



U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of **GORDON M. GILLIES**

Conducted by **WILLIAM H. THIESEN**, Interviewer

1:15 p.m., May 19, 2010

Bath, Maine

INTERVIEWER: This is William Thiesen. I am the Atlantic Area Historian for the U.S. Coast Guard. I'm home-based out of Portsmouth, Virginia. Today is May the 19th, Wednesday, 2010, and we're here in Bath, Maine, at the home of Gordon M. Gillies.

Sir, if you could just give us your name, spell your name, and we'll get started with the interview. Oh, by the way, it is about 1:15 in the afternoon.

MR. GILLIES: My name is Gordon Gillies. That's G-i-l-l-i-e-s.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Sir, if you could tell us maybe a little bit about how you got in the service, and if you have any other family members that were in the military, how they felt about your going into the Coast Guard, that sort of thing.

MR. GILLIES: Well, I grew up in Bath, where we are now, and the draft lottery business was going on while I was in college. And at the time, Bath had a one-person draft board, and Mrs. Bean was absolutely determined that I was going to serve my country. And I was quite willing to because all my brothers had. I have three older brothers.

And so, in correspondence with Mrs. Bean, I energetically tried to find alternative ways of serving, including signing up for the Peace Corps, and that involved even having all my wisdom teeth pulled so that I wouldn't need dental work for 2 years.

And I wrote to her, told her that I was going into the Peace Corps, and she replied and she said, "I think that's wonderful, and I'll defer you until the day you return."

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: I'm perfectly willing to serve my country, but, you know, there's got to be a limit on how many years here.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MR. GILLIES: So I had all sorts of advice, you know, eating lots of peas before your physical, which was ridiculous.

I finally had a conversation with my oldest brother, who had been in the Army. He said, "You know, if you step out of line for this little project called the military, it just means that somebody behind you is going to take your place." And when he told me that -- and I remember where we were. I remember how he said it. That made me say to myself, this is ridiculous.

So I took what I thought was the prudent route, and I went to the recruiting station in Miami. I took the exam to go to OCS [Officer Candidate School] in the Coast Guard, and I think I passed the exam by one point, and I thought -- I didn't know anything about the military. I didn't know anything about the Coast Guard, I thought they'd put me in a lighthouse somewhere and I'd be fine.

INTERVIEWER: So you had gone to school already in order to get to OCS?

MR. GILLIES: I was a college graduate at that time, yes.

So they sent me to OCS, and I think from the day I arrived I started to get into it. The Coast Guard just impressed me so much.

First of all, my classmates were all extremely well educated because it was highly competitive; at that point, you can imagine. And so I was working with people who were very impressive, and just as I did in college, I had to work my beans off to keep up. And I thought this is going to be pretty challenging, intellectually as well as all the other ways.

So my first duty station was Captain of the Port Office in Baltimore. I asked to be on a buoy tender, and I was not selected.

I was the law enforcement intelligence officer in Baltimore, and my responsibilities included gathering evidence for pollution cases. I supervised mobile boarding teams that went out and boarded recreational boaters on the weekends. You know, this is in Chesapeake Bay, which is the recreational boating capital of the world, and on summer weekends, I would go on a 65-foot tug and serve as the committee boat for regattas, so it was a pretty good job.

INTERVIEWER: So it was all right. You liked it.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, I loved it.

INTERVIEWER: So it was kind of unexpected, I guess.

MR. GILLIES: Because I went to my commanding officer, who was -- this was his last job in the Coast Guard, and I think it was the first desk job he had, and he understood what motivated me. I went to him and said, "Captain Hutchins, I don't want to spend any time at my desk unless I have to," and he said, "Fine. There are boats down there. Get in them." And so I spent the bulk of my time running around in 40-foot utility boats or the 65-foot tug.

INTERVIEWER: Had you had much boating experience prior to service?

MR. GILLIES: Well, I grew up within sight of the river, and I had a boat when I was a kid, but nothing like a 65-foot tug. But I was so into it. I would get there at 5:00 in the morning and I would leave at 9:00 at night, and I was single and I had no girlfriends or anything, I was married to the Coast Guard. And that may have brought my name to a top of the list of maybe this guy is wacky enough to go to Vietnam. So I remember having a meeting with the executive officer [XO], and he broached the subject, and I said, "No, I spent a lot of energy trying to avoid Vietnam, and I'm not sure I can turn all that around." And he said, "Well, you'd be serving in the Coast Guard, you'd be on an 82-footer," and he said, "Think of all the opportunities you'd have, for instance, to help people. You're going to be the only ones running into the little canals and stuff, undoubtedly action is going to happen on the shore, and you might be able to help people and pull them out and get them to medical attention and so on," and I thought, "Oh, you know, all right, all right."

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Was it a volunteer situation at that point or did they assign people to --

MR. GILLIES: I don't think I know.

INTERVIEWER: They just kind of said you'd be a good candidate --

MR. GILLIES: I was recruited.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: And that was a very effective technique with me. If they had said you had to go, I would have been pissed and probably would have, you know, not been terribly cooperative, but because they asked me if I would consider going, it worked with me.

And I was the only junior officer I think in Vietnam who had no prior sea duty. I arrived as an ensign, and I was also the only ensign that had ever gone, I think. Almost all the other officers that I ever knew on the 82-footers had had prior sea experience.

INTERVIEWER: That's unusual.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. And I think it was because of my -- I spent a lot of time in boats, and I thought, well, somebody must have said "he can."

INTERVIEWER: They must have been watching you and seeing what you --

MR. GILLIES: Maybe. I compliment myself by saying that. I have no idea. It might have been they were desperate for somebody. I have no idea, but I worked it to my advantage anyway, my ego.

So I finished my 18 months in Baltimore and --

INTERVIEWER: Any big cases or anything that you recall, highlights, mentor figures, anything in those 18 months that bears commenting on?

MR. GILLIES: Sure. I remember lots of them, but I'll give you just a couple.

Because it was a search and rescue operation in addition to the law enforcement and the intelligence and the dangerous cargo and all the other things that went out of the Captain of the Port's Office, it was a rescue coordination center, and every fourth or fifth night the officers in the group had to serve duty in the watch room, as officer of the day, coordinating the rescues that came up during your watch, 24 hours. And I liked that, but I really preferred to be on the boats, so on the days when I was not on that duty, I would go down and hang around the docks, and if a boat was called, I'd go, and the first -- maybe not the first, but one of the very early jobs that I went on was a call had come in that a person had either fallen or been thrown off the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, and so a 40-footer was dispatched, and I jumped aboard, and we steamed down to the bridge, which took a while to get there, it was a quite a way from Baltimore, and we get to the bridge and the drill is -- and I'd never done this before -- we were going to first cover the surface to see if we could find anything unlikely, because it had been so long, and the second would be to start dragging in coordination with the police, you know, with a grappling hook and all, I mean, it was just ridiculous. We get there and we find the body within 2 minutes.

INTERVIEWER: Just floating on the surface.

MR. GILLIES: The body was floating -- it not only was floating, it had been tied to a weight, which was sitting on the bottom, but the idiot who killed this person and threw them off the bridge -- I assumed killed -- threw him off the bridge, tied like a 12-foot rope to his ankle and threw him in like 8 feet of water, so he basically just

moored the guy, and I thought if this is what it's going to be like working in Chesapeake Bay. It's going to be pretty interesting.

INTERVIEWER: That was one of the first cases, big cases?

MR. GILLIES: One of the very first times I was in a Coast Guard boat doing work. It was fun. You know, we broke ice in the winter.

INTERVIEWER: Ice-breaking?

MR. GILLIES: The variety really interested me. There were lots of missions out of a Captain of the Port Office. So I was very entertained.

And we did a lot of oil pollution, and water pollution was just starting to pick up then, and we'd go around the perimeter of the harbor looking for discharges and spills and looking at examining pipes.

