

## T.R Shaw Oral History Audio

**[00:00:00] Dean Wetzel:** Video's. Good. And we'll start the video's. Good. Alright TR I want start by just saying thank you for your service. Thank you for sitting down with me today and talking about what you've done and everything like that. If you could start with just which branch of service you joined and then when you were in, and when you got out.

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah. My name is T. R. Shaw. I'm from Battle Creek. I grew up here. Went to school here. I went through Battle Creek Central and went on to Central Michigan University where I was a journalism student. I worked for our student paper, and I was heavily into journalism. And I got interested in the Navy. I'd been interested in the Navy in high school. And I through college I've kind of kept in touch with that. And then as I graduated with a degree in journalism in the early 80s the job market wasn't real good. And I said, well, I thought I would go into Navy public affairs. And so, I looked into it and talked to a recruiter, and I decided to become a go into the Navy as an officer with my college degree and pursue public affairs in the military. But little did I know that That was the smallest community in the Navy at the time. Very few people knew much about it. Post Vietnam public affairs was seen kind of as a propaganda area. And it was still a growing community, but we were right on the cusp of the Information Age. So, there was opportunities there. And what kind of also attracted me to it at the time, in the early 80s, is Ronald Reagan was building a 600 ship Navy. And so, the opportunities there were just massive for doing things and for doing, uh, getting involved and becoming part of a growing Navy and a growing military and really being part of something big. So, I pursued that. A little bit I know that I had to my recruiter, and I listened to, we really didn't know a whole lot about public affairs directed me to go into surface warfare. And so, I went through commissioning at Officer Cannon's school, got commissioned as an ensign. And then the plan was to go in do your time in surface warfare,

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get qualified, and go cross over afterwards because that's the way of time. He didn't know about direct commissions and the public affairs at the time. I wished I'd known about that. That's probably what I would have done. So, I kind of took the hard road of getting to public affairs going through. Normal line officer training and going to a ship and being a surface warfare officer. Which in the end was probably the best thing I could have done to be a public affairs officer because it gave me the background in the Navy and if you come in as a direct commission you have to learn everything about all the rates, but actually being there, experiencing it, and really be part of the action. And then becoming a public affairs officer is much more beneficial to being a public affairs officer. So, in the end, when I finally got into the public affairs community, I had a lot of background and a lot of experience in the fleet. Which was something that was a real advantage to being a public affairs officer. However, that road was a little convoluted. Said I was a journalism major, and I went to OCS and went through that, and I struggled through that. A lot of the people that were pursuing the Navy at the time were hard-charging people who had dreams of becoming ship commanders. A lot of them had engineering backgrounds technical backgrounds, and I guess I want to say I was journalism and more of a liberal arts background. So I was learning things like thermodynamics and navigation and all the intricacies of that was was a real challenge for me, so, but I struggled through, and I made it through OCS, and I went on through Surface Warfare School, struggled, but because of my class standing, which wasn't real high at OCS, on build up selection night, you get selected, you get picked, your ships by your class standing and Surface Warfare, all the ships we're put on a big board and the first head of the class goes in and picks their ship, and of course the top of the class took the battleships at that time, the Iowa, the New Jersey, Missouri, were all put back online, the Wisconsin, all four of those battleships were coming back, being rebuilt, so the top of the class went to the big battleships. Then it went on down to the combatants from there. It went to the destroyers, the

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cruisers, and then it went down to the auxiliaries and the service ships and all that, depending on your class. Well, my class standing was pretty low. I was literally the second from last in my class, but I did graduate. And but when I got down there and built Selection Night my choices were pretty limited. I literally had a choice between an aircraft carrier and a tugboat in Bahrain. That And in hindsight, you know, that tugboat might have been a, probably a better career thing, because I probably would have been part of an elite small crew, but I wanted the excitement of the aircraft carrier, and I figured there's going to be doing things, and be doing a lot more. So, as a young aspiring surface warfare officer, I went to the had orders to the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, my first ship, which is against the advice of people says, oh, you don't want to go to a carrier that's, you know, that's an aviation platform. They they don't, you know, it is really hard to get surface warfare there. And it was, I struggled with it. I got through it. Got beat up on watches had to fight for watches. Just to give you an idea of the scope of an aircraft carrier, it's a very exciting platform. Ike is a great ship. But it's a huge crew, you know, there's 5, 000 people on board. Half of that's air wing. It's all run by, said by aviators. The captain and everybody, all seasoned aviators who go into the community. Every department head was a captain. And so, we got really a high-ranking high-level ship. And actually, in my, in the wardroom itself Amongst us in the ship's company, we had 56 Lieutenant Commanders, and that was just a young lowly ensign coming on board there. So, it was a real struggle to do that. On top of that, you had not only did you have the surface ensigns, you had frequently, since this was a nuclear carrier, you had young nuclear ensigns that came out of nuclear school to work in the engineering department. So, we had this just a whole big mix of officers of all kinds. You had aviators, you had nuclear engineers, you had the surface people you had intelligence people, you had all kinds. So, it was quite a community, which was probably, to really get an education on the Navy, it was a great place to be and an exciting place to be, but it was really a hard place to be a junior officer.

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Especially a brand new minted what they call a butter bar going into in the Navy. So, I got there, struggled through it, and then went on a couple of Mediterranean cruises. One of the exciting things we did on one of our first cruises is we went over and took part in the 40th anniversary of D-Day in 1984. And being that Ike was one of the namesake ships we had the Ike; the Montgomery and a couple other ships were namesake ships that were named after people from that era. And we got to go over, we had a port call in Portsmouth, England in early June, and then on June 6th we crossed the English Channel and anchored off of Normandy. And we got to go ashore on D Day and got to tour Normandy and do that. And our commanding officer took part in the ceremony. And we also hosted at the time President Reagan came aboard. Well, he was supposed to come aboard, but he didn't. The timing didn't work out. But we did have a reception set up for the president to visit the ship. But he just, the timing didn't make it. So, we missed an opportunity to have President Reagan. ship and it was a really exciting experience and something that we did. That was something I'll always treasure. It was just a neat thing to be able to walk the beach at Normandy on D Day to do that. That was one of the highlights of my career. But stayed with Ike a little bit later. But going back when I first arrived in Ike, just a part of the Tour before that, my first tour was probably, I got on there and took a long flight from Norfolk over to the Mediterranean. At the time, Ike was stationed off the coast of Normandy on an area called Bagel Station. And we, the ship had been there almost two and a half months on station, flying surveillance over Lebanon. And we were when I got there, I was there for the last 30 days of that. Long deployment where we were flying surveillance, doing intelligence, and all that. And then we finally after, the ship had been on station for just over 96 days. And they finally got a break to go to Naples. So, we left the station and went to Naples. And I stood my very first import quarter deck watch at anchor. And during that first watch that I had there were rumors floating around about something happened back in Lebanon. So, during that first watch, the

