this, the Gardens of Annapolis, which is probably the best place in Annapolis to live except it's not on the water. That's the only thing that I don't like about it.

[01:30:13.60] BOBBI HOVIS: I would say I had more of that in the Korean War. The Navy is the one who developed the prosthetic arms and legs and really, really modernized that. Dr. Doolittle invented these devices that made it so much easier for the amputee.

[01:30:37.42] And I worked in the amputee center in Oakland Naval Hospital where he was. And I was right on the ground floor of these prosthetic devices. And I was very pleased with that.

[01:30:50.63] Well, the Huey revolutionized the in-country type of medevac, which got the patients to us. They could be wounded and we would have them off the battlefield in Vietnam in 10 minutes. They could land right near our compound. And we had a helicopter squadron only for medevac.

[01:31:20.85] And the commanding officer was a great guy and he would bring us casualties. And to this day, I'm in contact with a helicopter pilot who was shot right through the knee. And he nearly bled out on the helicopter flying him up here to Saigon.

[01:31:43.65] And to this day, he and I and his wife, we write. And I've gone down to visit him in Alabama where he lives. And they just-- it was so great to visit them in their home.

[01:32:01.98] And he was a lawyer, his dad was the town lawyer. And then after he got-- he couldn't stay in the Air Force or Army because of the severity of the knee wound. And now he is the town lawyer, too. So we write to this day. And that-- look how long that is. 64 years.

[01:32:36.35] BOBBI HOVIS: No, but I would say that without a doubt, I chose the right career. I loved what I did. I knew I was going to be a nurse at five years old. I could write at five, read at

five years old. As I say, my mother was a schoolteacher. So that probably helped me along a little.

[01:32:58.82] And I was good in math and science, which in high school that's where I got all of my ground school for my flying. We had no gasoline. This was during the war. I had no gasoline to hands-on fly, but I had all of my ground school. So when I went down the Jacksonville Naval Air Station, we had an auxiliary field left over from the war where we had a little doctor, nurse, corpsman squadron of Piper Cubs and things like that.

[01:33:39.57] And I had been through my ground school and had all those licenses. And so the instructor there-- I wanted to get my license, so I found him. And I soloed in four hours and 20 minutes of dual instruction. And went on to build up my flight time. And then my second duty station was Key West, Florida.

[01:34:11.08] And the manager of the airfield there was a native Key Wester and they were called Cox. They were Cuban of descent. And they were called Cox. And he was a Cox. And he had been in the Navy. He'd been shot down in the Pacific and came home to Key West. Got the job as airport manager. And he bought four brand new Piper Cubs surplus.

[01:34:45.58] And he would either let you rent them or you could buy them or whatever. And I bought one along with an aviation machinists mate from Boca Chica Naval Air Station next to island up. And he liked to fly too. So we bought it together. I was an ensign. I made \$110 a month. And we each paid \$200 for that brand new airplane.

[01:35:15.83] So we would take turns flying it around wherever, around the Keys or whatever. But I had relatives in Miami that ran a real nice little hotel on Biscayne Bay. And I would jump in that airplane on Friday afternoon and fly up to Miami, spend the weekend with them, fly back on Sunday.

[01:35:40.78] Next flight whenever I could.

[01:35:42.62] [LAUGHTER].

[01:35:44.45] And so then I got orders to Navy flight school, flight nurse school.. And I first got orders before he did, co-owner. And so he bought me out. And I had since been back to Key West to see George. And it was great to see him.

[01:36:08.34] And it turned out he was undercover for an organization which I will not say. And he was after the drug smugglers from Ecuador and down in South America. And I just loved sitting in his office. And he would tell me these stories. So I just had the best time both active duty and retired.

[01:36:49.22] BOBBI HOVIS: I don't think it did. I don't think it did. I mean, I was trained. I could cope with what I was encountering in the war zone. I could handle that. Some couldn't. Some would drink and get into other things, and I never could do that. I was brought up right and I maintained that throughout my life. And that's it.

[01:37:31.80] BOBBI HOVIS: Well, of course, they're just treated so very well now. And it just warms my heart because to see them being met at the airports and the things that are now being done for veterans, and veterans who have-- like amputees, they build a house for them to accommodate somebody with an amputation of great importance.

[01:37:58.08] The dogs, for instance, dog training for those Soldiers. And oh, it's so different. And it's a pleasure for me to see that when it's stories on TV. And I do, I think back to when we came home. I just never understood why there was such animosity. We were fighting for our country. Most of them didn't volunteer, I did.

[01:38:34.83] BOBBI HOVIS: Barely remembered, I would say. Barely remembered. So many good things came out of it for me personally. I could only probably judge it on that basis. And then I would say good came out of it for many, many people. Of course, others-- different, but that's life.

[01:39:06.09] BOBBI HOVIS: Just live your life as best as you can do. Just live your life.

[01:39:18.43] BOBBI HOVIS: I was there at the dedication. A lot of nurses went to the dedication. And we marched down Pennsylvania Avenue. And we got a standing ovation from military men along the way. And they reached out and hold our hands. And they would say thank you.

[01:39:45.02] And it was the best day I can imagine. And of course, Diane Carlson, who was the moving force behind that, I thought the world and all of her. And at the dedication, I got to sit in the second row. And I felt very, very honored for being-- sitting in that row up close to everything.

[01:40:17.36] But to have these ex-Soldiers just cheer us and whistle and clap, that was really special.

[01:40:32.28] DEBBIE COX: Lieutenant Commander Hovis, on behalf of the Commemoration, I'd like to thank you for sharing your experiences and impressions of the war with us today.

[01:40:42.43] BOBBI HOVIS: Well, you're quite welcome. I'm happy to do it. And I'm always very proud to say that I was a Navy nurse in two wars.

[01:40:55.02]