 Tim Hancock
Salt Lake City, Utah

**Interviewer**

Give us your full name.

**Tim Hancock**

Tim Hancock.

**Interviewer**

And you're from Layton?

**Tim Hancock**

From Layton, Utah.

**Interviewer**

And what year did you go into the Navy?

**Tim Hancock**

I think it was '69. I went into the Naval reserve in '69.

**Interviewer**

Naval reserve? Then how did you end up on active duty?

**Tim Hancock**

Naval reserve you're required to have two years active duty.

**Interviewer**

So tell us about getting to Vietnam, and how did that all happen?

**Tim Hancock**

Basically I was on a ship – I was assigned to a ship – and we were on a WestPac cruise, and word came through the pipeline that they needed some guys in Vietnam. And the whole reason of going into the Navy was not to go to Vietnam. And then I started thinking maybe I'm missing something here, and so I put in my request. Before the

cruise was over I got orders, and I got off the ship in Okinawa, flew home and went to CR training and all the other training for Vietnam. And then next thing I know I was on an airplane to Vietnam.

**Interviewer**

And you arrived there when?

**Tim Hancock**

June of '71.

**Interviewer**

Now things are changing in Vietnam. Do you know that the war is changing from what it was at that time?

**Tim Hancock**

Probably not to the extent that I know now. I knew it was being turned over to the Vietnamese. As far as a total wind down, I probably didn't really realize that.

**Interviewer**

So when you got there, where were you assigned, what was the name of your base? What was it like being a green guy?

**Tim Hancock**

Yeah, when you land at Tan Son Nhut Air Base there in Saigon, that's the first thing you get hit with as soon as you walk out the door is tremendous heat and humidity – something we're not used to here in Utah. And we weren't really sure where we was going, any of us. We didn't get orders until we were actually there. They had a hotel they'd put us up in – and we called it the Annapolis – and that's where they gave you all the rest of your clothes and arms and things that you need. And then they start cutting orders, and everybody starts going different places, and they said I was going up to an advance tactical support base clear up on the Cambodian border. That was a little worrisome. I started asking some questions about the place and turns out before they turned the boats over, before the wind down started, everybody on the base had a Purple Heart. That didn't make me feel good.

**Interviewer**

How did you know that? Who told you that?

**Tim Hancock**

There's scuttlebutt in Saigon about it in all the places, and they said everybody on these bases have been wounded because they get hit regularly. When they're on boats, the boats get hit. You get shrapnel from that if you don't get direct hits. The bases get rocketed pretty regularly or mortared.

**Interviewer**

So tell us about your arriving there and your first day.

**Tim Hancock**

Well, it was a fairly long boat ride up the river – long, slow boat. When I got to the base they basically just said here's where you're going to be staying, and here's where you're going to be working, and then they explained what I was going to be doing and things, and that's pretty much all. There were only eight Americans on this base. The base was basically run by Vietnamese at this time.

**Interviewer**

How big of a base?

**Tim Hancock**

Not real big. The Americans had a couple buildings that we'd eat in and sleep in. The Vietnamese also had two larger buildings than ours because they had boat crews and stuff like that, and their radiomen, radio personnel and things like that and people that facilitated the day-to-day operations on the base – but the base wasn't that big. We're probably talking 200 yards long by 100 yards wide, maybe 80 yards wide.

**Interviewer**

What did your fellow Americans tell you about the situation there?

**Tim Hancock**

They really didn't say much. They just had their things that they did. There was a guy that would man the generators and stuff like that, a Navy engineman. And he just did what he did to keep the generators running so we had power. Our CO really didn't say much either. He just says, "We want you on this radio a couple times a day and anything comes across you think I need to know, you let me know."

**Interviewer**

But sailors talk amongst each other, I know they do.