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XO came down and ordered a recall of the ship. So, we had to initiate a recall of my first watch. And we all got together and got everybody on board and within four hours we got the ships back. We got most of the crew back and turned the ship around. We went for the quarter deck watch up to the bridge. The XO actually got the ship underway, and we left Naples Harbor flank speed going South and the commander of the ship was in Rome at the time when the recall came down and the helicopter picked him up and we were leaving the Naples Harbor, he arrived on the ship. Took back over command. So, the XO got the ship underway. We went through the Straits of Messina on flank speed. This is the time what we've happened is that the Marines were attacked in Lebanon and the embassy was blown up and we, uh, we're ready to go. **[00:10:00]** We'd heard that there'd been mass casualties of Marines. There's been a huge attack, and we were ready to fight. And I do remember. What was interesting about that is standing a bridge watch as we were heading back toward Lebanon across the Mediterranean. And we had F 14s on the deck, fully loaded, ready to go. And it was called Alert 5. And it was meant that the pilots were sitting in the plane on a warm Mediterranean night. The canopy's open. One of the pilots looked down. One of the pilots was reading a book. The other one was in the back snoozing. They were ready to go, and we were ready to attack. So, we heard it's looking bad. It happened to the Marines. And during that transit back, we found out that what, *222 (220 Marines, 18 sailors, and three US soldiers, a total of 241 US Military members killed correction made after oral history)* Marines were blown up when the embassy was attacked by a truck bomb. And that was probably the, about the only time I really experienced war nerves. We were ready to fight. We were ready to go, but problem is it was a truck bomb and who do you attack? Who do you deploy? So, we went back to Bagel Station, we cruised around, and we had an endless cycle of probably two weeks of loading and unloading planes that never once launched a strike. And it was really kind of frustrating because everybody wanted to do something, but

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what can we do? And it was just that was one of the first really major volleys in the war on terrorism. And how do you fight, how does it, how do you how does an aircraft carrier bring bring power to a something as simple as a truck bomb. And so, we're doing tribal warfare with high technology. And how do you do that? And so, we had to kind of, kind of throw us back on the curve and and step back. Well, that cruised in, and we came back to Norfolk. And then the next so then we came back, then we came back. And that was when we went to Normandy and did Lebanon. Did that all to the 40th anniversary. So, so I had two major tours in on Ike over there, going to the Atlantic, taking part in D Day and Lebanon. So, it was an exciting tour for two years on there. And then what happened is that Ike decided to go, well, it didn't decide to go, but it was, it went in for a complex overhaul. So, by the time we got back, it had been through a lot. It had been under arduous service for several years and it was time to get The ship refitted, rebuilt, so Ike was going into the shipyard for probably more than a year and it was called COH, or Complex Overhaul, and at that time, I still hadn't gotten qualified and so I had a mix in, I could either stay with the ship and work through the shipyard and be part of the ship and do that, or I had an opportunity to, it's called cross deck and go to another ship, so I'd get underway again. And continue my Qualls. So, I got my detailer sent me in, and I went to an amphibious ship that was transferred over. It was called the USS Charleston, which was an amphibious assault ship. It was called an amphibious cargo ship, it was called. And they called it the Cadillac of the Amphibs. It had 70-ton booms on it, it had big holes on it, it carries all the gear for amphibious landing. Trucks, tanks, it has boats, it has it's quite the amphibious delivery ship. It also carried a contingent of Marines but amphibious warfare at the time was a dying really with our mission with today's technology was an antiquated mission doing an amphibious landing at some place that didn't have any facilities or probably not going to happen. So, we, just continuing our mission we did, loaded, and unloaded the ship a few times, went to the Mediterranean took part in amphibious

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support group, did that, and came back. It was um, it was a tough career. We had some real personnel problems on it. We had a little bit different pace, a little bit different level of professionalism than the carrier was, and it was It wasn't really a good, it wasn't a very good time. It was not something I really enjoyed as much as I did in the carrier. And by that time, I was ready, I had my four years in, I was ready to transfer, stay, do something else, or go back to civilian life. And at that point I decided, well, I want a reserve seminar and learn about the reserves. So, I came back left active duty and stayed in my reserve status. For And I came back, actually, to Battle Creek, and I took, came to the Battle Creek Reserve Center. I was a young lieutenant now, and I I'm coming home to my hometown reserve center. I said, hey, I'm probably going to have some seniority there. This is probably going to be, you know, a good place to be, because I could probably have, you know, really do something there as a reservist and all that. I stepped on the drill deck here in Battle Creek on the first day. And I came to find out that at that time it was one of the best reserve centers in the Midwest, but it also has pretty elite units. We had a NATO unit, we had three medical units, we had a Panama unit, and all of them were primarily staff units, and most staff units are senior enlisted and senior officers. So, my first drill day in Battle Creek, I was a young lieutenant, and I looked across the drill deck and I just see this sea of gold. I mean, it's like captains, commanders, high ranking chiefs and all this stuff. And I'm going, oh my God, I'm junior again. And it was like so much for that. But I found out that the reserve was really top heavy. And the fact that a lot of the senior people who have left active duty want to finish their careers. Yeah, but it was really a pretty exciting place to be. So, I came in my reserve duty. And my first job I had, I was with the, since I came from an amphib, I had some amphibious experience. I became the executive officer of Amphibious Construction Battalion 2. A FIB CB unit. And what that unit does, it's a unit made up of primarily, there's two officers in that unit. And we had a whole bunch of construction men, iron workers, bosun mates gunners

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mates. And our job was tomobilized; we supported a beachhead on an amphibious landing. And we had people that built piers, we had people that, you know, did metalwork, we had bulldozer drivers, utility men so basically our job was to go and support the beach at an amphibious landing. So, what we did is that we About once a quarter we went off to Little Creek, which is south of Norfolk, out there and did exercises there on the beach, did things, we built we built elevated piers, we built other things, we did beach defense exercises, it was a fun unit but it was, it felt a lot like I was in the Army, we camped out, we wore fatigues, and we did that, and you know, you slept in the sand and did that. I wanted to sleep in the dirt. I said I would have joined the army, but you know. But anyways, but it was a fun thing. I ended up becoming the commander of that unit. I was CO of the 5th CB unit for a couple of years and did that. And then the reserve, you have to move around a lot, so you can't call it, it's called homesteading. You know, people get into one thing, and they do that for the rest of their career. And they discourage that, so I went on. It was an opportunity I took on. I was the I had an opportunity to be the commanding officer of the destroyer squadron staff unit, which is about six people. We our job was to go support a destroyer squadron in Norfolk staff unit. That was kind of fun doing that. And then the best thing I did was I got into the NATO unit. It was called, it was the most elite unit at our reserve center. It was Supreme Allied Command Atlantic. In NATO at the time NATO, when NATO was developed after World War II there was two major commands in NATO. Commander in Chief SACEUR, which was a general that commanded all the forces in Europe, and then the SACLANT, which was the commander, it was a Navy command that commanded all the seagoing and the ship units in the Atlantic. So, SACLAN was charged with keeping the sea lanes open that was the bridge to Europe. So, the original intent of SACLAN was to protect the shipping routes from the United States to Europe and to keep the shipping lanes open. **[00:20:00]** And they were headquartered in Norfolk, so they became part of SACLAN and that was just a great thing.



