

CAPT. PAUL JACOBS – USS KIRK RESCUE FLOTILLA –'75

Captain Jacobs: My name is Paul Jacobs, P-A-U-L J-A-C-O-B-S. I am originally from Castine, Maine currently living in Gainesville, Virginia. I did five combat tours in Vietnam. Two on a minesweeper, one as XO of Floyd B. Parks, one as Plans Officer of CTF-75 in the Haiphong Harbor raid, and then CO of the Kirk.

I grew up in a small town in Maine called Steuben and went to high school there first and then over to Milbridge and graduated in 1955. That high school was in one room with two teachers. Everybody that graduated from there comments on how well we have done from that one teacher and how she influenced us. Then I went to Maine Maritime Academy in 1955 and graduated in 1958, which is a three year college. My father was there.

The two people that I think probably influenced me most was a guy named Joe Pittison. [00:00:58] He was an engineering instructor along with my father, who was an engineering instructor. I graduated, I was about ready to go on a T2 tanker and my dad said, 'there's a brown manila envelope there.' I said, 'Is it from the army? Well, don't open it. I'm going down and enlist up in the OP end in the military and become an ensign. I'd rather be an ensign than a private.' That started me on a 26 - 27 year career in the Navy and I did not look back.

I always was really ... I'll give you an example. They assigned me to the post graduate school. I said, 'How in the hell am I going to keep up with those guys at the Naval Academy, at the Naval Postgraduate School?' I went there twice, to the Postgraduate School. The first time was very, very emotional. I realized that what happened is these two guys, my father and Joe Pittison, all those instructors are there like that; will give you something that you do not get anywhere else, even in a Naval Academy. You find out what the job is and you get the goddamn job done and do not whine about it.

The chief engineer is the guy we worked for on the ship, he is like God. He asks you to do something, you jump through hoops and get it done. That is a different way of doing things, though. You never asked permission to do a thing. They always told us, 'You want to make a mistake, make it. It's your choice. It's your mistake, not somebody else's,

so don't ever ask permission, just do the right thing.' That is how I grew up.

Producer: Where did you ... What was your first ship? What was your first [crosstalk 00:02:33].

Captain Jacobs: My first ship, I got out of Maine Maritime in August of 1958. One month later, I am landing on the ship in the water in Quemoy Matsu, 1958 with the guns a'blazing. I was a chief engineer and a crash crew officer and all of those things. I worked for a Navy captain and he just got there about a month before I did, so he is the only guy that signed my fitness report for two years was this Navy captain. I was his chief engineer at 21 years old.

I went from there to another destroyer. I was supposed to be there to be the engineering officer because I was an engineer with a background. That captain probably changed my whole life by doing this. He said, 'Are you going to stay in the Navy?' I said, 'I'm thinking about it.' He said, 'You go down and get that R removed from your name, your Naval Reserve. Make it a regular Navy and come back to see me.'

I run down to the log room and changed that, made it, signed the document. Came back and showed it him. He says, 'All right. I want to send you off to gunnery school, then you are going to be my gun boss. We are going to have fight a few peers over this, but I think that if you're going to stay in the Navy, these two department heads will be better than you having one department head with two different ships.'

That turned my whole career around right there. Then at the age of 24 and a half, 25, I guess it was, I was CO of a minesweeper up in Charleston. Followed by another CO job out of Long Beach, which I did two combat tours of Vietnam on that ship. We were tending the [Winslow 00:04:17] was an AVP-40 with 10 C-planks in there to run up and down the coast to run interference with any ships coming from the Chinese Communists out to Quemoy Matsu islands. We were there for - that was my first ... I am saying, 'My God, I'm seeing dead bodies all over the place.' They sent us out to rescue a PC 104 which was a Chinese Nationalist PC. Took a lot of hits and was over on 30 degrees. Killed the doctor, [inaudible 00:04:49] right through the armor-piercing stuff. Holes all over everywhere; we had plugged the holes, in and around the dead bodies. The ship left me there with a motor launch and we towed that ship back into Quemoy. I'm saying, 'What the hell am I into?'

Producer: You were all of 24 then, you say?

Captain Jacobs: I was 21. Chief engineer at 21 years old. Those two tours, when you think back about them, I did not recognize it at the time, but those two tours with two single men. Here I am, four years in the navy and only two guys have signed my fitness report. Both four-strippers. That does not happen every day. I went right from there to shore duty, back to command.

Producer: Right. A lot of people did not even now where Vietnam was, so you were probably more intimately aware of the situation there.

Captain Jacobs: My group it was, we were supposed to interrupt contraband going on South to the North. What we would do is run interdiction there. We had a 40 millimeter gun and the Marines dug in, right south of DMZ, realized we had a 40 millimeter only drew 8 feet of water so they pulled us in, do naval gunfire for them. He says, 'That's a hell of a gunner you got on there.' I said, 'That's my mess cook.' Because, a 40 millimeter sets tracers, every five rounds is a tracer, you can just point that anywhere; like pointing a garden hose. Wherever you want to go.

Producer: What year was that first tour?

Captain Jacobs: God, that was 1962, I think.

Producer: Now, in 1962 we were still in an advisory mode. You say you were using that 40 millimeters [crosstalk 00:06:26]

Captain Jacobs: We were credited with, we got in a firefight we killed, I think, 29 KIA s with that gun. You do not sign up to do that, it just frigging happens; you either respond or you do not respond.

Producer: 1962?

Captain Jacobs: I am beginning to think it was like, let me see.

Producer: 1964?

Captain Jacobs: 1964, 1966 I think it was.

Producer: That is when we were actively [crosstalk 00:06:56]

Captain Jacobs: It was really active then.

Producer: Yes. That was your first tour?

Captain Jacobs: When you deploy from Long Beach you have got to put a big, what they call 'rubber bag' on the fantail, when you put your diesel log in it. Then you have got to make sure it is tied down because that thing, if the ship rolls toward you or just crawls way up, right up over the side and go into the water, and you have got to fish it out. You pump down your fuel from that, the bladders they called it. That is how you get from Long Beach to Hawaii.

You do not island hop over there, because you are looking at a 6 week trip to get there and then market-time patrols were running 35 days each. They had to count the days you were in combat. If you were on the line, you were on 35 days of combat. I got two hours out, I was gun boss on the Harry Hubbard dead, doing naval gunfire support. Usually some of our men, like in the bay and in Tú Nang and up and down the coast.