### Tim Hancock

Oh, yeah. But they mostly just said it was just a hot, boring area to be since they really didn't get a lot more action like they used to there. The base didn't get rocketed near as much. We had our own guard tower that we would man. The Vietnamese had their guard towers. We had one that we would man, and it was right on the canal. And about the only thing we'd do at night there is look through the night vision scope out through the fields and see if we could see any movement and occasionally, not any specific timeframe, but occasionally throw percussion grenades into the canal in case there were swimmers in the canal. And that's pretty much what it was for day-to-day operations.

### Interviewer

So you were there for how long?

### Tim Hancock

Well, I got hurt and left in November.

### Interviewer

How were you hurt?

### Tim Hancock

Well, it wasn't very glamorous, I was playing volleyball with the Vietnamese after dinner one night, and I dislocated my knee.

### Interviewer

Tell us about the intense moments, the Seawolves. You're right next to Cambodia. What are you seeing that's going on?

### Tim Hancock

Well, what surprised me was I would see right next to our base – the name of our base is called Pleiku, and it bordered a Vietnamese Army base that was run by two U.S. Army Green Berets, and they were the advisors for those people – and what surprised me was I would see helicopters going back and forth, in and out of Cambodia, and that surprised me. They were more than likely filled with those Vietnamese personnel, but I think the helicopters were flown by Americans.

### Interviewer

So what was surprising about it?

### Tim Hancock

Well, the whole time the American people were told we weren't really doing any kind of operations in Cambodia. Naturally the North Vietnamese would use that very reason to use Cambodia for a travel route. They could travel easily down through Cambodia and then infiltrate into Vietnam with little or no resistance. And so it's unfortunate that we couldn't go into Cambodia full strength because we could've intercepted a lot of the supplies and stuff that were coming into Vietnam.

### Interviewer

Was that frustrating for you guys?

### Tim Hancock

Yeah, just because we couldn't stop it. The only time we could stop it, especially the Navy personnel up there on these rivers were as they were getting on the river and transporting those supplies further south or further east on the rivers down towards Saigon, Bung Tao, all the other places that are down river from where we were. We'd have a chance to catch those things then. And at that time the Vietnamese, it was their job because they had our boats.

### Interviewer

How are the Vietnamese doing in combat, in your opinion?

### Tim Hancock

They weren't really good at it. I would hear stories from some other guys that were on the base prior to me getting there when they actually turned over the boats to the Vietnamese. And they would teach them how to set ambushes and stuff like that. Generally one of the things we'd do is take the boats up river and then cut the motors and come down the river and try to beach them about making any noise just by following the river current down. And they'd try to teach the Vietnamese that and they could do that okay. But then once they get beached and everything's all nice and quiet, they'd turn on their radios, light up their cigarettes. I mean just completely blow their cover. So they weren't really too… I don't know, gung ho, as it were.

### Interviewer

You're one of eight guys on probably one of the most remote bases in all of Southeast Asia. The war is winding down. Do you know this?

### Tim Hancock

No, not particularly. I didn't really know it was winding down as far as what the top brass would think winding down was. Naturally, knowing that the boats and things were turned over to the Vietnamese you have to know something's going on, and we're trying to – the term was "Vietnamization."

### Interviewer

Explain to us what Vietnamization is.

### Tim Hancock

Basically getting the Vietnamese to run their war themselves using all of our assets.

### Interviewer

Say Vietnamization is...

### Tim Hancock

Well, Vietnamization is the program that was started, I presume, under Nixon to turn our assets over to the Vietnamese so they could run their own war. And at this point, we were just advisors there. In fact, the total name of the group that I worked for was Military Advisory Group Vietnam, which is also the acronym MAGV. And so you know by that very reasoning that we're winding down, but you don't really know at the time how long this is going to take or how long you're going to be there in an advisory capacity. I mean, we might have troops there for ten years, we don't know. We weren't told. But this is '71, the war ended, and all of us came home in '75.

### Interviewer

So was there anything going on that was frustrating you or making you angry or maybe you thought was going well? What were you thinking in that time?