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We, the unit frequently went to Brussels, Belgium. Unfortunately, I never really had an opportunity to get to Belgium. I was still too junior, but the opportunity just wasn't there to do that, what I was doing. However, I did do a lot of operations in Norfolk at the headquarters. Did that out there and took part in that. And then that's when I finally got into public affairs in NATO. I started poking around, and I talked to the NATO public affairs people, and I found people that gave me, you know, okay, I got to get over into the public affairs area now. And so finally they helped me transfer into public affairs, so when I became a public affairs officer I went into the public affairs community, so I then went to Great Lakes down there, and I worked in a public affairs unit in Great Lakes, and it's called the Navy Information Bureau of Chicago. So, I was involved with that, and it was a media training unit. It was a great deal. We went all around the fleet. We trained admirals, generals, high level staff people in media relations. We just had a blast doing that. And then finally I was doing what I wanted to do in the first place in the Navy. And it took about 10 or 12 years to get there. But then I finally ended up following my calling in public affairs. And I was ended up becoming executive officer of the Navy. Unit in Great Lakes that went on and did media training. It was just an awesome job. I loved doing it. And then after that, I, there was an opening again back in NATO for the public affairs officer in NATO. So, I came back to the unit in Battle Creek, and I became the public affairs officer of that unit back at Battle Creek. And that was just a great job being a part of that, telling the story of NATO, telling the story of the Navy. The one thing I did get to do during that time as being a public affairs officer there is I did an exercise in Stavanger, Norway, and I led a media team that did a weeklong event training. At the time, it was really interesting because we were an American public affairs team going to Norway to train Canadian officers going to Afghanistan. You can't get more NATO than that. So, we were there for a week training basically the equivalent of the Chief of Navy Information in Canada which at that time was a commander and his people doing their public

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affairs work. And we're getting ready for this exercise, but the public affairs officers that we trained in Norway. We're part of what was called ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force, that were going to Afghanistan. This Canadian team was going to be there doing all the public affairs work for after it was actually Afghanistan's first free election, following the operations we had in Afghanistan. And so, it was kind of cool that we took part in training the very first people that, went there to do the public affairs work for in Afghanistan for now the new provincial government. So that was an exciting trip, so, I got to do some pretty interesting things and take in a lot of really great events as a public affairs officer. And then I came back and worked with NATO and all that here in Battle Creek. And I also was a collateral public affairs officer at the Navy Reserve Center, so I worked in my own community doing public affairs work and doing aiding work here in the community. Trying to raise the awareness of Battle Creek where we live here. It is a huge military town. We have Fort Custer, which was one of the largest training bases in WWI and World II. We have an Army National Guard here. We have an Air National Guard, a huge Air National Guard here. We have a great Marine Corps contingent here. We have a Federal Center. And we also have the Navy Reserve here, but not many people know there's a Navy here. So, my challenge here was convinced my own hometown that there's Navy in their own hometown which was a continual challenge. So that was a lot of fun doing that. So, I got involved in a lot of military affairs here in my own community doing that, and really enjoyed my time as a public affairs officer and doing the work here. And that's it. Public Affairs it's an exciting time to come in. The information age was just taking off, and it has grown by leaps and bounds. You know, a lot of times when you think of Navy Public Affairs, they think, well, it's part of recruiting, or you know that, or just marketing, you know. The Navy, no, we're doing a lot more than marketing. We're telling the Navy's story. We're telling people what, they need to know in a free society, we can't, you know, we have to be transparent in what we do, you know, with

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our security, but still, we have to be transparent with the American people and all that. So, public affairs, and what's interesting is the last few spokesmen for, uh, the White House, right now Admiral Kirby.

Admiral Kirby was an ad, was a public affairs ad on the Desert Storm over in Iraq for him, Admiral Braithwaite was the, became the Chief of the, or the Secretary of the Navy. So, public affairs officers are really grown in stature. They really don't, came out of the shadows of being these little forgotten, you know, people that were considered propagandists back, you know, 30, 40 years ago. And it's become really a great profession. That's kind of my story. I've been involved a lot here. Presently, I can tell you a little bit about the Commanders Club of Michigan. When I came back to Michigan and I was serving in the reserve here, I found out about an organization that's based in Lansing called the Commanders Club of Michigan. **[00:27:46]** It was a Navy organization, and I looked into it, and somebody brought me to it. And the Commanders Club of Michigan was is the, I want to say it, predecessor, or the successor of the Michigan Naval Militia. If you, from our history, if you go back to the time that we were forming as a state states had their militias the state militia was formed to protect the state. Michigan had both a land militia and a naval militia, and the naval militia was basically anybody that owned a boat. So, in the time they owned that, anybody connected with maritime or any Navy veterans, that became part of the Michigan Militia back in the 120, 150 years ago when the state was forming. So, we had a bonafide in our pioneer days here, we had a Navy Militia, we had a Land Militia. And as things went on and developed, we became a state, and eventually, the land militia became incorporated in what's called the National Guard. So, all the army and the land militia, in fact the army militia was what went to Washington to protect the capital in the Civil War. But anyway, the land militia, around the turn of the century, rolled into the National Guard. But the Navy militia became

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federalized and became part of the Navy Reserve. So, we went from this kind of a ragtag Navy Militia became part of the Navy Reserve, so it fell into the Navy Reserve. The Navy became federalized, so we see here we have a National Guard here, which is part of the state. The Navy here has always been federal, so it's part of the Navy Reserve is federal, so there's kind of a distinction between the two but that's the Commander's Club, But then in the 1960s, the Governor of Michigan Admiral, or Governor Swainson, who was a World War II veteran and actually recovered in Battle Creek at Percy Jones Army Hospital, which is now the Federal Center became Governor of Michigan, and he was one day looking through the, and we still had in the Michigan Constitution authorization for Navy Militia, which didn't exist anymore. What would we do about this? Do we take it off the books or do we do something with it? So, what they did is they put together a bill and they rolled what was then the Navy Militia into an honorary organization and it was called the Commanders Club of Michigan which was a maritime organization for support of maritime interests in Michigan under the auspices of the Adjutant General. So, I'm now a member of the Commanders Club of Michigan as a volunteer and Technically the Navy Militia, but we don't do anything militia work. We do more advocacy; we do more for the maritime services in Michigan. We do honorary things and it's a great organization doing some good things. And so, we are the successor of the Michigan Naval Militia, doing doing the work of promoting maritime interests in Michigan. And when I say maritime interests in Michigan Michigan is a fantastic state. A lot of people don't realize how much of a maritime state Michigan is. And when they think of Michigan, we've had Air Force bases here. We have Army Armories all over the state. We have Air National Guard facilities we've had. But we also have on four of the five Great Lakes. And we have a huge role in Great Lakes shipping here as a maritime state. We have a huge Coast Guard presence. People don't realize that Michigan is a Coast Guard state. Michigan has almost half of all the Coast Guard facilities in the Great Lakes. We also have

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both of the Coast Guard air stations in Detroit and Traverse City in the Great Lakes. So, we are a huge military state. Navy still plays a part of it. There's really no active-duty military, or active-duty Navy in Michigan anymore. We do have several reserve centers. The Reserve Center in Battle Creek recently grew about ten years ago. They rolled in the Reserve Center from Lansing and Grand Rapids to Battle Creek because we have the Fort Custer base here and so, Battle Creek still remains a huge military town Navy is still part of it, and I've been proud to be part of it, and just doing a lot of things to help promote the Navy and maritime interest in That's kind of my story and thank you for your time. And I think those who have served before me, thank you.

**Dean Wetzel:** Yeah, we thank you, TR. I have just a couple of follow up questions if you don't mind. There was what is flank speed? I remember you talked about that a little bit. What exactly is it?

**T.R Shaw:** Flank speed is the top speed of the ship. Flank speed would be usually up to about 30 knots. So, you know, at full speed, flank speed, flank would be the fastest speed the ship could go. Okay. So, you know, let's say full speed ahead or flank speed, flank would be the fastest you could get the ship to go. If it would be on full speed, it's usually.