The Refuse Act of 1899 prohibits the discharge of any refuse into the waters of navigable waters in the United States, and I remember going ashore at the pier of W.R. Grace Company, this huge chemical company, multi, multi-national company.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

MR. GILLIES: This ding-dong ensign in the Coast Guard with a couple of seamen apprentices with me, and we had collected a colorful liquid coming out of their discharge pipe. We had no idea what it was. We asked to speak to the plant manager and were brought into this board room, and I'm sure -- I have no idea what they thought of us, and the case was prosecuted. I have no idea what happened to it, but the evidence was used. So it was a very interesting job.

And I have to tell you, in retrospect, the fact that I was wounded and the fact that I'm retired from the Coast Guard, I think of it all the time, what it would have been like if I had not been wounded. It could have been a career because I just loved it, loved every part of it.

So, in preparation for service in Vietnam, we had to go to the West Coast.

INTERVIEWER: What was the date that you left for the West Coast? And it was Baltimore. You had been in Baltimore the entire time.

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Up until then.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. Went right from OCS to Baltimore. I was there 6 months, so it was May or June, I would guess.

INTERVIEWER: Wow! You were on the West Coast for 6 months.

MR. GILLIES: No, no, no. I was in Vietnam for 6 months.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I understand.

MR. GILLIES: So I'm guessing -- I was boated in December, so I must have left Baltimore in April or the spring of that year, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MR. GILLIES: Spring of '68.

And there was some training that we had to undergo on the West Coast. We went to Camp Pendleton for weapons training, learning how to fire a shotgun and a machine gun and how to take apart, put together an M16 and that sort of stuff. We were in Coronado --

INTERVIEWER: You had SERE training there?

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: How did that go, and how did you feel about that?

MR. GILLIES: That was as real as I would have programmed it. The only disappointing part of it was that they put us in a bus to take us to this SERE. It was a national forest in California -- I forget the name of it -- where the training was going to take place, and there were maybe -- I don't remember. It was a busload of Coast Guardsmen.

I was assigned to a group of, let's say, 10 of us because I was the senior person and they were all enlisted, and if there were 10 of us, 8 of them were cooks. And I was trying to think how I could turn this into some advantage. And it was a survival school, so one of the things we were charged with doing was capturing rabbits to eat. Well, so many survival groups had been through there before. There wasn't a rabbit within 500 miles of that place. We evaded for a while, long enough so that the siren sounded and we had to turn ourselves in.

INTERVIEWER: That's pretty good, isn't it?

MR. GILLIES: I think. I have no idea. I have no basis if that was -- it didn't seem like they captured very many, but anyway, we finally had to find a road and surrender.

They took us to the prison of war camp, which I thought looked pretty realistic. I'm a very claustrophobic person, and when they put me in the black box, I thought I was going to -- but they told us in the training before we went, that worked like a charm. They told about the guy who had been in solitary confinement and actually constructed a house nail by nail and board by board during the time that he was in solitary confinement.

INTERVIEWER: In his mind.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

I can't remember what I did, but I somehow bolted my mind to some concept and got through it. But I do remember I was interrogated. The officers were separated from the enlisted men, as I remember, and I remember being interrogated, and I remember the interrogator was just not doing a very good job. He kept referring to, "Now, you know Mary is a prostitute. She's back there in Maine just working as a prostitute," and he kept using this term "Mary," and I thought, who in the hell is he talking about?

And so having the record and my sister's name is Mary, but I've never called her "Mary: in her whole life. Her name is Sissy in my mind. So it took me a while to figure out he was talking about my sister, and by then I realized he obviously doesn't know what he's talking about, and that lightened it a little bit.

I was struck, hit, by one of the interrogators, and he perforated my eardrum. I almost didn't have to go because when I got back to Oakland, I guess it was, we had to go through a final physical, and the doctor thought about it, as to whether I should go, the long flight I think was what was troubling him, and he said, "You're fine," he said, "You'll be all right," and so I went.

INTERVIEWER: At that point, were you pretty much resigned to the fact you were going or did you --

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, I was --

INTERVIEWER: And you were okay with that?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, I was okay with it. There was one member of our group, I remember an officer like myself, who was a very vocal objector to the war in Vietnam and spent a great deal of time talking about it, and I don't think he went. I think actually they said, you know, we'll find something else for you to do because you're obviously not going to be very helpful. So, no, I wasn't into it, but I was okay with it.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MR. GILLIES: Because I had no idea really.

We had some speakers at OCS who were Vietnam veterans, and they showed us films. And it was great. I at least knew what an 82-footer looked like, but I had no idea what in the world we were going to be doing, and the training didn't acquaint me with it either. And I think the moment when it finally became more of a reality was -- I was a Catholic at the time and decided to have my confession heard before I went, and the priest on the base in Oakland -- it is Oakland, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Well, it's Alameda Coast Guard Isle.

MR. GILLIES: Alameda.

INTERVIEWER: But it's right next to Oakland.

MR. GILLIES: That's right. Alameda.

I remember I called him. I must have called him and asked if he could hear my confession, and he heard my confession while we were walking down the sidewalk. I had never had -- I had always been in the little booth, and it's the way confession should be heard. I mean, it was just --

INTERVIEWER: Just walking along and sunshine?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, it was much more meaningful, meaningful to me. It was very moving, and I remember -- I don't remember his name, but I certainly remember what the priest looked like.

INTERVIEWER: He was a Coast Guard chaplain basically?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. And that was a long time ago.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. GILLIES: And after that I think I had a couple days off, and then we flew on a Braniff [Airlines] jet --

INTERVIEWER: From Travis Air Force Base?

MR. GILLIES: Somewhere in California.

INTERVIEWER: Near Sacramento?

MR. GILLIES: To Saigon.

INTERVIEWER: Straight flight, huh? No layover?

MR. GILLIES: No, we laid over in the Philippines for 12 hours maybe, I can't remember, a while.

INTERVIEWER: Any other Coast Guard personnel on board or were you the only one?

MR. GILLIES: I don't remember any. And I remember flying in the Braniff jet feeling this is ridiculous because there were stewardesses wearing the Braniff uniforms, and at that time it was, not miniskirts, but short skirts, and I thought this is a joke, we're on our way to war and we're flying in a commercial jet? And it just seemed --

INTERVIEWER: It must have been surreal.

MR. GILLIES: -- ridiculous.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: But I do remember coming into Tan Son Nhut -- I think that's the name of the airport --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, Saigon Airport?

MR. GILLIES: Flying at the normal elevation, and the pilot told us that he had to literally drop out of the sky to the runway to avoid coming in at a long slow descent, which was much riskier.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, from anti-aircraft potential.

MR. GILLIES: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: So we landed, and I think I was in Saigon for maybe 2 days or 3 days, and it was not well organized. I had no idea where I was or what I was doing or what was going to happen to me, and nobody seemed to -- I was met by somebody and taken to a Quonset hut and told, "There's your bunk," and that was it. I just kind of sat on the end of the bunk for 2 days until finally somebody --

INTERVIEWER: Who was your contact with the local Coast Guard liaison? Was there a liaison --

MR. GILLIES: I don't remember anybody meeting me at the plane or telling me where to report. I don't remember anything like that. I remember there were long periods of time when I thought this is -- I think they've forgotten that I'm here. Well, anyway, somebody figured it out.

INTERVIEWER: Was it dangerous at that point in Saigon? Did you have any fear for being sniped at or anything?

MR. GILLIES: I never left the base.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were on base the whole time.

MR. GILLIES: And the base was occasionally shelled, the airport, but I didn't --

INTERVIEWER: Have too many concerns about your safety.

MR. GILLIES: No, nothing happened remarkable while I was there. And I remember getting in a small -- they finally figured out where I was going to go, I was taken to a small Navy plane -- prop, as I remember -- and flew to the airport on Phu Quoc Island, it must have been. And all these places I only saw once, so I don't remember terribly clearly. And I know I was the only Coast Guardsman on that flight, I was maybe the only passenger. It was a cargo plane and they were bringing in cases of beer or something, I can't remember what. And the same thing: I get to the airfield on Phu Quoc Island, nobody there knew what the hell I'm supposed to do, where I'm supposed to go, and I was just kind of at odds with -- but, anyway, it finally became clear.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been rather frustrating because you would expect to have that organization --

MR. GILLIES: Well, yeah, until you kind of look at the big picture and you realize we're busy here, you know, the thought of a new ensign arriving is not a remarkable event to us. So I reported aboard. Harry Hamilton, I think was his name, was my first --

INTERVIEWER: To the *Point Cypress*?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And that was An Thoi? Is that the name --

MR. GILLIES: An Thoi, yeah. An Thoi is the name of the town on Phu Quoc Island. Phu Quoc Island is quite a big island, and this was at the tip, very natural, nice little harbor. And in the harbor was an APL, I don't know what those APL or APLNL, but it looked like a huge egg crate floating, and it's a dormitory, laundry, offices. It was our home port.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a barge or a ship?