Then one day they call for a Navy spotter. I did not realize, I was XO of a destroyer, Floyd B. Parks. They assigned me to go ashore, to be a spotter, to ride that little hyper-cover around so I could direct naval gunfire and reverse slope. It was immediately fired up in the air and then it comes down the slope on the other side of the mountain. It takes a good skill to do that. When I get into that plane, and I am looking, 'wow that's a brand new, pristine plane wait 'til you get inside, see they painted over it,' When he comes back, 'So you don't see any holes. But, the holes are on the inside. As long as it doesn't hit you or the engine we're fine.' I said, 'Thanks a lot. I am sure when we got back we went around and counted at 6 or 8 holes somebody shot at you, see. That was on my 3rd tour.

The average 38 gun can go about 19,000 yards. That is just straight out like this, but probably about 12,000 or 13,000. When you elevate or go up, you go shoot up in the air and it comes, drops down. They are pretty accurate. You could hit a spot 3 x 3 yards, 3 x 3 feet. It is pretty good.

Producer: So that was your third tour?

Captain Jacobs: Right.

Producer: Okay. Then the last two were [crosstalk 00:09:15]

Captain Jacobs: I just got bumped back up on the Floyd B. Parks and got assigned to be a Chief of Staff on a destroyer squadron. Squadron five, and I have been home about two weeks or so, and I got a call from Admiral Haley Rogers, and he said, 'Get your bag packed and meet me at the airport. I'll tell you what it's about when I get there,'. One of the helicopters on the Providence, crashed and killed the Admiral, Chief of Staff, the plans

officer and the Ops officer, and these guys, all these guys had planned the Haiphong Harbor raid and they are all dead. We get aboard the Providence, and I am the plans officer, so I have got to execute somebody else's plan in the Haiphong Harbor raid, that was quite a hairy, hairy trip.

We have to go almost thirty miles, right alongside the coast, before we can make that one slight turn and we are on the flight line in a minute, and 8 - 10 seconds we are unloading nine Volkswagons every six seconds, I do not know if Newport knows. We did the POL, it was called the POL Strike. Try and knock out all of the POLs, the primary before moving south.

Producer: The POLs are?

Captain Jacobs: Gasoline, the products for -

Producer: Petroleum.

Captain Jacobs: Petroleum products, yes. It was good. It was like every morning, bang bang bang, every fifty yards, up, over and back down again. I am saying I have done the Haiphong Harbor raid, the guns are so powerful on Newport News, the oil pressure wiped the SS rader off the rubberson which is the front of a convoy and the roller was in the back. Just wiped the SS rader right off the ship. Then we would take an airbrush up all the way, nothing on our person, so on our way back safe inside, they would just raise hell with our boats. [inaudible 00:11:14] Just ruined. We looked like a junk, when we got out of there. We only had one guy get hit, a Captain on Mount I, took a round from the shoulder and out the back. Did not hit a bone.

Producer: Wow.

Captain Jacobs: One round hit right on the waterline, knocked the Admiral, Asiotiki [inaudible 00:11:34] right on top of me, on the bridge on the Providence. I am saying, I got to be the luckiest guy, or the most unlucky guy, depending on how you look at it. I had a good reputation of doing the right thing, and Admiral Haley Rogers picked me. When I took over the Kirk he came to my change of command, and he came when I got relieved, too.

During the summer of 1974, I was not supposed to deploy, until June of 1975, so I guess about a week or two after I got into command I got a call to come and see the Admiral. It was Admiral Haley Rogers and his staff, over in [inaudible 00:12:23] he said, 'We have got to send over another

aircraft carrier, the Hancock, and you are going to jump you up in the schedule. You have got to be ready to go on 1 March, so you have to do all the same workups, so you are ready to go on 1 March, by the way you've got two holidays: Thanksgiving and Christmas, and you've got to back up thirty days for stand-down; holy shit how in the hell are we going to do that?' I got so frustrated in trying to do this alongside the pier in San Diego, training and all of that, the workups. I get on the way and went down to the buoy, right off in San Diego, there are just a bunch of buoys there just tied up one buoy to try and get rid of everybody, so we could focus on our training.

I got put on report, I went all the way up there. I said, 'Who is the CO or the Colonel?' He goes, 'Oh I know, it's Jacobs, he can go anywhere he wants to'. He wants to go to Port Laden, we are jump starting him, we were the first ship to deploy, even on the "hurry-up" schedule, with three qualified [inaudible 00:13:22]. I moved the engineering watch section from to the engine room to the wardroom, if we are going to bulk hit, I want to send in every one of those young fireman, 3rd Class petty officer with the qualifications. Let them know that I know what they are doing and I know what they are going through.

My philosophy was, was this: (I learned this on the first ship I was on) I was team engineer, and I had a casualty report, which I had to file a report, took it up to the Captain, and I said, 'Captain this is a thing on the pump we have got to fix,' and he signed it. I said, 'Captain, aren't you going to read this?' He says, 'Son, I pay you to read it,' I thought, 'ooh, maybe I'd better look at that again,' Fifteen years go by, I am on the current first young incident, [inaudible 00:14:10] with his cas rep. That leadership just goes right through your mind, I signed and handed it back to him. He goes, 'Aren't you going to read it?' I go, 'No, son, I pay you to read it.' You can get more things done, to say, 'Look, I know your job, I have had every job you've had, in there; I'm not paying you to do what I think that job is, you've gotta learn that job, and you take responsibility for that job and you go do it without my authorization. Just goddamn well do it, if you screw up, that is my screw up,'. That was my leadership technique.

Producer: Yes.

Captain Jacobs: I will give you an example: Midnight, a young ensign, the smartest young ensign I've seen in my twenty-five years in the Navy, smart as hell. Qualified officer of the deck, he relieved Hugh Doyle, who had just come out of the wash, and we were taking Vietnamese people, rescuing them off of the fantail, rescuing them, pulling them on boats, whatever they

had back there. I hear, 'Captain in the rear, rifle [inaudible 00:15:17] put the lights on,'. He had to distinguish between the engine noise of a Cobra, and a Huey. One of the Cobra's we lost, the only one we lost, crashed landed right alongside the wall, just a mile from us. Dipping down and we had both of those boats back on board in 12 minutes; I did not do a thing. Nothing. I said, that is what it is all about.