**Dean Wetzel:** That was an aircraft carrier going 30 knots. That was hauling.

**T.R Shaw:** Well, it is. And it shakes a little bit, too. If you go that fast, that's a lot of weight going through the water. 96, 000 tons.

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**Dean Wetzel:** I would hate to have been seen the wake behind that at 30 knots. That was probably a small tsunami. Yeah, oh it was amazing. Now were you the first person in your family to join? Did your, excuse me, did your mom, dad, aunts, uncles?

**T.R Shaw:** My family, I've had some, I had two uncles that were in World War II. Both of them served in the Army. As enlisted. My father served in the International Guard. Briefly. All that, and I'm the first actual what I'm known as a Navy Supply Officer. For a few years I did that, but I'm, I was the only one that went on and got the highest-ranking member of my family to serve. But I've met about six of us that have served in the military in some personal capacity. Awesome.

**Dean Wetzel:** So, were they, then, I'm guessing, and correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm guessing they were supportive then of your service, correct?

**T.R Shaw:** Oh, yeah. I was like you know, people, I thought, it's a good thing. Even during during the Vietnam era when I was posted to Vietnam. During that time, they were still, you know, pro military and it was a thing to do. And it was interesting to talk about Vietnam. I came in post-Vietnam, but the people I served with, especially some of the senior people were pretty, you know, haggard, I would say, Vietnam veterans. The commanding officer of my ship was an F-4 pilot in Vietnam, highly decorated. You know, by accident he flew A-4s in Vietnam, F-4s. And I stood a watch one night with a warrant officer who was a boat coxswain who drove River boat on the Mekong River under fire. He was probably, I don't know, maybe in his 50s, but he looked like he was about 80. I mean, it was just and a lot of these people, I mean, I served with so many senior people that had Vietnam stories, and it was like the, kind of the, I still do, my career was beginning, the Vietnam career was ending, and there were some really interesting stories of people. And yeah, he was talking about

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getting shot at on the river, up there, and a boat up and down. You know, every run was, you know, perilous, as they did, you know.

**Dean Wetzel:** Well, I'm glad you bring that up, because it's one of the things that I like to try to explain to people, right? It is We have this hyper fixation, take Vietnam for example, 65, which we know it was actually 1960 we started to send advisors, but combatant troops went 65, so most people see 65 to 73. That didn't start at 65 and it didn't end in 73, and even if you didn't serve during Vietnam, you were still impacted by the Vietnam service because your entire leadership, or most of them, had been there. So, their experiences there, right. Passing on wisdom came from that experience that they had.

TR Shaw: That's right.

**Dean Wetzel:** You know, and there's that legacy effect that one particular war can, and then like you said, which is interesting as well you brought up the War on Terror in the 1980s. Right. And I don't think that's on, at least no one that I know of radar. You know, everyone seems to think War on Terror, 2001. And a lot of people don't even realize that wasn't even the first attack on the Twin Towers, right?

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah, no, it wasn't. In fact, the first couple attacks were in Africa. And actually, this it really didn't wake up until Lebanon. And the Beirut bombing, I think that was what woke everybody up. That's the 222 Marines. It was interesting, we had a Marine detachment on our ship. And the XO, or Marine Dot, was a Real Gunho Marine. And he was just crawling to get on, to go ashore. He wanted to go ashore. He wanted to go ashore. You want to be there, do that, and they wouldn't let him go. You know, he was just clawing at his skin

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while trying to get ashore. He would have swam if he had to. I mean, it was it was interesting that he

**Dean Wetzel:** We're different, right? Marines are just different. I mean, listening to you talk about this story, I'm getting goosebumps over here, sitting like, yeah, I want to go ashore. I want, 30 years, 40 years later, I want to go get him.

**T.R Shaw:** I got another good story, too. My reserve career so I was with 5th Seabee. And we went to Little Creek there and at the time I went to Little Creek there was a an LDO lieutenant, a limited duty officer named Mike Thornton. And Mike Thornton was a Vietnam veteran. He was a Medal of Honor recipient. And at the time he was the only Medal of Honor recipient on active duty. And his he was just a great guy, but he was the Bravo Company commander of Little Creek, which was, ran the boats there and all that. It was his twilight tour. I mean, he retired from that there after 30 some years in the Navy and through Vietnam and all that. But what was interesting about him is that I got to know him and it's kind of interesting to know a Medal of Honor recipient, but he was a Navy SEAL. And he got it as a SEAL. And his story is just fascinating. And if you ever get a chance to go to the Navy Seal Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida he's all over that because he's one of the time, I think there might be a few more now, but he had one of only one of five seals that have a Medal of Honor and two of the Navy Seals. There's a statue outside of the museum. It's called Swim Buddies. And what it is, it's himself and, his captain, or his commander lieutenant that he served with they were on a mission in somewhere in Vietnam. They and he they went ashore with a group of Vietnamese I call them, they're equivalent of SEALs, and they led a team into, they were looking for POWs, and anyways, they got dropped off in a raft. And, you know, on as shore. And they didn't land in the right place, and they went, and they came



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under fire and I very under heavy fire. And the captain Tommy, uh, can't remember his name. Anyways his lieutenant was was hit and shot and they retreated. And Thornton took the rest of the crew back to the boat they got and sent him back to sea. And he says, I'm going back. And the boat went. Went back to their ship out at sea, and Thornton went back in to find him, and he found him still alive, under fire, and literally carried him out of the jungle into the beach while the boat was gone. So, he played his life jacket, put it on him, and he swam him two and a half miles out to sea while treating him and getting him out, and he really saved his life and brought him back under fire. And what was interesting is that the statue is a statue of him carrying him, but both of them are Medal of Honor recipients. And the other, his commander actually had, before that, I don't know if I got the whole story straight but was doing another mission where he got wounded and evacuated while trying to recover POWs and went to Bethesda, and it was in Bethesda. That was during the time between their incident and him getting the Medal of Honor. And the day of his he got his Medal of Honor at that time, it was from President, I think it was from President Nixon. Thornton his skipper, the guy he rescued who hadn't gotten his Medal of Honor, yet they would not have come to the ceremony. And he was still recovering in the hospital, and he said, "I'm not going to have that. And so, he snuck into the hospital, grabbed him out of the bed, and carried him to the ceremony. Put him down at the ceremony, he says. So, he rescued him twice. So that was kind of like legendary. In fact, he was literally stolen from the hospital and taken to his medal of honor ceremony. I mean, there's stories like that. But anyways, the statue of the boatman, eventually he got his medal of honor. So, there's two Medal of Honor winners, or recipients in the statue outside the Navy Seal Museum. One is Thornton Caring, Tommy, I can't remember, Tommy Norris, I think was his name. Yeah, Tommy Norris. And that's the big statue outside, and both of them are recognized, along with other Navy Seals in the Seal Museums. But he was just a great guy, he was, and you see him, I still see him, cause

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he's every year. He I think he lives in Indiana, but he is one of the I wanna say recognized people at the Indianapolis 500 when they do the opening ceremonies there, they recognize the military, and they do all that. And he is one of like three or four Medal of Honor recipients that they recognize that are, so every year I see it with the TV at the Indy 500, just kind of neat. But it just, it's an amazing story. He was probably the most interesting person I met at the SEAL community. So, if you ever get a, anybody ever gets a chance the Navy Seal Museum in Fort Pierce, Florida, they a must see. I mean, it's just a, it's just a make you proud to be an American to go through that place. The thing they have,

**Dean Wetzel:** I'll add it to my bucket list.

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah. One of the things they've got in there is well, they've got the the lifeboat from the Merc, Alabama. It still has the bullet holes in it. Okay. And they've got Rescue Captain Phillip that's in there, and they have all their, shows all their toys and everything. They do have a captured ISIS flag on display there, and if you read about it, it explains what the flag is and how they captured it, and then at the bottom it says that this flag is flown upside down to show disrespect, which is interesting.