MR. GILLIES: It was a ship, quite tall --

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so it was a big mother ship of some kind.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, exactly. I don't know how it was moved, maybe it was towed, but it never moved while I was there. It was huge. And beside it were these steel floats that looked like barges, and we would tie up to those as opposed to the side of this big floating box. So that technically was my home port, was the APL, the APL, I think, because onshore in An Thoi, there was a radio station, an officer's club, and I think that's it. Supplies came in there obviously, and there would be a shuttle boat that would run back and forth to the shore.

INTERVIEWER: Most personnel there were Coast Guard or Navy or a mix?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, almost all of them Navy.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And they were all for swift boats and for -- what are they called? PFCs or PCFs, whatever, smaller speed boats that they ran.

MR. GILLIES: Right. Swift boats, I can't remember the numbers of how many swift boats and how many Coast Guard cutters, but if I had to guess, I'd say there were four or five Coast Guard cutters and probably double that number of swift boats. I really could be wrong, but I think that's right. And the vast majority of the people that worked in the APL were Navy.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Had you received any briefings yet or would you, I guess, about what the mission was there and what you were going to be doing?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That came later, I guess?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. I'm sure when I reported aboard -- I never met with any staff officers that I remember. There were Coast Guard officers in charge of operations and personnel, and I never met with any of those people that I remember. I reported aboard the 82-footer, and I don't think I left.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really? So you never saw -- was it Commander [Norman] Venzke who was one of the -- okay.

MR. GILLIES: I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe he never came --

MR. GILLIES: Maybe I did. I don't remember him. Like I say, if it only happened to me once, after 40 years, I can't remember it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: And the initial crew of the 82-footer, the *Point Cypress*, was a pretty interesting group.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you say that

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: I had never worked with senior chief petty officers before. Those that I supervised in Baltimore were either new chiefs or junior chiefs, but these two chiefs that I encountered in my first days were senior, senior, senior chiefs. I can't remember whether they were masters or -- I don't know, but they were old guys and they knew what they were doing and they served on everything the Coast Guard had afloat. The chief engineer and the chief boatswain's mate. The chief boatswain's mate was named Santos, John Santos, and he had a Latin temper that would boil over, and I was the perfect victim. I had never been on an 82-footer, I had never driven anything bigger than a 65-footer, and then it was in Baltimore Harbor. I had a lot to learn very quickly and I stepped on his toes at least once a day, and --

INTERVIEWER: And he would come out?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, he would -- the 82-footer was laid out so that it had an aluminum superstructure to keep it light so it wouldn't rock unnecessarily. Well, terrific protection for the officers because we slept above deck, and the first story of the superstructure, the pilothouse, was above us, and we had a little desk in there and bunks and our shower. He would wait until I was in there by myself and he would knock, but he would storm through that door, he would fly in the damn door, and he would chew me upside down, and it was always done professionally, it was always, "May I speak freely," and da, da, da, da, da, but, man, would he let me have it.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about that?

MR. GILLIES: Well, you know, I vacillated. Part of the times I thought he's paying attention to me because he likes me or he cares about me, you know, that argument. The other times I thought, I've got to get out of here, this guy's going to kill me.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: I can remember coming in -- I was pretty good at boat handling, maybe not a great navigator, but I was a good boat handler, and the weather in Vietnam was just -- it just stunk, a lot of wind, a lot of swells. Coming into An Thoi and pulling

alongside these steel barges to tie up was always very, very stressful. First of all, lots of people watching; second, if you miscalculate, it's steel on steel, you're not coming into a wooden dock where you have a little bounce.

INTERVIEWER: Unforgiving environment, right.

MR. GILLIES: This sucker, it's going to tear a hole in the side. And it wasn't very high above the waterline, the barge we were tying up to. So lots made it difficult. And Harry Hamilton and Jon Collom both used to give me that job because I --

INTERVIEWER: You had experience?

MR. GILLIES: I was into it. I loved boat handling, and they were not into it.

INTERVIEWER: Harry Hamilton, was he your predecessor on board?

MR. GILLIES: No, he was my first CO.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see. On board before Jon Collom.

MR. GILLIES: Exactly, Jon Collom's predecessor. And I remember coming in one day and the weather was just unholy, and I can't remember what I did incorrectly, but I gave an order from the bridge that was incorrect, and that was one of the occasions when John Santos went nuts because there was a way -- and there is a way -- and the way makes sense, and I didn't -- but I just screwed up, I didn't know the way or I had forgotten it that day, I can't remember, but he let me have it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of the other crew members when you came aboard? So the senior chief was Santos, skipper was Harry Hamilton.

MR. GILLIES: Harry Hamilton.

INTERVIEWER: You, of course, were XO. And then do you remember any of the others that were on board at that point, crew members?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. I have an old Christmas card from the *Point Cypress* that has the name of the crew on it. With that, I could -- although I have some slides. I have maybe 20 slides that I thought I'd show you if you want to see.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, right.

MR. GILLIES: And when I see those faces, I can't remember their names, but I obviously remember their faces. There was one young radarman who was the smartest kid I think I've ever known, and I'm like, oh, he was so wickedly smart.

INTERVIEWER: Radarman? Oh, radar, yeah, yeah.

MR. GILLIES: Electronic technician I think was his technical title. And I always tried to get on watch the same time he did because he was so smart.

INTERVIEWER: Just because you wanted to interact with somebody --

MR. GILLIES: I trusted him. He could make good decisions. He didn't screw things up. Pendleton I think was the name of the chief engineman.

INTERVIEWER: So, typically, you'd have a chief engineman and a fireman, and they would switch off watch or something like that?

MR. GILLIES: I think that's how it worked. There may have been a third. We had a cook who was one of the most outrageous human beings I've ever met in my whole life.

INTERVIEWER: Why is that?

MR. GILLIES: He was probably one of the most x-rated human beings that I've ever worked with, every other word, but baked bread in an 82-footer. I mean, the food was just fabulous. When you're in 6-foot swells on patrol for a week or whatever it is, and you're turning out baked bread? That's --

INTERVIEWER: Pretty good.

MR. GILLIES: -- pretty cool.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: It was a genuine mishmash, kids from every spectrum, every background. The only thing they had in common was they were in Vietnam in the Coast Guard, but remarkably congenial. I don't remember -- one of my careers was I worked in a private boarding school and managed a girls dormitory at night, 45 teenage girls, so I know what human drama can be. It was just a -- it was an easy place to live, considering the fact you had 10 or 11 men jammed in 82 feet, you could get 81 feet away from somebody, but that was about it.

INTERVIEWER: Was it air conditioned?

MR. GILLIES: You could say yes. It had air conditioning equipment, but it was broken almost all the time.

INTERVIEWER: So everybody was hot, sticky, sweaty?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, just stupid. And you could take a saltwater shower, which doesn't help a bit. It was very hot a lot, not all the time, but a lot. When the air

conditioning worked, it was cold. It was either cold or 100. And 82-footers weren't designed for this. It was an afterthought, they were search and rescue vessels, they weren't meant to be at sea for a week, 2 weeks, 3 weeks, I mean, that's just out of the question. We couldn't carry enough fuel or food. The only way we could possibly stay on patrol was to run our engines at low as possible RPMs as long as possible. And we ran out of food all the time. We'd have to go offshore to one of the Navy vessels and literally beg food.

INTERVIEWER: Was it hard? I mean, did the Navy make it difficult?

MR. GILLIES: No, no. The Navy -- they thought we were so -- I think they were very amused by us because we'd come across, come alongside, these guys would be wearing, you know, khakis and "Dixie cup" hats, and they were in uniform. We had shorts and shower shoes and ripped t-shirts.