I reunited them I guess about 2010, in D.C. He had gotten out of the line, in the Navy, went into JAG and retired as a JAG, Navy Captain. I think it is ironic, his name is Bruce Jacobson, I think it is ironic, he was working for a lady named Anne Dumb, at Homeland Security, who is one of the people we rescued. It is a small world. He is a very, very fine young man; how we did that training, on the way over, we made a dummy, out of canvas, and put CO on the back. I would throw that dummy over day or night, move the call; they were supposed to bring the ship around, right alongside of it, discovering him without hitting anyone with the grappling hook, running over him or that kind of thing. We did this everyday until we got the crews, officers were able to handle the ship. That paid off.

We got the Marines on board, we had to report that we rescued them, supporting commander of the Marines squadron says, 'Send them back to me,' I said, 'You'd better call and speak to the Admiral, you don't get them back 'til you've paid the ransom,'

'What's that?'

'You'd better find out, I'm not telling you.' He comes back and says to me, 'You have twenty-five gallons of strawberry ice, going to be over shortly, Sir,' I went over for twenty-five gallons of strawberry ice, got it on board.

Two of them, one was killed on the air accident, John Bowens of the Marine Corps, retired Colonel, and he is honorary member of the Kirk Association, just because of the days he was onboard.

Producer: How this war had progressed, sort of ended at this peace agreement -

Captain Jacobs: That is a very difficult question, because the same question comes up with your crew: why are we here? You have to answer that, and here is the way I answer that for all of the time I was in the Navy: I do not care if you are a Vietnamese, Korean, or whatever you are, you will have the freedom to plow your ground, grow your crops without having the fear of being executed or kidnapped, whatever. That is why we are here. Now, this war, and the people, my counterparts that are back in D.C. have been [inaudible 00:18:19] bruticed they do not stand up and tell the right

thing. What would you do? Well this war has been fought at the Naval War College, many many times. We do war gaming there. If you turn it over to the military, how would you do it? I think you would do it a lot different than what has been done, all this time we are making the same mistakes, to be making today. War is not a pleasant thing, it is a dirty thing, but let the military do it, and they know how to do it.

What we would do is, we would probably put a barrier right across the DMZ so the [inaudible 00:18:51] could not get through, stand up for their country economically like we did in Korea, and then leave. You cannot leave them defenseless, like we did. I, me personally, my grandson is a Special Forces guy, and he did his tour in Iraq. All the time he was there, he was being protected by the Iraqi military, which I think it unsafe. I cannot imagine us putting people in harms way, and the rest are relying on someone in the military to defend them. You go to war, full force, let them know what the military is doing to defend them, do not tell them how to do it, just tell them what you need done. That war would have been done a lot quicker than it was, and that is one of the things he would have done. When you put a mine in, you have got a moral and ethical responsibility to take it out. You would have mined it, so no one would have gone in there. One of the war gaming strategies was to fly right in there in broad daylight, and mine the hell out of it.

Those mines are inert, no CO was going to go in there or CO go in there when he has a guest with is that is real life

I got involved about ten years ago, for DOD, trying to find unexploded ordinance for the Vietnamese Government these days. The first military delegation came to D.C. and here is what happened: the Navy, the DOD had the op ed pre-reports, every bombing that was done from air to ground, we had on a 9-track tape that was located at the archives in D.C. But, it was a 9-track tape, so you have like this: 'A-B' and then, 'A-B, A-B'. It is like a hybrid, you have to go in and unload everything. I went out and found the IBM software that puts it together, went to MIT, my #2 son was an MIT graduate, MIT employee, and the computer was are. I asked for them to loan them to me, and they did. My oldest son was at a computer company and we procured that data and put it into an international database.

We briefed the first Vietnamese military delegation in Washington D.C. and they came in for an hour. This Colonel stood up, and before we started, and I said, 'You were my enemy for a long time. I have got over it and I hope you have too. I want to show you got there, this is just stuff dropped out of the sky for 10 years, we now have it in an original

database where ... but you can answer the question, how many times did you hit a target?' Of all the bombs dropped, less than 4% of the time you hit the target, when you try to hit an iron bridge, and hit a bridge, you are not going to hit it very often. What we were able to show them, that if a run had eight 500-pound bombs, you had better find eight craters, because if you do not, you have one there that is unexploded.

We got it down to a five meter resolution, and be able to turn it over to them, and the President Clinton went over there and my oldest son went over there to demo the system, and to my knowledge they usually get the data on the unexploded ordinance; we just got the stuff dropped out of the sky, what we do not get is the stuff from point to point, with the mining. When it is there, we can recover it. When you have this finger-pointed job, where state says 'you put them in, you take them out,'. Somewhere, if you want to build a relationship with that country, and realize how most of the people there do not even know about the war because they are so young, you still have a moral and ethical obligation to that country to recover unexploded ordinance, at least I think, anyway.

You left San Diego, with the USS Towers, it is a DDG. Halfway between San Diego and Hawaii, we had a medevac. One of my crew had appendicitis, we diverted us North to an AOE probably 300 or 400 miles.

Producer: AOE?

Captain Jacobs: I am sorry, OR. Where they had a doctor on board. Off loaded the patient and then we got a drink of gas, and then had to digress a little bit, there was a guy there an Admiral Sam Grey. Navy black officer. He sent me a personal, you made the best speed because you get it because you are going to be in a room pack net [inaudible 00:23:38] size, all of these southeast Asia countries, you are going to be the flagship that does 123.

I get on the main control, 'this is bridge, how fast will this sucker go?'

'What?'

I said, 'I am accepting control from the bridge to main control, wind it up, give me the best speed you can make out of it,'

One of the engineers came out of the woodwork and said, 'How fast can we go, are you kidding? We're gonna knot out of it,' I took the lamps off, threw the lamps over, about, you are supposed to go no more than 30 miles, I threw it 60 miles, so I get DCM varying on the towers and lift the Kirk up like a merchant ship and went right by the towers, at 5,000

meters not channeling one iota. We called it ski-x-one. We put the report together and flew it over to and gave it to the CO of the towers. I said, 'You guys did not even know it,' he could not believe I was sitting at right outside of Hawaii when he came over the horizon. That night, we were supposed to top off on fuel, get on the way for impact exercise the next morning, I got a phone call, port to deck. 'Are you Captain Jacobs?'