### Tim Hancock

Well, being only 21 at the time, I was pretty apolitical. I was just there doing a job, there wasn't much frustration one way or the other. There were times when the Vietnamese might not be doing things the way we would've done them, but I mean you can't hold that against anybody; everybody does their own thing their own way. And so there wasn't much frustration that way. Pretty much I was just a butt filling a seat. They need somebody there to do a job – I was to guy to do it.

### Interviewer

Can you talk about your job?

### Tim Hancock

Basically the Naval operation center, it's a big fortified bunker. I mean, when I'm talking big I'm only talking maybe 30 feet by 40 feet. Double sandbags on all the walls. Metal roof –sandbagged metal roof. And in it we would have our communications center where we would have – my radios were on the south wall of this building. I had two radios. One open radio that anybody can hear, one secure radio that we had to change settings on it daily and not allowed to pass any kind of information over that we wouldn't want anybody else to hear, I mean over the regular radio; we could only pass it over the secure set. We had a burn bag sitting right next to the desk I was at.

### Interviewer

A burn bag? What's that?

### Tim Hancock

It was just like an orange mail bag like you might see now. It was an orange bag, a nylon bag. And everything we wrote – because we were passing traffic up and down this river – anything that our main support base wanted us to pass up the river. I was the first base up, it would come to me. After they get done, I would call the next base up and tell them to get on their secure set, and then I'd go over to my secure set and talk to them. We'd call them up initially on the open radio. And then I would pass that traffic on up to them, and they would so forth, pass it up the river. Once that's all done, we'd have to destroy these papers, and we put everything in the burn bag, and that got burned every day. And somebody would specifically watch it burn so everything in there was burnt to the point where nothing's recognizable.

### Interviewer

What were some of the messages?

### Tim Hancock

It's basically, at the time, like it might be intel. We might get intel saying there's a troop movement along the Cambodian border at a certain point that we want to engage. One specific time was just to the west of me on the Cambodian border, we had intel that was supposed to be – that's another thing, intel is sometimes good, sometimes not; this was supposed to be really good intel – but we had NVA troop movement over on the Cambodian border. And they wanted us to intercept it. And so it's those kinds of things that we would get. And naturally that's not for everybody's ears, and so we would take care of whatever we needed to do for that particular

instance and then burn the papers.

### Interviewer

Did you go on leave, or were you there the whole time?

### Tim Hancock

Not leave, per se, but I did go down to – once in a while we had a little small boat, little Boston Whaler, it had two 40-horse Johnsons on it, and it was a pretty rapid little boat – and we once in a while, maybe a couple of us would take a couple of M-16s and an M-79 or maybe a LAW, stick it in the boat and head on down the river. I mean, this is only a little – like a 12-foot boat, an aluminum type 12-foot boat. And we'd head down to Binh Loc, go down there, and maybe if we could catch a ride, get a ride from Binh Loc into Saigon. Get a haircut, have a drink, some dinner, maybe stay overnight at a hotel. And then back to Binh Loc, back up the river. That's the extent of our leave.

### Interviewer

Can you talk about the parrot's beak? Where you were and what the river's name was?

### Tim Hancock

I was specifically stationed on the Vam Co Dong River, which is one of the rivers that run adjacent to the Parrot's Beak. The Parrot's Beak of Cambodia drops into Vietnam northwest of Saigon, and if you look on any map you can kind of see this pointed part of Cambodia that drops into Vietnam. And that's what we called it, was the Parrot's Beak. Maybe it's been called that for years, I don't know. But it was called the Parrot's Beak when I was there, and that's what everybody calls it today. But there are two rivers that run on each side of this Parrot's Beak. The one that runs north is the Vam Co Dong River; the one that runs west, underneath the Parrot's Beak, is the Vam Co Tay River. At the confluence of those two rivers was Binh Loc. That was our support base. And then there was three advanced tactical support bases – ATSB's – along each one of those rivers. And that was our area of operation, basically.