INTERVIEWER: I've seen some pictures.

MR. GILLIES: It's just no way you could expect people in that environment to wear a uniform, they would have killed you.

INTERVIEWER: But did most of the Navy people wear --

MR. GILLIES: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But the Coast Guard personnel were --

MR. GILLIES: Uh-uh.

INTERVIEWER: -- working.

MR. GILLIES: Yes. And even on the swift boats, because they weren't out that long, could maintain the uniforms, but we didn't have a laundry facility. You're going to be gone for a week -- I can't remember how long we were gone from the APL, but at least a week, we've been gone for a week, how many changes of underwear can you possibly have? You know? And you can't rinse anything out because all you've got is saltwater.

INTERVIEWER: So the Coast Guard was expected to stay out longer than the swift boats.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, and that was right, because we had the capacity. We had bunks and we had a kitchen, and they didn't have any of that. No, their patrols were much shorter.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I didn't realize that.

MR. GILLIES: And that made perfect sense. And most of the time you were assigned a patrol area and, just like a weather station, you'd go from one side to the other, back and forth, back and forth, put your radar on, watching for contacts, and most of the time the weather was so bad there were no contacts whatsoever because all of the boats in Vietnam -- I mean, all of them -- are 30 foot and under. I have a picture that I'll show you of a basket boat which is the size of this rug here in front of us.

INTERVIEWER: Five feet in diameter or something like that?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. A hand-woven basket boat, two men would get in it with a net, and they'd go a mile, a mile and a half, offshore to fish, paddling. So the odds in this bad weather of encountering the enemy were absolutely zero, and I think that's one of the motivators for doing the small boat operations up the canals, it was something to do.

INTERVIEWER: When you started out, you got there in -- was it June?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: June, okay. What was the mission of the 82-footers? Was it basically to stay somewhat offshore, I mean, not quite in the inland waterways, and to do boarding operations basically on all sampans and shuttle craft?

MR. GILLIES: That was the capital letter mission.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And that's what you're saying, is that that was really not -- by that time you weren't really finding that much or --

MR. GILLIES: I don't think there was anything there to begin with. A, we were in what is known as IV Corps, which could be dramatic because it's the lower part of the Mekong Delta, and, you know, think, oh, gee, this must kind of the hot spot, but we were at the absolute southern, southern, southern end of IV Corps. You couldn't fill Fenway Park with everybody who lived there much less the enemy. It was a free-fire zone, which means if you see somebody, you're charged with shooting them, no questions asked, it doesn't matter, because there are so few people. Somebody tried to convince us that it was where the Vietcong came for R&R. That would be like sending somebody to some god-awful city in New Jersey for their -- you know, why would you want to come there for R&R? As a punishment maybe.

So the capital letters mission, Operation MARKET TIME, was to interdict the transportation of enemy and supplies and so on. I think in the time I was there we probably had -- I don't want to exaggerate -- I'd say maybe six instances where we actually had something to interdict, a vessel we had to stop that really didn't look right. Most of the time if we did stop somebody, it was two guys out fishing, they had their wife and kids with them, and they were shrimp fishing, and they had been out for 4 days, and you could tell in 30 seconds that these guys are so scared of us, they're wetting their pants; they were not combatants.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about that, boarding a vessel and knowing pretty much that there's nothing, but it was a part of your duty to go on board and have to check everything.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, you had to do it. You didn't have to do it that often, you might as well do a good job of it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: If it were a busy, busy harbor, for instance, that would have been different, but it wasn't that taxing, and it was at least something that broke the routine, because I can tell you -- and maybe it's true in all wars -- but 99.9 percent of the time you're doing absolutely nothing except trying to stay comfortable.

INTERVIEWER: How were your relations with the local population? When you did board a boat, did you have a pretty genial despite language and all that, or were they just scared to death and you were trying not to scare them anymore?

MR. GILLIES: They were wary, at least wary, and afraid because it wasn't routine, because we didn't see people over and over, so you couldn't develop a relationship. If we had been ashore living in a little compound of some sort next to a village, that would be different, you would have people you would recognize and you could make relationships with them.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MR. GILLIES: We never saw people frequently enough. And even in An Thoi, the number of times I went ashore in An Thoi I could count on one hand, and there was a village there, quite a nice village, you just didn't go because An Thoi Harbor wasn't secure. On Phu Quoc was this giant prisoner of war camp, and every once in a while, I don't know whether there would be an escape or it was a drill, I can't remember, but all I know is that every once in a while you'd all have to scramble and leave An Thoi Harbor, sirens blaring and all this stuff, because there was a prison. I never saw the prison. I don't know how big it was, whether there were 50,000 prisoners there or 10, but it was considered to be an insecure harbor to the extent that when we were in port, somebody would be assigned to throw hand grenades, fragmentation grenades, off the fantail of the 82-footer in case some swimmer was coming out to --

INTERVIEWER: Make it hard to sleep.

MR. GILLIES: We couldn't wait to get out of there most of the time. They'd have a movie and the food was better, but mostly you really just, "Get me out of here." Those of us who like boats, you know, like messing around with boats.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. GILLIES: There were some who did not, and they would -- and it might have been the right decision for their crew and their temperament and whatever, but if you take an 82-footer and you put it close enough to an island, it disappears, it becomes part of the blip, and that's what these guys would do. They would take their 82-footer and right offshore anchor, have a barbecue on the fantail, and nobody would know where they were. They couldn't find them on radar, and they would just shut off the radios. And I'm not finding fault for anybody doing that because, quite frankly, there wasn't much to do if they had been underway except burn fuel.

The two skippers that I worked with did not have that attitude, they were engaged, Harry Hamilton in particular. Harry Hamilton, if there was something going on, he wanted to be in the middle of it. I remember once we left An Thoi Harbor, there was -- I think it was Special Forces, and their ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] counterparts were trapped, pinned down, and that's all Harry Hamilton had to hear.

We left An Thoi Harbor and steamed up the west shore of Phu Quoc to the place where they were, and he's on the radio talking to some guy, some sergeant, in Special Forces, getting directions about where they were. "I'll make yellow smoke and I'll make green smoke," and all. I mean, they really -- it was like something out of the movies. We're maybe 150 feet, 200 feet offshore, as close as we can get, steaming back and forth between the red flare and the yellow flare, and anything in between there is where we're supposed to concentrate under fire. Well, if you look at an 82-footer, it has five .50-caliber machine guns on it, three of which, if you're running parallel to the shore, can operate at the same time.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, because they're on one side or they can fire off one side.

MR. GILLIES: Exactly. You literally had to -- we had to pace ourselves so that the barrels wouldn't melt because those suckers really get hot if you just pull the trigger and hold them. Steam up one side, turn, steam down the other, "boom, boom, boom," laying a withering --

INTERVIEWER: You're using mortar, too, I suppose, right?

MR. GILLIES: Well, I'm not sure we used mortar, but I know they used the machine guns, and the sand and the foliage, it was just tearing the bejeezus out of the place. And then they say, "We've got some wounded, we'd like to have you evacuate." And this is while all this stuff is going on. I can't remember who went ashore with that Boston Whaler to pull people out of the surf. Those are the people that ought to be in heaven, and I don't mean that the way it sounds.

INTERVIEWER: Well, they volunteered for what they knew to be life threatening.

MR. GILLIES: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: A Boston Whaler that has all of 12 inches of freeboard, it's all fiberglass, there's no armor, no protection at all.

MR. GILLIES: And there's surf. They're not designed to go on the surf. This is a landing on a beach, and they've got to go ashore, help these wounded people into the boat, and I mean wounded, get them into the boat, come out, offload them, go back and get another load. I don't know how many people we brought out but at least two boatloads.

And I remember the Boston Whaler coming along shore, alongside. Looking down into it, it had some wash in it, and it was just red with blood mixed with the water.

INTERVIEWER: From the wounded.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. I mean, that was pretty damn dramatic.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. GILLIES: And Harry Hamilton was perfect. He was totally into it, he handled it magnificently. It was impressive. And the guys ashore, the Special Forces guys, couldn't get over it. They were so impressed with the fire and the rescue and all. They were getting the cat's ass.