I said, 'Yes I am.'

'You're a big fat zero,' and hung up.

What the hell was that all about? I got a come over the towers, so I went over and looked over the bow. They painted out my 1, my 8, my 7. The boys [inaudible 00:25:01] were livid. I said, 'Go on the other side and paint out the 1, 8 and 7, we will get way a zero on both sides,'. We got an "attaboy" for originality.

Ten years go by, I am down setting a naval sea system crater here in Crystal City, and in come this brand new Captain. I did not know, and he says, 'Were you still with the Kirk?' And I said, 'Yes,'.

'Did you have an incident in Hawaii?'

I said, 'Yes, some son of a bitch painted my 1, 0, 8 and 7,'

'I am the son of a bitch,'

'You have no idea what kind of moral you did for our crew, I mean this crew was wound up like you would not believe, we've got to do that to someone else,' I was like, made my job so easy. I said, 'Well, my boss was not happy about that, had me get in and paint that overnight,' he said.

Those are the kinds of things, I do not know if you could do those things today, but that is what these crews are all about. You compete fairly, [inaudible 00:26:02]

Producer: What were you doing over there in the south [crosstalk 00:26:06]

Captain Jacobs: First of all, when we were inbound, Pacific Bay and the Hancock had to offload their jets before going in Pacific Bay, and meet the midway coming down in the San Bernardino Straits, when they made the room to get the jet to fly off, that jet cannot come back in. It will get to the point where, 'Oh well, I'll ditch it,'. All the jets, send them off, will go in the Straits and I am gutting for two aircraft carriers while they offload the

midways helicopters, onto the Hancock. We go in, and we do a quick stop at Pacific Bay, and then we head to Cambodia. So we did the rescue at Cambodia first, and no guns were shot and we did not do anything but just protect the aircraft carrier. Then we came around and were sitting off of Saigon, waiting for it to fall, and they thought that was big, moved us out 50 - 60 miles because we were option four, we were not even supposed to be ... if they executed 1, 2 or 3 we would not have anything to do, we would just lay there for the ride.

Send us to Singapore for a few days. I said, 'Where in Singapore? I see if I can take the opportunity to get my fire side clean, and blow them down,' then they were there less than six hours on an emergency underway, we put one border back together, we were not supposed to be within one border when the other one went off, that is a safety violation. I said, 'I don't care, we're going down the river,'. The guy next to me, he is a senior, he is supposed to take lead, says, 'I'm not going down the river, I'll wait until dawn.'

I said, 'You can wait here, but there is an emergency going on, I'm getting underway,'. I was inside, I pulled out, and he followed me down the river; we were going down the Singapore River, probably 16 - 18 knots, just to keep ... because it is 6 knots of current, I am going with, I have got to have some leverage so I can steer the ship. I broke out in the Straits, just like a [inaudible 00:28:15] so I saw this big super tanker, and I called over there, 'You got any Maine Maritime graduates on there?' I said, 'Yeah, Chief Engineer,' I said, 'Can I speak to him?' I said, 'We need to get up off of Saigon, and I'd like to pull in behind you and run this thing up, because every time they see that big ship come up, small ships just get away from him. Rather than me dodging all of these ships trying to get up through the Straits, I would like to fall in behind you. Make it so, [inaudible 00:28:37] in there. So two of us get in there, and that big super tanker got us all the way up to Singapore, up to Saigon. We sat, until the evening of the 28th, when things began to start moving.

Our job was to sit right off of Maungdaw and use the ships tack end to act as inbound of the embassy, outbound to whichever aircraft carrier they were going to go to. We were right in the front yard and my job was to chew down enemy aircraft, and small boats who were trying to interfere, 'Well who the hell is that?' To the XO, I said, 'Do you shoot or don't you shoot?' Most aircraft is supposed to be squawking friendly, IFF friendly, we got no squawks at all because they are flying Huey's they did not have that type of thing. So I told the XO, 'Here is what we're going to do; we're not going to shoot them unless we get shot at, and we're going

to proceed like they're friendlies. It takes a lot of guts, if just one of those is not friendly we are going to pay for it. We still have to be a gentle force, we still have to be able to respond with a gun. Thank God nobody shot.

Then we finished that, we all headed to Pacific Bay and I had not had much sleep in about ten days or so, so I went to bed. The XO started to wake me up and said, 'The Admiral wants to speak to you on a secure phone, Admiral Whitmire,' he said, 'Come alongside, I want to talk to you on the secure line,'. I go along inside, and he says, 'I'm gonna send you back to Vietnam,' and I said, 'Admiral! We don't own it anymore, am I going to get an air courage,' he says, 'No, you are just on your own you're a maverick CO, your job is try to get the Vietnamese Navy onto a ... we don't want to get them onto a communist and they are all going to want to go down to Con Son Island, and your job is to get them out of the territory where that way we can defend them. I'm going to send a guy to help you.

The guy that comes on board, he looks just like me dressed in khaki pants and a blue blazer and the whole rusty 45 stuck in his belt. No identification, nothing. I did look his name up in the blue book, which lists all the officers and graduates in the Naval Academy. I looked at him and said, 'I am not used to somebody coming on board and issuing orders to me, I don't even know where in the hell we're going, except I'm supposed to take my orders from you, says the Admiral. I see that you graduated from the Naval Academy and that is good enough for me, so where do you want to go?' He says, 'We're going to go to Cozumel Island,'. I make 16 knots and we arrive down there at dawn in the morning. We cranked her up to 18 - 20 knots, and we arrived at dawn on May 1.

Now, on the way down there, we were alert on the way down there. This happened about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, 'Now here this, general quarters, man your battles, this is a no shitter,' and inbound aircraft. Thank God my flight controlman, I knew this but I had forgotten about it. My flight control radar can lock on at 50,000 yards but we could never shoot anything down with a 54, he would be lucky ... he would have to run into our projector. I said, 'Soon as he reaches 50,000 you lock onto the aircraft,'. He locked on, and took off, and went back. We had no idea, what that was ... we went back over to Vietnam so we knew it was not exactly friendly. He wasn't squawking. At all. That gives you pause to think, if they wanted to wipe us out, they could have wiped us out, us and the Vietnamese ships, as well.