### Interviewer

Talk about the anxiety of handing it over to the South Vietnamese.

### Tim Hancock

Back to the radios. As I was manning my radio, the Vietnamese over to my left on the east wall of the tactical operation center were manning their radios, and they were in contact with their river boats, which used to be our river boats. So they have people on PBR's out there on the river. This one particular afternoon I was on the radio,

and there was like three Vietnamese over on their radios – I don't know if all three of them are on radios or not, I didn't pay attention to what they did – but when they would start speaking like twice as fast and their voices would raise an octave, I knew something was going on. That would go on for just a few seconds before one of those guys would run over to me and say, "We need Seawolves." Naturally, during this Vietnamization process, nobody could call in air support except for an American. I mean that would be pretty foolish to have Vietnamese call air because the enemy could call it just as easy as anybody else, and so only Americans could call air. And so they'd come around over to me and say, "We need Seawolves, Seawolves." That's about the only thing they would say. And they knew I knew what they wanted. So at that time I would call down to Binh Loc, which there was a Seawolf detachment down there, and I would call down there and say we need air support on this particular part of the river. The Vietnamese would show me – we had a map on the wall as you might envision. You've seen World War II movies where there're big maps on walls and things – it's like that. We had a map on the wall, and they'd go over and show me on the wall where their boat was making contact with VC or NVA – generally VC in that area. And so I would direct the helicopters up to that area. Once they got within visual of that area, they'd take over and have no problem. Until that time, I was basically calling the shots of the firefight as far as – in fact, this one particular time, a heavy fire team, which is a bunch of Cobras from Cu Chi got the call, they heard me calling. And they were on station before the Seawolves. They also sent one of their own C&C ships – Commanding Control ships – and once he's on station, he tells me I've got it now, and at that point he controls all the fire. It turned out to be a pretty big firefight that went on for over an hour. One of the Cobras got shot up, and he had to fly back to Cu Chi, he was back in 20 minutes in a new bird shooting them up again.

### Interviewer

When did you become short in your tour, do you remember that? What was going on?

### Tim Hancock

I never did become short.

### Interviewer

Why is that?

### Tim Hancock

Because I got hurt, and so my short time days never did come. My short time day was in a matter of minutes. When I got hurt they flew me down to – I'm one of the few guys that got to call in my own dust-off by the way – so I called in my own dust-off, they come in and pick me up, they take me down to Saigon. The doctor down there looks at my knee, and it's all swollen up. And he puts me in a cast from my ankle to my hip, and he sends me back up to the

base. So I arrive back on base, and my CO says, "This ain't going to work. What happens if we get overrun? What happens if we really have to start fighting like hell for our own lives at this little old base? You're not going to be worth much here. How are you going to get into a bunker?" It's not like a foxhole type bunker, we had covered bunkers that we'd have to squat down and crawl into. He says this ain't going to work. So within a couple of days he had me on – with all my gear packed up – on a chopper flying me back out of there. Then I took a plane from there to Camp Zama, Japan. And I was in the hospital there while they were trying to figure out what to do with my knee at that point. So I was short overnight. I didn't have to look forward to my time and coming up when I could go home.

### Interviewer

Tell us about the Seawolves and what they were doing. Was there any difference in the intensity of this fighting as things went on that year?

### Tim Hancock

The frequency of contact was going down. As far as any particular contact or battle, especially the Seawolves -- greatest bunch of guys in the world -- they would fly all hours of the day in any weather. A lot of combat groups wouldn't do that. And these guys, they fight everyday like it was the last day. Or like it was the first day. And so they were great.

### Interviewer

What kind of unit were they?

### Tim Hancock

Seawolves are a Navy helicopter fire team. I have a friend that I still keep in contact with that was at Binh Loc the same time I was. I didn't know him then. I've since made contact with him since I've got out of the service in fact, but he lives in California. And they would get hand-me-down helicopters from the Army. Like these guys are flying B and C model Hueys, which are quite small compared to the Hueys that most people saw in combat there that they could carry quite a few troops. The B and C models were quite small. They'd had pilot, co-pilot and two door gunners, and the rest of the bird's full of ammunition, and they didn't have much room for anything else. When you call, they came.