**Dean Wetzel:** You mentioned OCS, which is Officer Candidate School. Obviously, I was enlisted, so maybe, could you possibly walk us through what goes on at OCS?

**[00:40:00] T.R Shaw:** OCS is it's kind of a bridge between civilian and military. It's where you go, you get your commission. It's a 16-week program. And, what's interesting about OCS is it's, it was, okay, you had to, they try to make you, break you from civilian to military. But the problem, I want to say problem, the thing with OCS is that the class is a mixture of people from the fleet, you have some really hot running, you know, enlisted people that got the

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opportunity to go through OCS and get commissioned. And everyone in there is a college graduate, so we're all, you know, I want to say smart people, so it's not like you're, you know, Gunny screaming and hollering at us like you do. We do that. So, the senior class, there's two classes, there's a junior class and a senior class. And the senior class acts as the, you want to say, the drill instructor. And they do, you know, they don't go in there and basic puncture stuff, you know, fallout. You know, they do a little screaming and hollering at you and all that. It's only for a week, they're like a hell week, basically. And then after that it's more of a school. And you go through that, and you have a routine class. It's classroom work after that, and then you go through the junior, and then you become a senior, and then at eight weeks, and then after that they, if you've passed everything, you know, you cover in 16 weeks, you cover about 30 courses. So, it's an intense academic program, which was, this was some physical, some, you know, the first part you gotta do a little of that, you know, screen and authoring, but, for the most part, OCS was a very It's very academic and very intense. They had to study. They had to, you know, use your flashlight at night, you know, and study late in the night if you had to. You're not good with that. And conditions. You had to really learn how to budget your time.

**Dean Wetzel:** Did you guys have any funny moments happen? Like, I think of like Again, I know it's an enlisted side, so I think of like some of the times the DI was screaming at us or having someone recruit do something really just dumb and off the wall. Cause they could, did they ever mess with you guys like that at all?

**T.R Shaw:** Oh yeah. well, the first week they you know, they ever follow your room, and you sit on, they, they drill you with questions and things, so, and you have to, you know, shuttle back to 'em and all that. Well, toward the end of it, you know, earlier at the end, they

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start asking really stupid questions. This guy gets in your face and asks who the captain of the love boat was, and things like that, you know. And it's like, Sir, Captain Meryl Stewart, Sir. And it was like, and you're all trying not to laugh. And as soon as you start laughing, they start chewing you out, and you're trying to hold back a laugh. And so, they're just messing with you at this point, and you end up having fun after that. And that was just, I mean, this event was really You know, questions about Star Trek and things like that. I started doing that. People were like trying not to laugh and trying not tell you,

**Dean Wetzel:** test that bearing a little bit.

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah. Yeah. It was, it got to be fun to be like that.

**Dean Wetzel:** Do you did any of your instructors have a lasting impact on you? Were, you were remember 'em today at all?

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah, I had one. You know, you talk about well throughout the Navy when I found out and I didn't realize. You have like super enlisted who are given commissions. They're called limited duty officers or LDO and it's called limited duty Officer. It means they get a commission in their field, like a a navigator or a navigator like that, but an officer. But he can only work in the navigation field. And I had one LDO who was there who. He was really a good, I mean, he was good with navigation. I was struggling with that, so he took me aside. One day during lunch, he said, hey, come on over to my office. So, he took me to his office and explained, you know, some of these things like maneuvering board and how you do this and that. He really took me under his wing and did that. And it really gave me a lot of respect for these LDOs that, you know, because these are super enlisted that, you know, became officers and they love to pick on real officers, you know, and all that. And like they

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tell you, they say, Yeah, he says well, I got my commission the hard way. I earned it. You know, come on, you don't say something like that. You know, so we So we referred him as LDO and that loud, dumb, and obnoxious. But, you know, but anyways, but some of them were really good. And it was really There was one LDO who was, he was a Lieutenant Commander, and he was the Ordnance Officer on Eisenhower. And he was, and he had done a hard, he'd been all through Vietnam and he got all the way up through E9. And then he got commissioned. And when he commissioned, he was, he had enough time, they made him an O2 when he was commissioned. So, he was very proud of the fact, especially with that He says, yep, I've been every rank of the Navy, but Ensign. I mean, you know. So, it was like, you know. They were great guys though. I mean, they were just some of them were really good at what they did. You know, they really, I mean, you know, they picked you on your little bit and all that. I mean, they're pretty proud of it. They're called Mustangs in the Navy. They're collectively called Mustangs. They were LDOs and they were, you know, picked because they were so good at what they did. They gave them a commission, but they were limited in what they could do. Kind of like Warrant Officer is another path for like, let's say super enlisted that become warrant officers that, you know, limited in what they do.

**Dean Wetzel:** Yeah, I think for the Marine Corps it was like E five and if you were a standout marine, you could then, if you chose, could go officer, you could go the Mustang route and go through OCS and then become an officer. Or you could go through a warrant route than that. I remember those, what might have been for you the hardest part of adjusting to military life?

**T.R Shaw:** The hardest part of the hardest part I had, well, when we went to sea, I mean, we had the routines that you did, but it was just being away from everything. And for me, what,

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because I was at sea during the early 80s, and what we were seeing at the time, you know, the early 80s, things were booming you know, the roaring 80s, you know, all this, and there was times that I just felt I was missing out on what was going on in the rest of the world. And, you know, sometimes I questioned what I was doing, you know, here. Am I really, you know, is this really what I should be doing? And, you know, you see people, you know, people were making money in the markets. People were doing, you know, things were, you know, cell phones being developed. I mean, just, I mean, just things were exploding in the 80s, and technology, you know, and there's just times in a way you felt like you were missing out on life sometimes, by being out there, being isolated. And that was, to me, that was a hard adjustment. I guess you could call it being homesick in a lot of ways, because there was things that, God, what am I going to be doing? I mean, you know, I could hear about things, and, you know, you know, we should be taking part in doing something like this, or I should be doing this, or that, and I'm here, you know, I'm doing this. And that was hard sometimes, you realize when you're doing something, you're special. So that was the hardest part of, you know, just separating, you know, let's say the real world from what we were doing, you know, and that was for me that was hard, the isolation. Of course, in the 80s we still didn't have the internet, you know, let's see, we didn't have, we didn't have a whole lot of communication, we didn't have a whole lot of, you know, I mean literally we got our news still over the teletype. You go down to the Ops center and you can read the boards and read through the news, you know. But they had a notebook, or they just like, you know, news stories, you know, this is what's going on in the world, and like that was our connection, you know, and that was pre internet.