We get down there and sent our only Corpsman over to assess what was going on. These guys were shot up, coming down the river, pregnant women, seasick, dehydrated. He comes up to me and says, 'Captain, I have no medical supplies left, we hadn't even been there 8 hours,'. I get on the horn, and sends out a C130, low-pass pushes out 55 gallon drums into the water, and that is how we got our medical supplies. Everything from diapers, kapectate, whatever we needed. But wrestling those barrels into the boat is not easy. It is also snake infested waters, huge poisonous snakes, so you have to put the people in a [inaudible 00:33:18] and you just cannot go in in your swimsuit, you have to go in with a full wet suit on. You put two guys in the water, two Hawaiians underneath the barrel, two guys up into the boat, and they pull that barrel right up over the [inaudible 00:33:29] and into the boat and bring it alongside and bring it on; that is how we got our medical supplies.

The first one started landing on the evening of the day of the 29th and the first one was Air-America, out stepped up a 3-star General. He is almost dead on his feet, and I went in my room and the doc fed him intravenously, because he was dead on his feet; worked with him for three days before we saw him. His name was Tran, Major General Tran. He pushed that helicopter up alongside the port side of the hangar and the next one landed and was shot up pretty bad. We took the people off and took them to the side, as soon as we see ... you can see them standing up there, it was a no brainer, somebody asked me, 'Who gave you permission to push those helicopters over the side,' I said, 'You don't understand, I grew up with women, I don't ask permission to do a goddamn thing, I just do the right thing. If I am going to do a mistake I want it to be my mistake.'

I had a squadron commander embarked on the Kirk, it was 123, he was very supportive and I never turned around and asked him permission to do it, I just turned around and did what I thought was right. 20-25 people and each one of us crammed in there, you have got to make it you have to make room, to do what you have got to do.

Producer: How much room did you have, for that? [crosstalk 00:34:57]

Captain Jacobs: I could probably, we figured if we could fit one on the port side, as biggest side on the hangar deck, one on the flight deck, or two on the flight deck with the fins sticking out, and maybe one on the fantail. The one on the fantail got put on there by my pilots, two of my pilots who were heater pilots originally. Took off, and measured down on the deck where they had to put the skids down, when they put the skids down right down on those marks, when the rotor blades stopped they missed

the flight deck by about six inches, I said, 'Guess what, guys, they're not going to fly off here, I tell you that,' We went to San Diego with our own bird, and 1-2-3-4 more, and we tried to save the better ones, what we tried to do was take anything of value, off of it, prior to climbing in and pushing it off to the side. Then he shows up and tries to land, and we said no, he could not land on the main roads. The main roads and the ship are where the main impact, and killed a lot of people.

He made it known that he was out of gas, and what he would do was hover over the fantail, and people would jump. The XO took volunteers, and he is a crew member. You are not supposed to stand on or underneath the landing helicopter because of the static electricity. That is a really gutsy issue, because any one of those guys could have gotten killed just because of the static electricity. But, this young machines guy looked up and saw a baby coming and said, 'My God, there's a human, I'm not gonna let that baby hit the deck,' and he caught it just like a football. He caught the mother the same way. He is in the movie for when the Navy did, they interviewed him down in Texas. He is a good ol' boy from Texas, and he says, 'When I think I'm having a bad day or hear a helicopter come, I run into my garage and get my American Flag, and I wave it. I don't know if they see it, but I sure hope they do,'. I have had guys like Admiral Robinson, and Eric [inaudible 00:37:10] who lives right down the street from me, he says, 'every time I see that, I tear up.' Because he is speaking for the Nation, as a whole.

Producer: How many people were on that ship?

Captain Jacobs: I guess probably 20 - 25, mostly his family and other kids he could pick up in the schoolyard.

Producer: And every one of them, and the crew were caught?

Captain Jacobs: I think we had a sprained ankle, that was it. When he survived, the excitement was such ... we had [inaudible 00:37:44] get in the water and rescue him, if he is alive. He popped up and on a flight deck, six or seven of my sailors took off their shoes and jumped in the water, just to save this one little man. What he did was hover deck, he hovered his wheels just in the water and he had to push out the door on the port side and he fell out of his flight suit and took everything that would bog him down, off, and jumped out the port side and tries to get down in the water as fast as he can, because that thing explodes. It was a really big explosion, we thought that ... closing bulkhead doors because pieces were flying on the Kirk. As soon as that happened, they opened the door and seven of the flight deck sailors took their shoes off and jumped in the water when

he popped his head up. They got real-live footage of that in this movie. The Admiral says, 'You know that guy deserves an air medal for what he did,' and his country is gone, and I cannot do it, and I cannot touch it, but the Kirk Association could, so we followed ... and I said, 'I'd go up there with you,' and we wrote him up for an air medal.

In July 2010, we were able to present it to him. We did not know that he had Alzheimer's, he could not speak at all. He sat in back in the back room of the stage area and when you write something emotional, the cabinet gets to read it. And sometimes it is hard to read these things. We said, 'Here, air boss,' and wheeled him up and we did not know, no one knew whether he knew what was going on.

So here is what happened: the Air boss pinned a medal on his lapel, reading the citation, he struggled out of the wheelchair, stood up to his feet, takes his right hand, his left hand was underneath him, and ... I want to salute the airman, I want to dry eye in the place. Now the Vietnamese are trying to find a video. I am trying to find it, to put on the Kirk webpage, we have not found it yet. I found the guy who has it, I know that. People do not realize that these are the kinds of things that you have a relationship, and you do the right thing.

Like, a baby dying on board. The sister called me up and said, 'Are you Captain Jacobs?' And I said, 'Yes,' and she said, 'Well, I am the sister of the man you buried at sea, 1975. We are trying to track you and Chief Corman down,' I said, 'Well, the Admiral is going down to ... to see Chief Corman, where do you live?' She said, 'We live in Houston,'. I said, 'This is going to be down in Pensacola, Florida. She said, 'We're coming. The whole family is coming, there's no question about it.' NPR covered that story and we decided that, most of us decided, that we ought to do something right. Let us make him an honorary Kirk crew member. His name is Bo Lee. He stepped off in freedom, but he died. If you want, I can send that to you, that citation.