### Interviewer

Talk about a helicopter going down and the blades were sabotaged.

**Tim Hancock**

I even have a picture of that in that book, the very helicopter that actually went down. It's kind of a long story.

**Interviewer**

Was it after you left?

**Tim Hancock**

No. I was the guy they checked into when they checked into my area. I was the last guy that these guys talked to before they died.

**Interviewer**

Sabotaged?

**Tim Hancock**

That came out years after. They know why it went down and what happened to the helicopter.

**Interviewer**

Tell us the story.

**Tim Hancock**

It's a good story.

**Interviewer**

Let's save that story for last. Right now describe what the PBR's did and what the guys did.

**Tim Hancock**

A PBR is an acronym for Patrol Boat River. It's a fiberglass boat, it's made by Chris Craft – which when I was a kid, that's what all the boats were around here, everybody had a Chris Craft. Now there's thousands of different manufacturers, but Chris Craft was a big boat manufacturer back then, and they got the contract from the Navy to build these boats. You've seen them like in "Apocalypse Now – " that's a PBR. That movie wasn't quite as real as they would like to be, but it was a pretty lame movie as far as PBR's go. But they have twin 50s in the bow and they're on a spindle basically where the bow gunner gets down behind him, and he can spin these twin 50s all the way around, probably about 200 degrees, 250 degrees probably. And they have a 50 on the back and 60s on the

side and four-man crew – have a boat captain, the gunner in the front and two gunners in the back. And, they would take whatever they think they would need, I mean they would carry LAWs, they carried M-79s, and some of them even would take mortars. But they could throw out some pretty good fire power.

### Interviewer

They did their own search and destroy on the river but a lot of inspections and checks?

### Tim Hancock

Right. Inspections and checks. What it was called is River Interdiction. They were, in daylight hours, they would patrol the river and inspect sandpans and things like that. There's plenty of movies about that, everybody's seen that too. They'll pull over a sandpan and look underneath mats and things like that to see if they're carrying any kind of weapons or explosives, things like that. That was their job.

### Interviewer

Would you clarify who the U.S. were fighting?

### Tim Hancock

Well, back during the war, that was probably the most publicized war ever on record. Every night they'd give you death tolls that would tell you how many people died in Vietnam today. They'd show scene after scene after scene. Cronkite was always talking about what was going on. Back then everybody knew what the NVA, VC, South Vietnamese troops, whatever, they knew what all those acronyms and what those people were. I can see it today where they, a whole new generation couple times over at this point. NVA are North Vietnamese Army. VC are Viet Cong. Those are the two enemies, the enemies that we're fighting. Actually the South Vietnamese forces, they're called RFPFs, which is Regional Forces Popular Forces. They are our allies; they are who we are there to help. So that's about the extent of who we're fighting and why. We didn't see very – in fact, I don't think I really saw any kind of NVA personnel while I was there. You'd prefer not to see VC also, but VC are the black pajama people. You hear about the guys fighting these guys in black pajamas. They would wear all black – black tops, black pants – real flimsy, little light clothing – and actually black. The Vietnamese night is as dark as the inside of a cow. You literally can't see your hand in front of your face unless it's a moonlit night. There's no moon, you can't see anything. It's pitch black. It's the blackest, darkest you've ever seen. Like going in a closet. And naturally they wear those black things so they can blend in. You didn't see them much. Any time any of the boats got fired upon they just fired back, they really don't see who you're shooting at.

### Interviewer

You were living in Oregon when you left?

### Tim Hancock

No. I left Oregon when I was two years old. I grew up in California, and then I went to high school here.

### Interviewer

What was it like going down these narrow rivers and all the foliage and dense. This would be one of the most terrifying pieces of the war is you don't ever know when you're going to be hit.