**Dean Wetzel:** Were you still worried about the Russians in the 80s?

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[00:50:00] **T.R Shaw:** Yeah, the Russians, yeah, that was a big part of the Russian threat and we, that was one of the courses of studies we had was Russian threat, and I had to learn all about the Russian fleet, and that, that was, and they were, but at the time, though, it was still, you know, They weren't real, I mean, you saw their ships and you're out there at sea, they're old, rusty, and you always wondered, you know, are these really, is this really the threat that, you know, we think it is? We always had a Russian with us, we had a Tattletale, and we actually got to the point where we plodded on our formations, because we were, you know, there's always a crib back out there, and we know it's been there, we know what it is. You know, it's like a in fact, they even get to the point where, you know, probably the skipper gets briefed on their crew, you know, who their skipper is, all this stuff. I'm sure it's but it was they played cat and mouse games with us, you know. I remember one time, we were on the bridge, and what's interesting, in a carrier, when you turn the, they have to launch into the wind when they launch the aircraft. And, of course, they know that, and so they would position themselves to know that they can just listen to the radio and know when we're going to launch airplanes. So, when we turn in the wind, that ship is right dead ahead of us. And he put up his breakdown lights. And like that. And then we know he's just screwing with us. So, we're up there and the captain's and I was conning the ship at the time we turned. And the captain and I said *RUSSIAN SHIP* has red over red. We need to come right. He says, hold your course. And the captain, I says, he's at 2000 yards. I says, you know, we need to maneuver. Hold your course, damn it. And we're all starting to sweat. The captain finally looks up, grabs the binoculars, see smoke on the stack and takes off as we got closer. Damn Russians. We're all just like, oh. It was like, you know, that's the kind of stuff they played with us, you know. It was, you know, just things like that.

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**Dean Wetzel:** And he was the one that was in Vietnam, too. Yeah. So, he already had that salt lord actual attitude anyways. He's already seen it, so he's like, you want to go to war with us, let's go.

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah. We're all just like sweat bullets up there.

**Dean Wetzel:** You guys never seen combat. You're going, you're charging a Russian warship.

**T.R Shaw:** We're going, we're gonna climb to this guy. You know? And it's like, he's got red over red and we're gonna be, you know, we're obligated to move. You know, he called there bluff. It was like, he just knew, I mean, it was like, you know.

**Dean Wetzel:** He's been there before. So, this is nothing new to him, huh? Yeah. cause I see I was a little different. I went across the Pacific and stuff like that. But, yeah, that was just, it would be interesting not to have a threat like the Russians out there like that. Always just watching them.

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah, and it was just and then of course they had aircraft too. You had the Bears that were flying all over. The big, looks like a B-52 with props and all that. And the skipper, he had a fit. It was they went out and they chased them. And they'd go up in the fly by at range and take pictures and do all that. So, they chased this bear, you know, down that turn and went back. And then our planes came back to deck. And about an hour later, bear came back. And the captain picks up the binoculars and looks up and calls them up. He said, there's a bear out here on deck. And it came back, and nobody caught it. And oh, he was hot. And it



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was just one of those things that, you know, the captains thought to come back. You know, after we'd broken off engagement. And it went on. It went on, you know, just things like that were just like, you know, the Russians and it was all basically cat and mouse games. It wasn't really, you know, nothing, you know.

**Dean Wetzel:** How did you feel in 1989 then when the Soviet Union collapsed? Because here during your first, you know, during your active time in the Navy, your enemy was the Russians. I mean, you were off doing things in Beirut. I'm sure you had Desert Storm maybe popping off eventually, but your enemy was Russian.

**T.R Shaw:** It wasn't, I don't think it was unexpected. Because you can just look at their fleet, and look at the condition of their craft, the, I mean, it just is, and everything we've read about, I mean, all the intelligence that they were struggling with everything, and didn't think that they could sustain what they, the threat that could be sustained, and I just think it was like it was a good thing it broke up, and it was like when they, you know, and they tore down the Berlin Wall, it was a great day. There was a documentary where they were talking about it, you know, how Regan, you know, stood there, and uttered those four, he said that a forward hammer will tear down these walls, you know, that was like a, one of the most powerful, you know, ways he said it.

**Dean Wetzel:** Did it feel like a victory for you?

**T.R Shaw:** A little bit of that, that, you know, we were, you know, we were, Russia today is it's dangerous and I don't know what, you know, you've got to, Putin is, I haven't quite figured him out, I'm not sure why he's destroying Ukraine for what, like why, you know, and also I'm just disappointed that we didn't support Ukraine earlier on.

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**Dean Wetzel:** He's definitely got similarities to other Russian leaders that aren't exactly good in history, Stalin. You know, So, well, let's speed forward a little bit. So, you get into the 90s and early 2000s, and now you, I'm guessing you, you correct me if I'm wrong, but your world has to have ended in 2001, September 11th. I mean, you went from, you know, active duty in the Navy, fighting the Russians, the wall comes down, you feel like you're almost at peace in the 90s. I mean, there's small Wars, but no one's really a threat to us. And then. Your homeland is now attacked.

**T.R Shaw:** Well, 9/11 at the time was and it was in fact that happened on the drill weekend here. So, the drill weekend we actually moved out of the base. Actually, we moved to the hotel downtown. We had just gotten out of the hotel. We didn't go to the center. We didn't know what was up. And when I was under attack, or the nation was under attack, or whatever. And then hard part about that was is that what bothered me the most about that is that our response to it. I mean we of course we deployed, you know, we, all of us in the reserve expected to be called up, you know, we got to fight this, we're going to be called up. And people wanted to be called up. I mean, there were people that were begging to go, I want to go fight, we've got to get this. And it was just, and that was the hardest part was that we'll just wait, and we'll see what we're trying to figure out. And then what they did at the time, which bothered me, is they handpicked people to go. And they recalled certain people for certain things, instead of taking units and groups. And after that the people that didn't get selected to; to go left says you don't need me in war, you don't need me in peace. You know, and that was what that did to morale in some ways. We were better off if we just recalled the units and sent them even if not everybody was needed. You know, I think the psyche safety point, that was just a bad move when they did that. That was just one of the things that came out of that. So,

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**Dean Wetzel:** After your service ends, which was 2006, right, you said?

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah, 2005, yeah.

**Dean Wetzel:** 2005, sorry about that. How was it adjusting back to civilian life?

**T.R Shaw:** Well, it wasn't hard because I was reserved, so it was more of a

**Dean Wetzel:** You kind of already had your toes wet.

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah, I was already, I came back, when I came off active duty, I went back to college. Okay. I got my, I ran a funeral home, I'm the funeral director, and we had our family funeral home, so I had a job, I was busy, and that was just something I did, it was almost like a dual career, and I, when I retired, I was relieved, and now I can just concentrate on doing my job, and not have to worry about next weekend, and this and that, what I gotta do, so it wasn't hard at all, I mean, it was like, and I would say I was glad it was over, but I would have stayed longer if I could, I mean, But I got the point. Well, you've done your time. It's time to go. That's why I got involved in things like the Legion and Commander's Club. I was with the Navy League for a while. So, you know.

**Dean Wetzel:** I wear my hat when I can, you know. I wear mine all the time, too. Yes. I do it more for like, really for the Vietnam veterans, for gentlemen like yourself. It's like a salute to your guys service. I can be proud and show that I was in the service because you guys had to weather, you know, especially Vietnam veterans had to weather a horrible return.