Producer: How old was that baby?

Captain Jacobs: He was over a year old. It affected the whole crew, everybody knew about it. Burial at sea, buried him at the Vietnamese American flags, marked a spot. After that ship, the Kirk gets into the Sui Bay, and we take about two weeks to get ourselves cleaned up and our repairs made, and we go off to Japan, Korea, and were sent to Guam for two weeks upkeep, and we sailed into Guam, and by that time there is 140,000 Vietnamese on the right-hand side of the hill over there, and we call it tent city. Running down to the river, waving their arms, this crew had not had a

pay day since they left the States, take all their money, most of it anyway, nobody could have spent all of their money, from what I saw anyway, bought food, clothing, everything from the commissary, and took it up and gave it directly to the kids. So I went with them. The mother of that baby came up and got down on her knees in front of me. She was so appreciative of how we handled her sons death. So I think, in America, they do not know what these guys did.

Producer: So let us go back to the hotel, how many ships ... how did they all become filled with all these refugees?

Captain Jacobs: Well, they [inaudible 00:42:24] Captain Kim Do and rich cabinet were like this, 'I want you to take your ships and go to Con Son island, and Captain Kim Do said, 'Well, look, they're not going to go without their families. So they're going to have their families on board, if the seaman is going to go, the officer is going to go, his family is going to go with him,' When I got onboard the Kirk, I said, 'I have no idea, how many people are going to be on these ships. It could be just the crew, or it could be a lot of people.' When he saw a lot of people, he said, 30,000 people.

Every one of those ships was packed to the gill, that is how they got their crews to go with them. It was amazing to see what they went through, 100 degree temperature, no food, no water. Water was the most difficult thing to move. We had to make water for our boiler, we are a steam-driven ship, it is called "feed water", and we got it now to where we could not 10% feed water, and take all of our fresh water and put it in empty plastic bags, or 5 inch projector which stood about this high, and put it, a plastic bag and jug of water, 2 and a half gallons of water, and put it down to the other ship. We steamed ... we had two columns sixteen ships in each column, and the Kirk was going around during the night and on the flagship of the Kirk, we would have a big board where one of our Petty Officers would say, 'Hey Captain I've got a [inaudible 00:44:02] on this ship, where are you?' I would plug it on the board, at least pencil where they were. Died. Do not even think about it. Okay, bury him at sea.

That was going on all the time; do not bring them to the Kirk. We had shrimp boats, we used shrimp boats ourselves to sort of dock around. The fishing boats, we had one for each ship. There were sixteen, two columns, sixteen each, and we did that for seven days, until we got them in the Silver Bay. The maximum speed I could go is about 5 - 6 knots.

Producer: You had to go for the slow ship.

Captain Jacobs: Slow ship, yes.

Producer: Was there not one ship that was not sea-worthy before you [crosstalk 00:44:48]

Captain Jacobs: Yes, we would go alongside them, tow them, get them started, work with them like that.

Producer: Wasn't there one ship you had to transfer all of the people off?

Captain Jacobs: Yes. SQ42 came down the road, pretty well shot up, and there was a situation over there where HQ put them alongside and there was armature on there, and they were transferring the people arguing or occasion where one of the Vietnamese people, refugees, pushed this girl and went down between the two ships, crushed her, killed her instantly. The Vietnamese Officer of the deck took his gun out and shot that guy, probably stopped a riot, right there because, when you are running to plank from one ship to another, you have got to do it in an orderly manner, or a lot of people are going to die down between the two ships. I told my officers, 'if he didn't do it, you should've done it. That was your job, you should have done it,' he said, 'I don't know if I could,' I said, 'Well, that's what you get paid to do,'

You have got to look at the situation because, do you want to stop a riot, you are suppose to do that. It is hard for a 21, 22 year old to even think about that. You cannot even find a spy on them anywhere. In the meantime, we were using our small boats, I even commandeered a yacht for a few days, until I found out it had a broken gas can in their villages so we just got everybody off and then blew it up, sunk it. Brand new yacht.

Anything that we could float, we would use to move food, supplies, anything we could. As we approached the Philippines, they would not let us in. I had to wait until after dark, because the Kirk has a guidance light, do you know what a guidance light is? It is an oscillating light that the helicopters use to hone in on. It is the highest point on the mast, we kept it on all the time, so they could see where I was and they would just follow me. After dark, I made a 180 degree turn, if the Vietnamese knew I was going back West, I would have had a mutiny on my hand. Just before dawn I did another turn, just to slow the formation down until they figured out how we were going to get into Pacific Bay.

One of my guys did not make the turn, so we got into Pacific Bay, and started counting up; what, where? Where? Where the hell is Chief Gordo? He is on one of the fishing boats. He missed the turn, went in the

middle of the Bay. We finally got him. We had no idea where he was. You check your bow or the fanning.

Producer: How did you [crosstalk 00:47:27]

Captain Jacobs: Well, one of my crew members said, I do not remember saying this, but I probably did, 'Hey fix that,' I probably said, 'Hey do something about that, you're not supposed to expose yourself to the entire crew,' so he took a five gallon can, put a piece of wood and cut a hole in it and put a pole with a piece of canvas least he could sit there without exposing himself to the whole crew. You could smell the ship, the stench was so bad. You could smell it from a mile, half mile from moving alongside. We take our fire hoses and would put people on one side, and wash it down, that way try to get their fire main going, so they could do the same thing in this other way. There are no words to describe what a ship with no fire main, no place to go to the bathroom -

Producer: What were you feeding them, and where did you get them?

Captain Jacobs: I think there was one of the ships, which a huge ship, I think, a "Mike 8" which is huge small boat, with six [inaudible 00:48:32] and pull it up right behind the Kirk and unloaded the [inaudible 00:48:38] back into our transom back there, they were in 60-pound bags, moving rice these people were back there watching and unloading it. They would pass out from the heat and exhaustion. He would hose them down with the fire hose, salt water, 'get your ass back in there,' and that was how we unloaded it. Because I cannot move until they get it unloaded. We unload and then we disperse rice and water to each of the ships, manually.

Producer: Would they cook the rice?

Captain Jacobs: Huh?

Producer: Would they cook the rice?