I remember coming back into An Thoi Harbor after this had happened. And this is the kind of guy Harry Hamilton was. He took a broom and taped it to the mast.

INTERVIEWER: For a clean sweep?

MR. GILLIES: Clean sweep.

I remember one night we were anchored in An Thoi Harbor. One of these drills, it was called, we've got to get out of An Thoi Harbor, and he told me to do it. He said, "I'm going to stay in the galley drinking my coffee, you get us out of here," because I don't know whether he knew it was a drill or wanted to drill me. I was brand new. I had just gotten there. I don't know how long I'd been there but not very long. I go up to the bridge. I've got two guys on the bridge with me. I had to weigh the anchor, start the engines, sound general quarters and get people at the machine guns --

INTERVIEWER: So they'd be in general quarters?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: Without lights. And the radar wouldn't work. It was crapped out 25 percent of the time anyway. I have no idea where I am, and I'm thinking, I can't engage these engines if I don't know where I am. I'd gone maybe 100 yards, and the radar just, "boomed," blinked off.

INTERVIEWER: You could have been going right into shore --

MR. GILLIES: So I stopped the engines and we just sat there. He's down in the galley wondering what the hell I'm doing. He finally comes up, and he says, "What are you doing?" and I said, "I don't have any radar. I don't know where I'm going." He was just -- there was a great deal of time, now, in retrospect, people being angry with me.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: He was so mad at me. And he never made clear what he would have done differently, but he was pissed because I was the only one of the whole flotilla that didn't get to -- you were supposed to go to a particular station, which was never made clear anyway. I suppose it was so people would know where you were in case of some eventuality. Anyway, we never got there. Oh, god.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that was your only way to know where you were at night?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, yeah. There's no doubt I did the right thing. I did the prudent mariner thing. I mean, all -- you know, you look it up 45 different ways, I did the right thing, but it was embarrassing to him because the Point Cypress didn't get to where they were supposed to. So he had to file a report and explain. And I don't blame him, he didn't want to do that. He didn't have any choice.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. How long was he on board concurrently with you?

MR. GILLIES: I would guess 4 months.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really? Okay.

MR. GILLIES: Of the six? Maybe five.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, Jon Collom and I hadn't -- we hadn't worked together a very long time.

INTERVIEWER: So can you think of any of the other operations that you did early on there? You mentioned the Special Forces you evacuated.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I mean, we already went over boarding operations that you did there with sampans and local busses.

MR. GILLIES: There was one -- a couple of instances, one is that we did encounter somebody at night, a junk, as I remember, that wouldn't respond, wouldn't respond, wouldn't respond. We illuminated it with a big spotlight, which you only do if you're -- that's a --

INTERVIEWER: Risky.

MR. GILLIES: And it's a marine no-no. You're blinding the navigator on the other vessel. So we illuminated the other vessel, [it] still wouldn't stop, because I remember running in a course perpendicular to ours. I remember then we fired illumination rounds, 82-mm mortar rounds, to illuminate not only the vessel but all the area around it, and then took it under fire. I can't remember whether we sank it or we -- that's interesting--I can't remember what the end result was. We may have sunk it or we may have just captured it in conjunction with another 82-footer. I can't remember how it happened, but I remember it was an action at night that could have gotten pretty hairy and didn't. I mean, it was a lot of action, a lot of firing, and all that stuff, but nobody was wounded or took fire or anything.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

MR. GILLIES: And I don't remember what they were up to, whether they didn't understand the order or -- so it was that sort of thing. It wasn't common, but it would happen just when you were becoming desperately bored, something would happen.

INTERVIEWER: So you could almost count on something happening as soon as you'd get really bored; something would come up.

MR. GILLIES: You could count on something. I remember leaving An Thoi Harbor -- An Thoi Harbor is sort of crescent shaped, and at the terminus of one of these crescents is another little island, and between the terminus of the crescent and this other little island was a little passage, and if you wanted to take a shortcut out of An Thoi Harbor, you could go through that little passage and up the west side of Phu Quoc Island.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: An Thoi Harbor was a very nice little harbor because it was quite sheltered from certain winds. We pulled out of there, and the wind must have been coming out of the east that we didn't expect or didn't know about, it's a pitch dark night, 2 o'clock in the morning probably, I stood the 4-to-8 watch, which if you think about it, it's absolutely the worst watch. From 4 o'clock in the morning until 8 o'clock in the morning and 4 o'clock in the afternoon until 8 o'clock in the evening is when the body tells you,

you ought to be doing something else. Staying awake was unbelievably difficult at 4 o'clock in the evening, morning when you're not doing anything except cruising.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

MR. GILLIES: And things just didn't happen from 4 to 8.

INTERVIEWER: But it typically would happen --

MR. GILLIES: Ten o'clock at night or 8 o'clock at night, you know?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

MR. GILLIES: If I were going to try and sneak across, I wouldn't wait until 4:30 in the morning, you know? Go out at midnight. I think that's how everybody thinks. Anyway, for some reason I'm on the bridge, and we go out through this passage, we hit that wind, we hit those waves, I can't remember how big the waves were, but all I know is the only lights you have on the bridge are the glow from the radar screen, and, if you want to, you can turn on a red light at the navigation table, and maybe a glow from the compass, that's it. So it's dark, and it should be. Came out, hit those waves, I thought we were going to sink.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MR. GILLIES: The 82-footer is just --

INTERVIEWER: They're deep-V hulled, aren't they?

MR. GILLIES: They're deep-V hulled, but those suckers could roll, you would not believe. There is an inclinometer on the bridge, I can't remember what the tolerance -- I'm sure I did at the time, but we came pretty close. And in the course of being thrashed, at the initial encounter with those waves, somehow we were pivoted 180 degrees, and if you have your radar on a short range, it's only going to show like a mile, and you've got an island on your left and an island on your right, if you pivot 180 degrees, you can't tell you've pivoted 180 degrees.

INTERVIEWER: Right, because you're going the opposite direction.

MR. GILLIES: We steamed right back into An Thoi Harbor before we realized, "What the hell just happened to us?" We thought we were headed the other direction.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: And that was one of the things I liked about the 82-footer, was it small enough so that stuff like that could happen, you realized you were in a boat. Stuff like that didn't happen on a 360-foot destroyer, I mean, you just barely wake up before

you have to go to bed again. So my point is there was always something because it was a boat.

INTERVIEWER: Overall, did you like the 82-footer, you thought it was a good boat, or had you had better experiences on smaller, other, Coast Guard small craft?

MR. GILLIES: Well, for the job that we had to do, it was okay, yeah. Nobody would describe it as a comfortable boat. It was not designed that way, it wasn't meant to be, and I'm sure people still complain about the 44-footers and the 95-footers as just being uncomfortable. It's not how they're designed. They're military. When we would be in our patrol area, you would try to find a comfortable course for everybody.

So, if it's 270 and 090 back and forth, back and forth, and you're maybe gradually creeping up on the length of your patrol area, doing somewhat of a responsible job, unless you can see your whole patrol area on your radar screen, then you can just go back and forth, but you would steam into it, and then you'd get to the edge of your patrol area, and you would then call down to the galley and you would say, "We're about to come about," and everybody would hold on, and the cook would da, da, da, da, da, and the chief would get -- everybody would be prepared, and you would try to time them on the face of a wave to jam one engine full forward and the other full reverse, shift the helm and try and come about just as quickly as you possibly could, and if you were good at it, people literally would cheer down below, you could hear the cheer coming up. And if you screwed it up, they wanted to know who the hell's at the helm, who made that decision?

INTERVIEWER: And being an experienced boat handler that you were, I suppose you probably took a lot of satisfaction out of the fact that you could do this on a regular basis fairly smoothly.