### Tim Hancock

Well, the rivers aren't as narrow as you might think. In my younger days I could throw a ball or a stone pretty far. There's no way I could throw it across one of these rivers. The Vam Co Dong – I didn't ever go up the Vam Co Tay – but the Vam Co Dong River in most places was probably 150 yards wide, and so you're a football field and a half across. And me being, at the time, I got there a year after they turned the boats over. Now we would use the boats still. I used to go to breakfast quite often with a Vietnamese boat crew to this little village, little VC village that you wouldn't want to be caught dead in at night – or you would be caught dead probably – but in the daytime it wasn't such a big deal. I'd ride up there with the boat crew, we'd park the boat, jump off and go in and have breakfast. But when you're traveling on the rivers, even us in the skimmer going up and down to Binh Loc or something, if and when you took fire – and you didn't feel like playing that game – you'd throttle it up, and you're out of the kill zone pretty quickly. There was only one guy on our base that got wounded in the time I was there. He was on a boat that got hit with a rocket and took some shrapnel in his arm, but he's the only guy that got wounded. I mean, some of the Vietnamese got wounded because they're on the river daily. But he was the only American that got wounded the whole time I was there.

### Interviewer

You were talking about Cronkite talking about the death toll. Were you hearing from Cronkite where you were?

### Tim Hancock

No. This is before the war.

### Interviewer

You were following news. Talk about that and if that had an impact on you, the media.

### Tim Hancock

Well, there wasn't a junior or senior in high school when I was a kid that wasn't following the war because, naturally, your number's going to be coming up. And they started the lottery when I was probably a senior in high school, maybe a year later. I can't remember. So you'd follow the war pretty closely to see what was going on and see how many people are getting killed and what you had to look forward to if you were the one that got notice in the mail saying congratulations, Uncle Sam needs you. And so if you weren't either working or on a date or something, come news time, you were watching to see what Cronkite had to say.

### Interviewer

And what did he have to say before you went in? Were you alarmed?

### Tim Hancock

No, because I was going into the Navy. No alarm whatsoever. Prior to that, I wasn't sure I was going to be able to get in the Navy. In fact, when I went to enlist, they said, "Navy's not taking anybody. With this war going on, we got all the people we want, people trying to avoid being drafted." And so they said, "You can take the test, and the Seabees might take you. They're always looking for people there that are good with their hands and things like that that can do construction. They're not near as inundated with people as the regular Navy is. So we'll give you the ASVAB test if you like, the entrance test, and if you do well on it, there's a possibility you'd get in the Seabees." And then I started worrying a little bit because I thought, “Well, if I don't get in the Navy or something, I'm going to be drafted.”

### Interviewer

Were you reading magazines like Life?

### Tim Hancock

No, I'd catch those as catch can, basically if I was at a doctor's office and saw one, I'd pick up and look at it. I didn't follow any of that kind of stuff really.

### Interviewer

So you were injured, and you came home. How did you come home?

### Tim Hancock

I came home from Japan in December of '71. I got released out of the Navy, it was either December 7th or December 8th of '71. And they put me on a commercial flight to San Francisco.

### Interviewer

And how was it there? Were you one of many who received the warning to get in your civilian clothes?

### Tim Hancock

No. It wasn't near as bad as it was like in the late '60s. I traveled in uniform most of the time. And also, being a Navy uniform, I don't think we, as Navy people, got so much flack from the civilians at that time. I think – this is my own opinion – but I think civilians look at Army people as the baby killers and all the other things that they got called. They look at Navy guys as floating around out on a ship, out in the water. So I was really never exposed to that. I mean, I didn't talk about service when I came back, about Vietnam or anything. I'd tell people I was in the Navy and that's about it because there was still a lot of ill feelings, and you just don't want to start that up. You might have to crack somebody's head.

### Interviewer

Did that upset you, or were you okay with not talking about it for a while?