Captain Jacobs: Sometimes, just what they would do was warm the water up, put the rice in the water and eat the water and the rice. I was surprised how much candy my crew had stashed away; when they go on deployment they stash away every nook and cranny in their locker. They took it all out and gave it to the Vietnamese. I tell you, I have done this [inaudible 00:49:32] many deployments I have done, I have never seen one, maybe one I have been on had rough seas. Lot of wind and rough seas, except this time. Flat, flat, dead sea. It was just like a lake, for seven days. If we had any seas at all, we would have had those Vietnamese ships capsize, and a

horrendous problem on our hands, people dying all over the place. Thank God, we had good weather. That was a blessing from God, I think.

Producer: 33,000?

Captain Jacobs: Yes. They tried to keep that, Captain Kim Do tried to keep that as quiet as possible, but if he knew about it, he ... bring them along we cannot... I think Captain Kim Do took advantage of an armorties word, and said if anyone tells you to go, go. That was how we got them on there.

Producer: Who was this, Richard [inaudible 00:50:28]?

Captain Jacobs: Richard Armington was a regimental in the Naval Academy, Special Forces. He had done numerous tours in ... and he could speak Vietnamese, fluently. He could even tell jokes in Vietnamese. I have seen him in interviews, when they asked him a question in English, and he has answered in Vietnamese, fluent Vietnamese. He is a very quiet man, his boss is a name, he is [Aragbon Maubam 00:50:53] in the same area I live. He is in his 80's today, but he has only opened up to talk about the [inaudible 00:51:04] what they did and how they got out, of there, to the United States, and he is sitting in the Pentagon one day and he says, here comes the Commander of the Marine Corps, comes in my office, stands straight up and says, 'Rich, why the hell didn't you pick out all those stupid Marines? You know we don't leave our Marines boys behind,' he started telling him, 'At least they weren't blown to bits. It took them almost a year to get those pieces put back together in [inaudible 00:51:43]' You can tell this really bothered him.

Producer: These are the last two Marines that were killed in [crosstalk 00:51:45]

Captain Jacobs: Right. Right, right. Richard, even to this day he is moved to tears because of that issue. He is a Principal Deputy to the Secretary of Defense, very very ... I used to have him over to my house for dinner, with Jane Herman. He says, 'You know more of what you've done for him, is to get him to talk about this thing, because you're the first person that he ever showed his little black book he had with his names and numbers and people's names and what they did, that he showed it to,'. He even went through the whole story, because what they did with the whole Saigon film is show another movie. He took the Blue Ridge, not the Blue Ridge, one of the amphibious ships, I forget which one it was. He went down south to rescue a lot of the Special Forces guys.

Producer: I'm sorry, yes. Just to get back to the ... obviously the South Vietnamese Navy did not probably exist, except for the US; those were all US ships

that we had turned over [crosstalk 00:52:45] to them, is that the idea? We did not want those ships to fall under the hands of Communists, right?

Captain Jacobs: Right. That is right.

Producer: It was how many ships?

Captain Jacobs: It was ... I think it went more up to I think 31 or 32 of them. Most of them were the big ones, these USS Coast Guard ships called Whec's, W-H-E-C. They were diesel driven, so the discussion was, in fact, to take the ships back. They were not going to come into the Philippines. On our way getting into Philippines, we had to re-flag all of the ships, with an American flag and they flew out to make sure they were flying an American flag, to let them in Hoover Bay. They would not let these people ashore, they put them on [Grandi Island 00:53:32] which is in the middle of the Pacific Bay, and then the merchant ship would come in and transport them to Guam. They actually never set foot on Vietnamese soil, I mean Philippines soil.

Producer: Their flag was indeed flying on those ships, that must have been emotional to them, to take that down.

Captain Jacobs: Oh.

Producer: To the end of their nation.

Captain Jacobs: I know, I knew what the flag means to me. I just assumed that the same thing means to them, we rounded up thirty-some-odd flags and split them with 19 - 29 of my people. I could have gotten Court Martial for shipping things back like flags, but I went down there officers beside myself on the Kirk, and I asked them. That is why you have 22 officers on there. I put them on there, and I will give you an example: my four pilots, when they came aboard, and they got ready to board, I said, 'Well, guess what guys?' They said, 'What's that?' I said, 'You are going to stand watch on the road,' and they said, 'You don't have to stand watch on the road,' I said, 'Listen to me, you are standing watch, on the bridge and you are here to qualify as officers of the deck, bitch and moan,' Because what had I been doing?

They had command of Vietnamese ships, and had they had not had that background, that training, that would have been a very scary situation. On one ship, I've got thirty-some-odd ships, we sent ... we had already sent official orders going to each ship with a flag and the officer received

that and they mustered everybody on the fantail, and my officers exclusively, and my officer lowered it and they were singing their national anthem, crying and carrying on. We raised the American flag up; that has got to hurt. None the least of which were crying. We did that to every one of them. So you see, what I am trying to get at is you do not have to do any of this. You have your orders to get these ships in, how ... whatever it takes to get them, you could be onboard the ships just take them to come in at, right? Whether you can do with a little bit of dignity, and understand what they are going through; I do not think a lot of people understood. That does not happen by itself, a lot of work and planning has to go into that.

Producer: It makes a huge difference in these people's lives.

Captain Jacobs: Knowing that if I set the example, a crew member will do the same thing. Treat them with dignity; how would you like to be treated if this was not reversed. I think ... [crosstalk 00:56:29] puts it best when he wrote about the Navy, he said, 'Look, we were going home, we had 100 [crosstalk 00:56:35], these guys had left their home and didn't know what the hell was gonna happen to them,'. He, if they were to make him into a doctor, I would have made him into a doctor, onboard, for what he did.

Producer: Well, lucky for you. There were hundreds of thousands, back in Saigon and [crosstalk 00:56:56] who were ... did not know what their fate was at the ends of that ...

Captain Jacobs: I will tell you, I got an email from the State Department. I think it was like the first day we picked up these refugees, not the first ones that came out by helicopter, but the ones on the Vietnamese ships, 'You have got to kill all the animals,' I said to Dick, my XO, I said, 'We ain't doing that, I mean, can you imagine us going through there whipping a cat or dog away from a Vietnamese kid that's all he's got and threw it over the side? We ain't doing that,'. About two or three days ago I got another message from the State Department, I wish I had saved all of those messages, and said, 'What have you done about reference A,' we knew about reference A, you were directed to moved on the hour. I got cute, I put, 'Reference A has been executed,' I put that on top and then said, 'We ain't doing it,'. I mean, what are you going to do, Court Martial me? You see, the guy sitting at a desk does not understand what the disrespect would be for us to take and do that.