MR. GILLIES: Well, I think it separated -- there are navigators and there are boat handlers, and I was a terrible navigator. We had to go, for instance, to have our boat painted, it had to be hauled out, and I can't remember what else was overhauled, maybe an engine overhaul, I can't remember why, but we had to steam quite a way up the Vietnamese coast to, I want to say, Cam Ranh Bay, I think that's where it happened. If I had been given that job, I would have panicked. That was a long cruise, it took like 3 days to get there and 3 days to get back, and there were courses you have to lay out, you've got set and drift and all these complicated math stuff. And navigating there was difficult because the only charts we had were hand-drawn by the French, they were left over, and the charts weren't terribly accurate, and the bottom was constantly shifting because it is delta, of course, mud. I wouldn't have been comfortable doing that. I'm quite happy to go up and steer 270, but you better have somebody else figure out the 270. But when it came to pulling into Cam Ranh Bay and getting it into the slip and all, I was into that, because I liked it, so I paid attention to it, like anything else, you get good at what you like.

INTERVIEWER: The 82-footers were painted a really dark haze grey.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a stripe on, too, underneath all that?

MR. GILLIES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: Well, stateside they were white.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And they had the racing stripe by '67, '68.

MR. GILLIES: I can't remember a racing stripe on the white ones.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. It was spread throughout in the late '60s, so it came to different assets at different times, but it was initiated in '67, I think, when they decided they had an ALCOAST [an official "All Coast Guard" message], to go out.

MR. GILLIES: I think the original vessels in the flotilla when they got to Vietnam were still white.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: I think.

INTERVIEWER: I've seen a picture of the *Point Cypress* with a stripe on it, a racing stripe on it, which I imagine would have been just before it went into service in Vietnam.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So it was only a few months at best.

MR. GILLIES: Maybe under that paint there -- because there would have been a little bead like there was for the numbers. I remember there was a little bead so you couldn't screw it up, you do it by hand. There may have been a stripe, I just don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: I'm curious. You said that people were angry at you a lot when you were there?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Joshing, I suppose, or whatever. Can you describe what -- was that because you were really a stickler for doing things right or because skipper was a cowboy and wanted to do more than what was necessary?

MR. GILLIES: I don't think I've ever generalized it in my mind, and maybe I'm even exaggerating that, but I remember being chewed out, and my memory seems to tell me that I was chewed out very frequently. And I think if I had to attribute reasons to it -- and I don't know if I'm right or not -- it's a stressful circumstance. A lot of people are under stress just putting them in a boat, they get under stress. Chief Santos, for instance, for all I know, had never served on anything as tight-knit as that under an officer, because stateside a lot of those boats were run by chiefs. So all of a sudden he's working for some ensign who doesn't know his ass from his elbow, when this is a boat that he would have run in San Francisco. So you've got that stress. The stress that you're at war, you're away from your family, and you're in a miserable location, and it's 110 degrees out, add to that, plus you've got this new guy aboard who needs to be trained, who's never been to sea, who's never served on a -- a lot of them came from buoy tenders. If you want to learn all the jobs on a vessel, buoy tender was perfect, my impression is you had to know everything, because it's small and it was the opportunity to know everything. And I didn't know jack.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you knew how to handle boats, right?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, okay. So I came in handy 20 minutes every 2 weeks. The rest of the time, you know, I did my job, but I had never kept a ship's log. I had to do all that stuff from scratch. These guys weren't interested in training me, and I don't blame them, they had a lot of work.

INTERVIEWER: I know when I see and hear some of the stories from this end from other wars when somebody new comes along, sometimes they're called replacements. They don't tend to get the respect or even the camaraderie, at least not at first, as the people that had been there for a while. Do you think that was part of it, too, perhaps, or not necessarily?

MR. GILLIES: No. There was enough turnover of the crews that I think that was -- there wasn't an old guard that I was shoved into. No, I don't think that was it at all.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. GILLIES: And my relationships with people junior to me couldn't have been better.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Would you describe it as kind of like a family on board?

MR. GILLIES: No, no.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: No. I mean, I come from a big family, and it's not even -- and I think people might say that because it sounds like the right thing to say, but it wasn't like a family at all, we were working.

INTERVIEWER: Especially because of the difference between officers and enlisted?

MR. GILLIES: Officers and enlisted, and, you know, we were at war. There wasn't any part of the job that I remember that would have been anything I would have done with any member of my family. I can remember we played poker in the galley, and I was enthusiastically -- the enlisted men did, Harry or Jon never did -- well, Harry might have played once in a while, but Jon never did. I can remember enthusiastically being greeted when I would come down to the deck and ask if I could join in the card game: A, because we were paid in cash; and, B, they knew I made more than they did; and, C, I was a terrible poker player. They knew this is an easy 300 bucks that's going to sit down at the table. You know, and that part of it, I knew going down, I only take what I know I'm going to lose because I know I'm going to lose it, I think from that point of view, you know, the executive officer's job is to act as a liaison between the commanding officer and the crew, and that part I think I did well.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get along pretty well with enlisted?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. I think if Dillenbeck and I were to get together, we would have very good memories of each other, and I think it's why my feelings about Eddie Hernandez are what they are.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. GILLIES: He wasn't like a brother to me. He was 18, I'm guessing? And I was 25, I guess? And I definitely wasn't his older brother.

INTERVIEWER: So do you feel somewhat close to any of the enlisted people? Maybe not brother, but -- or not?

MR. GILLIES: I --

INTERVIEWER: It was what it was? You were friends, I guess?

MR. GILLIES: No, I would never have described it as friends. I mean, if I were going on R&R and I ran into these guys in a bar, I don't think I would have sided up and had a beer, and I think, I hope, the biggest part of that is that I was an officer and they were enlisted, and I could see no good coming of it, and, quite frankly, it was my impression that most enlisted men didn't want to hang out with officers.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MR. GILLIES: I had colleagues here, for instance, who are fishing guides who have been fishing guides their whole life, and in spite of the fact we share the same work --

INTERVIEWER: Because you have your own business as a guide.

MR. GILLIES: Yep, right. It's very difficult for me to be friends with them because our backgrounds are so radically different. They know I was a lawyer, they know I'm well-educated, and it just -- and I come from a family that was very wealthy, and those divides just are very hard to cross, and I think it was the same between officer and enlisted in that circumstance, and I think, in retrospect, and maybe I thought it at the time, that's the way it ought to be. Because if I start, you know, going down to the mess deck and hanging out all the time and using the "F" word, it's not going to go someplace good.

INTERVIEWER: It wouldn't have been authentic, I guess, in the first place.

MR. GILLIES: Not for me anyway, not for me. It would have been phony.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been really kind of tough for you because on the one hand you've got -- my understanding is all the cutter captains were basically Academy grads --

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: -- they all knew each other and good buds and all that --

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: -- and then on the other side you've got all the enlisted people, and they're probably fairly friendly with each other, and they have their kind of group going --

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: But not only you, but most of the XOs on these cutters are -- I don't know if you'd call them outsiders, but a lot of them are OCS, they didn't have the Academy collegiality, they were not enlisted --

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: So you're almost -- and it sounds to me like with at least Harry Hamilton, it wasn't like he was a good buddy of yours either --

MR. GILLIES: No.

INTERVIEWER: And there you are, you're on board this boat and you feel pretty good about yourself or else you're going to be in bad shape, I mean, just as an XO. Most of the --

MR. GILLIES: I had a role model, and the role model was the XO in Baltimore. He worked for Captain Hutchins, who was -- I can think of lots of -- he was one tough son of a gun. He didn't want that job, he was miserable every minute he was there, he was a sailor, and they got him stuck in a stupid -- his last job, they had given him this -- and Captain of the Port in Baltimore was just a crappy job, there's almost nothing to do. Now it would be different because you've got pollution and terrorism and all that. But nothing to do. He would come in late and leave early, you know, and he just was -- for all I knew, he was clinically depressed, he was so miserable in that job, and he took it out on his XO, Joe Thompson, and we all saw it, the officers. We'd go to lunch, it was at the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, and as a little rule, there was a little mess room for the officers, so we'd go to lunch every day, and Mr. Thompson would have to sit next to Captain Hutchins, and we'd all sit around this table, and it was awful the way he treated Joe Thompson, it just was -- it would make us uncomfortable, squirm. And he handled it perfectly. He said, "This is my job."