**T.R Shaw:** Well part of it too, you know, I was the funeral director for 30 years too. And I buried a lot of veterans. And I did a lot. That was always, you know, always, whenever we

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had a veteran funeral I was very, meticulous on how we did it, and made sure we did it right, and that was, you know, a lot of people understood that weren't veterans that didn't do that, just treat it like everybody else, but as a unit priest, when we had a veteran funeral, it was somewhat special, and it's something I worked hard to do well, and that was kind of continued service, I want to say, for doing that, and I was very confident, you know, made sure all the details were correct, and doing things right, and you know, Yeah, and even, it was interesting, the interview we had, it was interesting because there were people that, you know, even though they were veterans, they didn't want anything to, they didn't want anything to do with it, you know, and they didn't know how to, and there were some that brought in their discharge papers, you had families that had no idea of what their loved one did, and I'm looking at this stuff because I know what this is , and I'm looking at these people, you know what, where he was and what he did, and they had no idea. Because, you know, they came, like, especially World War II, they came home, they threw them in a drawer and went on, and did that, and it was like, pretty spectacular things that they did, all this, the family never knew, they never talked about it, and that was always sad, because I saw so many people, I even had, you know, some of my, like, my grandparents friends, who I never even knew they served, and I remember, like, until when they died, and I looked at their papers, Oh my God, I wish I'd known this, you know, and it was like, and they were like, ah, you know, did my job. I went to war and, you know, they came home and there were so many of those that we lost that just could have had tremendous stories and tremendous, you know.

**Dean Wetzel:** It's one of the reasons why I do this. Right. I you know, a lot of guys and girls will ask me, well, I didn't do nothing special. And I was like, you don't. It might not seem special to you, but you got to think of your descendants. You got to think of the next generation coming along. It could seem special. I did the research for Gunny Chang, which

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was my grandma or my wife's grandfather. They began, he died in 95. My, my wife didn't know nothing of him, loved her grandfather, but didn't know nothing of his service and come to find out the guy had decorations presidential citations. From Korea and Vietnam, no Purple Heart but a Combat Action Ribbon. So, meaning that he's been in combat in both Korea and Vietnam and didn't get shot. Which is just, I want to say he's probably less than 10 percent of people can say that. Yeah. You know. I know. I would love to hear what he had to say. What was his story like? What was that experience? And I'm so grateful for, you know, the Veteran History Project today that allows us to sit down and talk about these things. To hear from yours as an officer. I mean, we could have served on the exact same ship as an enlisted and officer and our stories would be night and day different.

You know?

**T.R Shaw:** And you talked with Sam Gray. Yep. He was an aviator too. Yep. So, he was on the ship. Yep. Yep. Too. So

**Dean Wetzel:** yeah, he talks about similar times of the bears coming out. That's why I wanted to bring up the Russians, you know. And what was your take? Okay, he saw it from his side where he was on the, you know, working on the maintenance of ships and what the, what everyone was doing. What was the officers like up in the tower? What were you doing? Commanders getting pissed. Cause the bears coming back and you guys didn't scare away, you know, gotta go back out there, you know?

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah, it's just amazing things that happened.

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**Dean Wetzel:** Looking back at it now, you go, wow, that was a, it was a crazy experience. I, you know, I listened to your, you walked 40 years after it happened on probably some of the, what I would say military wise for America is some of our holiest ground, D Day. And you were on the beach on the day it happened. That's I what was going through your head at that point?

**[01:05:00] T.R Shaw:** Yeah, it was like, wow. And that was like, it was just sobering because, you know, you think about what happened. It was interesting. It was a ship to educate, you know. We had all these young kids on the ship. They showed the longest day. And it was like, you know, for like days in advance. So, everybody had to see that movie. So, they kind of knew what it was all about. But my feel when I walked on the beach was like, you think about the pictures, and you see what happened there. And I had a feeling that if I just dug into the sand, I'd find blood. It was like, I just didn't want to do that, you know. It was like, I said, man, you know, the amount of bloodshed on this beach we had, the amount of people that died here, just, and as you felt, it was like you felt the ghosts of that when you walked there, like this was holy ground, you know. It was just, you know, you go pointing to Hawk up there where they scaled it, and just look over, oh my, you know, why the heck did they do that, you know. I mean, it just, it was just sobering.

**Dean Wetzel:** It's a little different than what Hollywood painted. It's not such a severe cliff from my understanding. Again, I've never personally been there. But again, it's still enough whereas a machine gunner like myself, I think of like the German defenders. And I would have been like, these guys must have been thinking we were insane. Cause it's pretty wide open, flat beach. It's not real rocky. There's not much to hide behind. And you're just coming on shore with all these people.

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**T.R Shaw:** Yeah. Yeah, I haven't had that. You know, you know, swimming to get there, you know, and all their stuff, you know. So, it didn't quite, you know, land all the way, you know. It stepped off and sunk, you know.

**Dean Wetzel:** And then, like, on the back of your brain, or back of your mind, you gotta still be thinking, like, we're in the Cold War still. This is still 1980s. We're still fighting Russia, so. Really, did World War II really end? Because the Cold War almost immediately started right afterwards. So did the World War II end? Are we still in World War II? Is this war still being fought right now? You know, that's always going on too.

**T.R Shaw:** Somebody once kind of, joked about, you know, Japan really rose, you know, everything was made in Japan, you know, and Japan has become, you know, an industrial nation and all that. Somebody said, you know, that event on the Missouri was a didn't end the war. That was a ceasefire, you know, because they ended up winning 20 years later with, you know, building everything and, you know, commerce and all that. So

**Dean Wetzel:** the benefit of not having to pay for a DOD budget, you know, when the American government comes along and says, Japan, you guys can't have no. Military will be your military. Well, I can put all that money over here.

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah. Say what we did though, like the Japanese Americans.

**Dean Wetzel:** I don't want, I want to get it clear, it's not the Holocaust, but outside of gas chambers and killing them, we did similar things that the Germans were doing to their enemies. They were locking them up, they were putting them in camps, putting them away from others, everybody else. They didn't want them around anything. We were using them for

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labor. Well, after you've been through your service, multiple different types of warfare, you know, different enemies, different experiences in that. Has your feelings changed about war? I know you talked a little bit about Ukraine today, a little bit about Israel. As you see all this going on, what do you feel? What do you think is....

**T.R Shaw:** Well, I came from the era when Reagan was building, you know, peace through strength. It was a belt forward. And I see today things that bother me, maybe as I've gotten older, we have a lot of, like, commanding officers being relieved. Or whatever causes, usually it's something social, or something, and I'm wondering, I'm a little leery of that. It's hard for me to tell kids ya join the military, because I'm not sure of the leadership right now. And I think, and I, that's, that bothers me a little bit, that and one of the things I've heard is that people are reluctant to take command right now, in this environment, because it's so close. You know, so volatile that, you know, you're always guilty until proven innocent. If you can, prove yourself innocent on things. And I know people have been relieved. I know people have been, you know, for whatever and something that they couldn't control, something they couldn't do, you know. There's just an environment now where it's really right to send, you know, kids to do this stuff if we don't have the full backing. And when I see that, you know, the veterans aren't being taken care of, you know, and being taken properly that's problematic. And I said, you know, and I said so that's a hard time right now. I think military's great. You know, you should serve, you should do that, but just have a hard time pushing anybody into that right now, you know, doing that. It's an option. But when I see the leadership and I see, you know, decisions they make, like Afghanistan and I don't wanna get political, but we need a strong leader who can, you know, say enough is enough, and that was, what happened in Afghanistan was just deplorable. It was just, and we armed the Taliban. I mean, what the heck, and how much, I mean, if you look at the figures of the stuff



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we left behind, what we did, it was just, it was so wrong. And I'm just like, if that's the leadership today, then it would be hesitant to send my son or daughter. Do that, you know, but....