### Tim Hancock

No, I was fine with it. I was fine with it. I really never had – this is the most talking I've ever done about it. I hardly never even talk to my kids or anything much about it. It was just kind of water under the bridge. I've embraced it more in my older years.

### Interviewer

Why are you guys talking now?

### Tim Hancock

I don't know. I think it's a pride thing. Especially with where our country's going now. I think you want to take some pride in what you've done for your country, as little or as much as it may have been or may not have been. But I think as you get older you also have to have something to hold on to. And now that Vietnam service is looked on favorably, as opposed to what it was when I came home, you don't mind embracing it now. I mean, there's quite a few days where I might be wearing my Navy hat or something like that or a river hat or whatever I might have on. And I was even buying some parts for my car at a dealership one day and one of the salesman – I was just walking out the door – and he came running over to me, got out of his chair and ran over, and thanked me for my service. That never happened when I was younger. I would've never even expected it to happen. But things have changed.

### Interviewer

We've talked to some who are very bitter. Some say it's too late. Do you understand that sentiment?

### Tim Hancock

I understand where they're coming from, sure. I mean, at the height of the war – I would say the height of the war was probably '68, and that also coincides with the height of animosity towards the war too – and I'd be willing to bet a dollar to a donut that these guys that you're talking about were '67, '68 soldiers. They're the ones that got harassed, spit on, everything else when they came back. I mean, I would hate to be in their shoes, I bet they have a terrible taste of the war in their mouth and of the military and even of the populace in general because they weren't appreciated. The work that they did, I mean, that's all it is is a job. And you don't have to like the war, but I think you got to appreciate the job. And people didn't do that.

### Interviewer

Anything you want to say to these guys?

### Tim Hancock

No, I'd feel out of place even telling them anything. They know what they went through, they know how they feel, and they have probably very good reason to feel like that. I might feel like that too if I'd gone through the very same thing, but I didn't. I mean, I didn't get a hand on the back, but I do now. And they do, too. It still might be a little too little too late for them, but it's there now. Even from those that are a lot younger than us that know very little about that war.

### Interviewer

Were you able to just acclimate, get back into your life?

### Tim Hancock

Yeah, I turned 22 three weeks after I got home. Yeah, I was able to acclimate back into civilian life pretty easily. I do remember one time – and there was only one time – I was driving down 39th South out west, heading towards Redwood Road – and the Jordan River crosses 39th South out there, probably about 14th, 15th West, something like that – and I was driving down, I was heading west, and I looked down the river with all the growth and stuff on the side, and it threw me back just for an instant, it kind of startled me. And then it went away. And I've looked at that a million times since then, and it never has done it again. But that very first time, I don't know what it was, but it was kind of startling, it was just surreal almost.

### Interviewer

You've got a lot of the photos of the Vietnamese. What was your relationship with the Vietnamese and the SVA?

### Tim Hancock

I didn't have anything to do with the South Vietnamese Army at all. The one picture in there is a lady in pink, she's a Cambodian. She was my hooch maid. She was a great lady. She didn't hardly understand anything I'd ever say, but she kept my place spotless. She cleaned, washed all my clothes. Her husband, like I said, our base bordered a Vietnamese army base, and I would very seldom venture down there except to go to the café, maybe, they had a kind of a little café that would – the Vietnamese make great French bread, that's one thing they did learn from the French – I'd go down there once a while to get a loaf of French bread, haul back to my little hooch to eat with some sautéed mushrooms or something. But that's the only interaction I had with them. But this hooch maid, I mean, guys would tell you about their hooch maid stealing everything they owned. She was as honest as the day is long. She found a five dollar bill in my – it was military script, but it's five dollars in my pocket of one my shirts – and while she was washing it she brought it back to me and gave it to me. Her husband used to get that amount of money – in fact, there's a picture or there's actually some money in that book, I brought back some both North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese money – and her husband used to get that equivalent monthly for his army duties. And, I mean, so that's a month's worth of pay, and she just handed it back to me. She was a good lady.