And I remember having conversations with him about -- he and I became very good friends, and he said the job of an XO is to act as a liaison between the captain and the enlisted, you're in neither party's bed. You are not on one side or the other, and the only way you can make it work is you will appear to be completely in the middle. You're the one who takes the captain's orders, which make absolutely no sense or which are offensive or which are either going to drive everybody nuts or overly burdensome, whatever, and you have to sell them to the crew, and vice versa. And that job title makes perfect sense to me. And so it might have been almost by design that the skippers were Academy and the XOs were not, and I would give the Coast Guard credit for that because that's how smart the Coast Guard was, I don't know if it still is. There were only 3,000 officers in the Coast Guard when I was -- in '68, and I don't remember meeting many Coast Guard officers that I didn't think, holy smokes, this guy is impressively smart.

INTERVIEWER: So you say they were.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, yeah, yeah. This was a hell of an outfit. But I did meet one skipper who was not an Academy graduate -- I remember this very clearly -- standing on the fantail one night drinking a cup of coffee in An Thoi, moored along the APL -- and we moored, we nested --

INTERVIEWER: So you wrapped it up.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. And this guy climbs over the rail onto the *Point Cypress*, and he comes up and he says, "Is your name Gordon Gillies?" and I said, "Yep." He said, "I'm Dick Penly." I said, "Hi."

INTERVIEWER: You had no idea who he was?

MR. GILLIES: No idea who he was. He said, "You're from Maine, aren't you?" I said, "Yep." He said, "So am I." I said, "Shit." Well, it turns out his parents and my parents were very good friends, both in the lumber business, had known each other forever, lived in different parts of the state, so they didn't see each other, but knew each other. And so I thought that was kind of amazing, these two guys from the lumber business in Maine.

INTERVIEWER: You're a lieutenant and he was one of the skippers.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. So I come back from Vietnam, da, da, da, da, da, da, da. I'm opening my law office in Bethel. My wife and I literally backed the U-Haul up to the front of the office and we're moving because we're going to live above the office, moving in, the first night, it's like 10 o'clock at night. We had two visitors. The first was a state cop who came by who wanted to make sure we weren't moving stuff out. And the second, a guy shows up with a six-pack of beer, it's Dick Penly. He lives a quarter mile away, and he'd heard, he'd heard from the town clerk that a new lawyer was coming. "What's the guy's name?" "His name is Gordon Gillies, just bought the building on the corner."

INTERVIEWER: Wow, small world.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. And I was the best man at his wedding, and we've become pretty good friends.

INTERVIEWER: So did you have a pretty close relationship in Vietnam --

MR. GILLIES: No.

INTERVIEWER: -- or it came out afterwards?

MR. GILLIES: You never saw these guys. You know, you'd see them and then you wouldn't see them again for three weeks, and, you know, if you're only there for six months, how many times do you overlap? Not very often.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: And there was an O-club [Officer's Club], and I went probably to the O-club, I would guess, twice.

INTERVIEWER: And when you were there, did you ever hang out with some of the other XO's? Or you just kind of had a drink and went away? I mean, you didn't have much time there. It sounds like you weren't able to get to know too many people.

MR. GILLIES: Well, remember what I said, if I only did it once, I don't remember. I do remember -- because I probably went to the O-club twice -- I do remember one incident. I remember going up because we worked with a gunboat from the Thai navy, and the skipper of the boat from Thailand -- they carried beer on board their boats, and it was Thai beer, which is very good beer, I can't remember the -- Singha maybe was the brand? Well, he had cases of Singha, and I remember he invited me over for dinner one night and we had dinner, and then we thought we'd go up to the officer's club, have a drink, and come back, because I said I was not comfortable drinking beer on his boat, this is not good, I'll get caught somehow or something will happen.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: And we must have had a great deal to drink because we were coming down this very long pier, and his boat and my boat are tied at the end on the side, and there are street lights on the pier, and I remember walking down the pier with him, and I remember he reached out and took my hand like a boy and a girl holding hands, and thank God I had the good sense not to pull my hand away because I'm sure it would have been culturally just a disaster.

But I remember walking down street light to street light holding this guy's hand thinking, "Oh, geez." This is the sort of thing that happened to me all the time. I get to the boat, and of course there are two enlisted men up on the bridge of my boat on duty watching me come all the way down holding hands. It took the English major, the future lawyer, I mean every ounce of creativity I possibly had to think of a way to tell these guys that I was not gay, that I was not having an affair with a guy in the Thai navy --

INTERVIEWER: Of all the people that could be watching you in your entire life.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: Oh, and in an 82-footer, that would not have gone over well.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think of something good?

MR. GILLIES: I don't know what I said. All I know, it was not a problem.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Wow! It must have been a good one. I wish you had remembered that. I know what you're saying. I went overseas and experienced the exact same thing in the Far East, so I can sympathize with what you're talking about.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Too funny.

When you're on board an 82-footer like that, what are the sorts of things that make life bearable? You said the food was extraordinarily good because the foul-mouthed cook was a really good cook, and you were able to dress down, obviously, cutoffs and flip-flops or whatever because it was so incredibly hot and uncomfortable, and you guys had to steam for days at a time, and the Navy did not with their swift boats. But were there other things? Poker games, I guess you mentioned. What other things broke up the monotony? Because it sounds like it was sheer terror for a few seconds broken up by extreme boredom for many, many hours.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. I filled my time. I wrote letters. I don't think I probably received more than two letters the whole time I was there. The mail was just a joke. The delivery of the mail system, this is how it worked. Let's say a bag comes in of mail for *Point Cypress*. It gathers for a week or two weeks when we're on patrol. There's a boat leaving on patrol, they're going to rendezvous with us, so we can take the *Point Cypress* mail, yeah, sure. So you've got this canvas bag. You get to where the *Point Cypress* is, and there are 12-foot seas. You can't pull alongside and hand the guy a mailbag. You would have to come at each other, one down-sea and one into the sea, and you're doing this.

INTERVIEWER: You're going up and down, heavy seas perhaps.

MR. GILLIES: Up and down, up and down, and you have to get close enough so that the guy -- because if he screws up and that mailbag goes into the water, the crew will kill you. This job devolved me. You have to come nose to nose and go nose to nose because you have the greatest control slamming the engines in reverse if something goes wrong, nose to nose, and of course you could watch easy, you could see what's happening. And then at the exact right second, you tell the guy -- because it's through the open window, "Heave it." And then you'd immediately put the engines in reverse and back away. That would make it sound like mail was just this wonderful event.

I don't come from a family of letter writers. I never got a letter from my father in my whole life, and I went away to private school. And my mother, she wrote maybe twice while I was in Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: So those two letters you got were from your mom.

MR. GILLIES: I would guess, yeah. I don't remember getting any mail from anybody. My brothers certainly wouldn't write me a letter.

INTERVIEWER: Now, was he in the military at the time?

MR. GILLIES: No. All three had been in and out by the time I went in.

INTERVIEWER: And they were all in the Army, or Navy.

MR. GILLIES: Two Army, one Navy.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You were talking about your boat handling skills. I suppose you probably became skilled at operating the craft during combat operations when they were firing weapons and that sort of thing?

MR. GILLIES: No, it wouldn't be my job. I was -- I'm sure there's a title for it. I've forgotten it. On a ship, I'm sure there's a title, and I'm sure the title was used on the 82-footer. I just don't remember it. Fire control officer maybe? My job was to stand on the bridge with the headset on communicating to the men manning the machine guns.

INTERVIEWER: So all the people that were at the different guns, operating the guns, had on like radio gear and they could hear from the bridge where they were supposed to be directing their fire.

MR. GILLIES: Supposed. They were sound-operated radios. You'd have to press a button, and everybody would hear the same thing. Crap radios. I have tinnitus today because of it and --

INTERVIEWER: Hearing problems.

MR. GILLIES: Hearing protection was a joke.

INTERVIEWER: Really? And so what you're saying is that this noise from the weapons was deafening and you still had problems --

MR. GILLIES: Oh, it was unbelievable.

INTERVIEWER: Really? Mortar and the .50-calibers.