Producer: Were there a lot of pets?

Captain Jacobs: There was probably more dogs than cats, but when the kid gets on the aircraft and he has got his dog with him, what are you going to do.

Producer: Yes, I guess I never thought about that. Wow.

Captain Jacobs: They are their pet, their dog ... their cats and dogs are their pets, you know? I think we probably had thirty, thirty-five of them.

Producer: Were you ... obviously when most helicopters started landing on [crosstalk 00:58:38]

Captain Jacobs: We knew, the Huey's were flying by us, they were looking for a place to land. They landed on the ones like the Hancock and the Midway, just to escape. They would do the same thing, push them over the side because they had to make room for these Marine Corps helicopters flying off the embassy. What is amazing to me is I met this Marine Corps Colonel who, I think, that he flew eighteen hours straight. That is hard to believe.

Producer: Just flying back and forth?

Captain Jacobs: Right.

Producer: Wow. Wow. That is certainly [crosstalk 00:59:23]

Captain Jacobs: People do not know that.

Producer: Thank goodness there was this [crosstalk 00:59:30]

Captain Jacobs: I say it like this: they are American sailors but in International embassy, requires you to provide assistance to anybody on the high seas no matter what nationality, no matter where. I do not care what the State Department says, that is the law. I am going to do it. I do not want anybody to go [inaudible 00:59:50]. It comes to me like this: I do not think I can speak for the crew, but I can tell you myself; I do not think we bothered to do anything special. We did not tell anybody. Its, 'Why didn't you tell somebody?' Who the hell are we going to tell? Like, who cares? I said, 'In fact, I never even told my parents. My parents didn't need to know what I did,' It is not like they see me carrying babies and things like this. We just did our job. People will come up to me and say, 'Why in the hell didn't you tell somebody?'

I was in Bucksport Maine, with Admiral Robinson, showing the lucky fuel. This man stands up and says, 'I know your father, well, what do you think about this?' I was stunned. I could not speak. Finally, I said, 'Well, I hate

to tell you this, but my father and mother never knew about this. I didn't tell anybody,'. Admiral Robinson jumped up too and said, 'Well they know now, Captain Jacobs, they know now.' That brought brought all these things back to the surface. What we realized we had done, when we suppressed everything negative, in order to remember those things positive, like the contest we used to ...

We used to have an ice cream eating contest. One of the officers in the wardroom, it was forty-five seconds to see how much ice cream you could eat. We would compete in competition between officers. One night they invited me down to the wardrooms for a dinner. I said, 'Okay, fine, I'll be down there,' and we were all dressing up in our whites, for a formal dinner. Well, my bones were telling me something was wrong here. This crew is trying to do something to me, we were always trying to do something. I sneak down there after ... and there is a little hole in the door, in one of the wardrooms and so I look in there and it says, "Big Jake's Truck Stop". They were serving spaghetti on no plates, just on the table. The cooks were going berserk and saying, 'You can't go in there!' I went back up, took off my t-shirt, rolled up my cigarettes, so I looked like a trucker, went down and threw the door open. 'How the hell did you know!?' I said, 'When you take the opportunity to do something like that, that to me is a great sign,' it is all in how you took it. Do not get upset.

Producer: Captain, you certainly had a remarkable career and I am glad that ... interested in this really [crosstalk 01:02:51]

Captain Jacobs: My training came from the people in the Maine Maritime Academy, how to do things. Way of doing things; first two CO's I had, they ... 'sign right here,' not even look at it. You can get more things done by making them assume responsibility.

Producer: Right. Having faith in them.

Captain Jacobs: Yes. We did this personal growth agreement conference on the crew, and everybody [inaudible 01:03:24] had to come and sit in the wardroom, would meet with the whole chain of command and his lead Petty Officer. 'All right, why are you here? It's not about me, it's not about the Navy, this is about you. What are you going to do with your life in the next year, in the next five years?' Always moaning and groaning, piss and shouting, and said, 'I don't know, if you can't leave until you tell me what you're going to do and you're gonna put it on a piece of paper, and you're gonna sign it,'.

'No, no, no, I'm not signing anything,'.

We go back and forth and pretty soon, every one of them signed it. One guy, the smartest guy I've ever seen, his name is [Hime 01:04:07]. He came to the ship busted, and reduced in rank from 3rd Class down to fire machineman because he mouthed off to some Petty Officer. I am in combat, the Chief machinist says, 'He can get enough time to qualify to take the 2nd Class exam, but he has got to get reinstated. Would you reinstate him, if he qualifies?' I said, 'If he qualifies for 2nd, and you recommend him, Chief, I will reinstate him.' This was about a full month after it, between the Chief's and everybody training him.

He had to demonstrate all these things. He demonstrated for the 2nd Class exam. I called him in, and I said, 'You earned your 3rd Class back,' and I handed it back to him, all smiles, I said, 'Oh the other thing, you didn't know, is that the Captain can reinstate you with back pay as well,'. He put his napkin on the wardroom table. It was \$15,000 in 1975, sitting in cash on the wardroom table. 'That's all mine? That's all mine?' This person goes, 'Great company, all the difference it is the first time I have ever been asked to put cash on the wardroom table,' I just wanted him to understand what this is about. Today, he is a PhD. He is ... I will see if I can find it, but he sent me a letter, four or five years ago of what he calls a [selfish joy 01:05:41]. I said to him this, 'When I think about the time out of it, I outta kick your ass up one side of this ship and down the other, just because you've got all this time and you're not using it. So you've got to take self responsibility,'. Trying to get them to take self responsibility, once you get it to one it is like an infectious disease, everybody else, 'Well how did you know about that?' That, to me, is about the leadership.

Producer: Captain, again, I want to thank you for sharing your story with us, and thank you for what you did over there, it was quite extraordinary.

Captain Jacobs: As you can see, I am pretty proud of that crew.

Producer: As you should be. Thank you for coming in. I will be watching tonight.

Captain Jacobs: Me too