**Dean Wetzel:** again, I've been enlisted and I would hate, I hate to hear it, but we are as strong as our officers really, you know, if you, if your officer can't read a map to get you on target to get you to where you need to be, it doesn't matter how far you are, how great or how accurate you are with your gun platforms or whatever your job is, if you can't get to where you need to do your job, then that's the job of the officer, you know? So, if you're chain of command, if your leadership is young and. New, essentially, yeah, you're destined to season them and it's going to come through the failures. I mean, that was some of the issues that we had in Vietnam, right? We had a very young officer corps, very little combat experience, because the last combat was almost 20 years before that. And then, what did we end up with? Well, we ended up with a bloodshed. And then towards the end of Vietnam, that officer corps got older, got seasoned, and we started to see less casualties, but by that point, Vietnam was lost.

**T.R Shaw:** Well, during the 80s, at least you had the perspective of, like, Colin Powell, who, when they made decisions, they understood, you know, Vietnam and what went along there. So, there was more, you know, today, we've gotten away from all that, you know. It's tough. I mean, you still, we gotta have a strong military. We gotta have, you know, we do that. And the world has changed so much. I mean today, even just today with the thing with Microsoft, I mean how vulnerable we are. I mean, and I think we're relying so much on technology now. And that scares me, you know, the amount of technology.

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**Dean Wetzel:** When you put all your eggs in one basket, you are asking for trouble to happen. It's happened every, I mean, any time that you look throughout history. When does a country start to have issues? When all of its eggs are pretty much in one area. You know, it puts itself out there for vulnerability.

**T.R Shaw:** That's the old, Advantage of during the space program when we were investing money into trying to develop a pen that would write in space, you know, because of gravity and all that. And Russians were using pencils. I mean, you know, it's like, so what now? We kind of got to go back to basics sometimes, you know. It just kind of, it just scares me that they were so reliant on this stuff. You know, cyber war, ex cyber warfare now. It's just, that's the hole new frontier. And I'm not sure I understand all of it, but boy, I tell you, you know, you turn off our internet and you're just, you know.

**Dean Wetzel:** It'd be insane to see what this world would do if today, Bluetooth, Wi Fi, gone. Did not exist no more, you know. I know you talked a little bit about the Commander's Club and you're wearing their shirt there, but do you attend reunions at all?

**T.R Shaw:** Yeah, I did a couple years ago. We had an Eisenhower award room reunion, and it was just a great time. Do not know if we will do it again. The commanding officer of the ship, in fact Admiral Klexton, who was the ship at the time, Captain Klexton, he ended up becoming a three-star admiral. He retired from three star, so he was there. He's up in It's upper 80s now and then some of these other guys went on, we had a couple people that went on to be admirals and yeah, so it was quite a, at the time, I mean we had some superstars, both from the air wing we had people that came with the, you know, four star admirals, a couple people from our ship one became the commander in chief of the Pacific I mean it was just an amazing era that those people went on and did a great things. But the reunion was

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really, you know, hashed out some old stories. It was just it was we had a pretty close officer group on the, in the in the wardrobe there. It was, especially those younger ones. We had some good times, so that was good.

**Dean Wetzel:** Awesome. One of my last questions for you T. R. You were talking right before we started. You're technically an O4. But you served as an O5, a commander essentially. Could you kind of explain that a little bit?

**T.R Shaw:** In reserve you could be placed in a billet zone, you know, pay grade above if you can. I did, I just, you know, I always thought that I mean, my command of one of the units, that was an O5 job, and I did, my public affairs job was an O5 job. So, I actually did a couple of O5 jobs, so I just call myself a commander because I did the job, you know, whether or not they selected me, and that's whole other story, the whole selection process is flawed in some ways because they're not the best people, but

Dean Wetzel: you're not telling me?

T.R Shaw: I'm just saying that it's just pushing the reserve and if the person who I found out later that served on my selection board wasn't even involved in the community or did anything, it was just sad. It was just, we don't put our best.

**[01:10:00] Dean Wetzel:** I think that whole process of promotion that they have in the military, where they want you to become an NCO on the enlisted side, you have to go in front of these panels of basically your peers or your higher enlisted who may or may not have a grievance against you. And they get to decide whether or not you get your raise or not. You warrant that raise. That's why I got out with a good cookie as an E3.

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**T.R Shaw:** Yeah. One of them part of me was like, I can't tell you how many times my guys, you know, they took the advancement exam and four or five times it's called P& A, pass, not advanced. So, you keep taking this test, but then you don't get advanced, and then P& As give up and they leave, and that was part of the morale thing. And, you know, if you're gonna, you know, it's the way to, you know, keep people is to advance them, you know, just to

**Dean Wetzel:** Don't let them take the test unless there's a spot for them to get when they pass their exam. It's just that, you, it's the reward process, not, oh, you passed, great job, thank you, but you don't get the job.

**T.R Shaw:** Yep. You know, that's interesting, even the friend of mine who's the commander's club now, who's a captain retired as a captain, but he was selected for Admiral. But for whatever reason, there was an investigation in his command about something, but it came time to retire, and his wife said, you retire, and he said, so he retired as a captain, and then about a month later, he got notice he'd been cleared, but he'd already submitted his retirement papers, so he was selected for admiral, but retired as a captain, you know, things. And so, had he taken it, he would have been out of the unit for another eight years, you know. But, you know, things like that, you know. It's an illustrious career to go that far, and that happens too, you know. You gotta make that decision. Do I stay or do I go? Do I wait? You know, just things like that all the time. Like me, I got to the point, I was a lieutenant at the time, and I'd done my time, and I thought, I can go back to the reserve and this, and just stop beating my head against the wall here. I was in a bad command, and you know, hindsight is always 20/20, but you know, and I pursued public affairs at that time a little harder, I had a different career, but it all worked out, you know, so.

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**Dean Wetzel:** Well TR as we conclude your oral history here, I do want to turn the microphone, so to speak, over to you. And let you add anything if we happen to have missed anything. I know we've covered a lot over the last hour and a half here. You got a lot to add, Yeah, a lot of work to ahead of me. But yeah, if there's anything else you would like to add maybe a, maybe you'd want to put out there as like a for future generations who will hear this, maybe a quick little message for them.

**T.R Shaw:** Future generations hang in there. You know, we were part of 1 percent that serves now you know, need to give it time. Well, it was like less than 20 percent during World War Two, less than 9 percent Vietnam. We're down to 1 percent of the population that serves. So, if you do serve, you are in an elite group today. And and there's a lot of benefits to it. I think it's gotten better. I think we've learned. We've got to take care of our troops; we've got to have quality of life has definitely improved places I've seen. You know, it was a huge sacrifice. You know, it is a sacrifice being away from family and friends. That will always be the case but it's still, it's a great profession and a great, even if it's not a profession, it's a great thing to do for a few years. And it gives you a leg up on everything else in the world.

**Dean Wetzel:** Thank you for that T. R. and I want to thank you for your service. Thank you for sitting down with me today. This has been very informative. I've learned a lot listening to you. I've learned a lot from all my veterans. It's a very great process. So, I just want to thank you for all of that.