### Interviewer

And do you think about her when the war ended, you were back stateside and the fall of Saigon?

### Tim Hancock

You know, not so much being up where they were. I mean, the only way into my base was by boat or helicopter. There's no roads. That's the only way you could get there. And they were so isolated that I don't think they knew or cared who was in charge of anything. They had their daily routines. They'd go out and work in the fields. There's some pineapple fields down the river from us. We used to pull the boats over once in a while and send a couple of Vietnamese over into the pineapple field to grab some pineapples – and they had a unique way of peeling them, but it was great – so we had fresh pineapple. We'd throw a few percussion grenades off the side of the boat into the water and blow up some fish. The concussion would kill the fish. The Vietnamese would jump in, scoop up the fish, and they'd cook those up with some vegetables, and they'd have fish, sitting on the boat. So there were some good times there. But those people, as far up as they were and as disassociated as they were from anybody else, I didn't think that they would have hardly any problem. They'd just go back to working their fields and whatever, and they wouldn't care if it was North Vietnamese or Cambodians or whoever's in charge, it wouldn't make any difference to them.

### Interviewer

Have you been to The Wall?

### Tim Hancock

I've been to the traveling wall. They brought it to Ogden once, and I went to that.

### Interviewer

How did you feel, and what was going through your head?

### Tim Hancock

Probably the single most thing I felt was what a waste of so many good young men. The only thing I really don't like or didn't like now about that war was them not letting us win that war. Getting to where we can't do this, couldn't do that, the things you couldn't do. And when we had the personnel, we would win every battle, but we end up losing the war. And it was all just political. And that angers me more than anything, especially when I see The Wall. I mean, we today see the news daily, they talk about Afghanistan and Iraq, and I don't think they've lost a total in Afghanistan of what we lost in one day in Vietnam. I mean, I was just looking at some specs the other day – yesterday – some statistics about The Wall and how many people were lost from here and there. There's one little town that only had like 750 people, and they lost three kids. And in the specs, our worst day, it was in January of '68, January 31st, as I recall, and that number was bigger than all the people we've lost in Afghanistan.

### Interviewer

That was Tet wasn't it?

### Tim Hancock

Yeah, Tet was January of '68, but I don't know. And I'm not sure the date, but I remember seeing that date in the statistics I was reading. And that's the sad part is so many lives lost for no good reason. I mean, sure, we're still fighting for Mom, the American way and apple pie, but in the end it was to no avail. When we pulled out of there, that was a kind of a disappointment to everybody just because then we're saying what for? So that is a disappointment.

### Interviewer

So your job was low-risk. You weren't in harm's way necessarily. When you returned, were there people in your community or your neighborhood who served that you would share stories with?

### Tim Hancock

Well, not really. One of my best friends in the world – he lives down in Bountiful – me and him still hang around together, but we used to always hang around together. We went to some jobs together and worked for years side by side. He was in the Army, and he went to Vietnam. He was in the Central Highlands up around Pleiku and things like that, and he used to escort truck convoys. Even between us we don't really talk about it either. We use some of the colloquialisms, basically, of the time. And that's more in jest, something to get a chuckle out of the other guy more than anything. But that's all. We don't really talk any specifics.

### Interviewer

Anything else you want to share with us?

### Tim Hancock

No, not really. It was an interesting time. I mean, like I said, while I was on my ship they called for volunteers. I thought I had to go just because I'm definitely a Type A type of person, and I was thinking I was missing something. Even when I showed up at home for my 30 days leave – you get 30 days leave before you go over – I remember my mother was fit to be tied because she thinks her boy is nice and safe in the Navy. Finally got in after going through the test and everything else and didn't think he was going to get in, the whole deal. And then next thing she knows, I asked to go. And so she wasn't too happy about that. No, I probably would do it again. I'd probably do it all over again just because I don't like to think I've missed something.