MR. GILLIES: If had been in the Navy, I wouldn't have had this problem because the Navy, that's what they do, but the Coast Guard, you know. It wouldn't surprise me if four or five of the officers in charge of manning this mission and putting it all together had never seen action, it wouldn't surprise me a bit, and I wouldn't hold it against them. All Coast Guard vessels, or most of them, are armed. So the equipment we had was just the worst, and I'm living proof.

The flak jacket that I had on, I might have been wearing a blue blazer. The rounds I took went straight through the flak jacket. The round I took in my head went straight through the helmet. The only impedance it offered was to make the round larger, flatten it out. The radio telephones were terrible between the crew. But that was my job, was to stand on the bridge, convey the orders from the skipper to the weapons.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I see. Let's talk a little bit more about the operations. Did you work in conjunction with Navy units like swift boats or any of the others and with Navy personnel?

MR. GILLIES: Once in a while, but not often.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MR. GILLIES: Not often.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't, at least not at first, go up any of the waterways or that stuff. You stayed off. Like we were talking about before, you never -- the swift boats are shallower draft, so they could go up the canals.

MR. GILLIES: Right. They were in the canals all the time. Well, not all the time, but a lot. We were deeper than they were. Their patrols were shorter. Their patrols were more intense. Their time off was longer, and it all balanced out. That's the way it should have been. There weren't many boats in our part of the squadron to begin with, and coordinating was difficult because the patrol areas were quite large. So, for you to coordinate a mission with this, I mean, it would take you half a day to get together. So they were very, very -- it was rare that we would operate with another.

INTERVIEWER: I know John Kerry was operating on the same base that you were. Did you ever have any contact with him or ever talk with him at all?

MR. GILLIES: I might have. I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: You just found out later in the aftermath of your service.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. I couldn't have told you that he was in the same squadron because his exploits -- there was another Navy swift boat operator whose exploits were much more outrageous and talked about than his. I don't think that's hard for people to believe that.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: And I don't remember Kerry -- I don't remember his name being used. It's entirely possible, I just don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MR. GILLIES: And I certainly don't remember meeting him or becoming a buddy of his or anything at that point in time.

INTERVIEWER: Right. And then when you were operating, started out, MARKET TIME was the overarching strategy, I guess, put down by the Navy for small craft operating in the shallow waters?

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Did that switch over to SEALORDS while you were there, or do you remember anything about that?

MR. GILLIES: I know the name, SEALORD.

INTERVIEWER: And did it influence your operations at all or it was just a different name?

MR. GILLIES: I don't think so. I can't tell you how soon after I arrived I was in the 14-foot Boston Whaler going up a canal. I don't know how that developed, I wasn't part of the conversation. And it all kind of melded together to me now. You could tell me the first small boat operation was 5 years, 2 years before I got there, and that's entirely possible. I really don't know. I don't know where I fit in that continuum.

INTERVIEWER: Timeline?

MR. GILLIES: Yep. But I knew that if that Boston Whaler was going to leave the 82-footer, I'm in it.

INTERVIEWER: So there were small boat operations even within a month or two after you got there? Were there small boat operations?

MR. GILLIES: I don't know that. I can't remember.

INTERVIEWER: But there were prior to December, there were some, maybe? Or you don't know.

MR. GILLIES: With me.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, yeah. I'd been on dozens of them.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe what the small boat was like, what it looked like physically?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. It's a 14-foot Boston Whaler that you could buy today, side console, 40-horse Evinrude, two gas tanks, three seats, a cleat on the bow.

INTERVIEWER: How much armor does it have?

MR. GILLIES: None. Flak jackets.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Portable armor, I guess.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. Flak jackets, that was it.

INTERVIEWER: Or whatever you call flak jackets.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did the engine have any protection or could you protect it in any way? Did you put flak jackets on the engines to protect it?

MR. GILLIES: No, for lots of reasons. A, we barely had enough flak jackets for ourselves, and you'd have to cover the gas tanks, and it would have been -- I don't know if anybody thought of it or not. I didn't think of it. But I do remember somebody telling me, fact or fiction I'm not sure, that when we came back from that day in December, the boat was pulled up onto the deck and somebody counted the holes in the Boston Whaler. I don't want to exaggerate, but let me just say there were a lot, and not one round hit either gas tank or the engine. If they had, I wouldn't be talking to you.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: So many parts of it were just a miracle.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: And some parts were not.

INTERVIEWER: Were not a miracle, yeah. Well, it's got probably 10 to 14 inches of freeboard. In other words, that's how close it is to the water.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It's fiberglass, it's 14 feet long.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. Heavy.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MR. GILLIES: Boston Whalers are all heavy.

INTERVIEWER: So maybe that was a good thing for a fiberglass boat.

MR. GILLIES: No, not really. I don't know why -- I mean, the boats that had a reputation for being just ridiculously heavy, Boston Whalers are right up there. You buy one today, you could spend ungodly quantities of fuel pushing it from one place to another because it's so heavy. It was an okay boat for what we had to do with it except you've got three guys, the fuel, and this heavy boat with a 40-horse engine. Today the Coast Guard wouldn't think of it because now they've got all this money. It was so clear from the day I got in the Coast Guard until the day I left that we were the poor stepchild of the military, and I'm sure because of Homeland Security, that's changed drastically. I mean, I see Coast Guard boats from Boothbay that come over here, they don't have Evinrudes and they don't have Johnsons, they have Hondas, and those rigid-hull inflatables are probably the most expensive 25-foot boats you can buy, I mean, they're just outrageously expensive.

And I work in a boat, I'm a fishing guide in the summer, I know a little bit about boats. So the Coast Guard of today is not the Coast Guard of then. And that Boston Whaler certainly was not designed for that mission; it was a boat that they went out on the market and bought. We had them in Baltimore Harbor, we had one, and we'd go out into the harbor when it was calm, you could efficiently, one guy could efficiently, cover a lot of territory in a 14-foot Boston Whaler. Three?

INTERVIEWER: So it was underpowered --

MR. GILLIES: Oh, way underpowered.

INTERVIEWER: -- in that kind of capacity --

MR. GILLIES: Very noisy.

INTERVIEWER: -- three grown men, their weaponry, and flak jackets, and all that.

MR. GILLIES: The fuel was a big part, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And the fuel.

MR. GILLIES: And why we carried two fuel tanks. I mean, we weren't gone that long. But crossing those bars to get into those canals, you had to know what you were doing.

INTERVIEWER: How shallow did the bars become? I mean, they must have been really shallow.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. What, 2 feet?

INTERVIEWER: Really? And then you'd get back in a canal and it would --

MR. GILLIES: Be deep.

INTERVIEWER: -- it would be cut out by the current --

MR. GILLIES: I have no idea how deep it was. I do remember pulling ashore once, one of my first missions -- I don't want to call them missions, the first time I was in a canal -- pulled in, pulled to the shore, and I can't remember what we were doing, investigating something, and I stepped out, and I didn't step on the hard shore off the bow, I stepped off the side assuming -- that banking went straight down, and I immediately was underwater. The current -- I can show you the slide -- the current going in and out of those canals was ferocious, which was why on the day when I was wounded, it's a miracle that any of us survived because we were going against the current coming out, and I'm barely moving this thing, and I've got it wide open. So the whole thing was just a whack job.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, let me ask you a little bit more about small boat operations. It sounds like you did them many times during your deployment there. And can you describe what the reason, the missions, were for that and who typically were the crew on board the small boat when it deployed up these waterways?

MR. GILLIES: I don't know what the mission was on paper in Saigon, or even in Captain Hamilton's office, his desk, I don't know how it read. From my point of view, the mission was to go up the canal and see what you can find, and if you encounter somebody, it's a free-fire zone, take them under fire, and then come back.

INTERVIEWER: Take them under fire from a small fiberglass boat.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. The second mission would be to go up there, see what you can see, and if you don't want to -- if it's just huts and something or a little makeshift temple or something, come back, give us that intelligence -- I don't know what Hamilton did with it, but he probably put it in a report and it went somewhere. So it was intelligence gathering and also looking for the enemy.

INTERVIEWER: Were other 82-footers doing the same thing with their small boats?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so it was a common mission, as far as you know, for all of the -- at that time.

MR. GILLIES: I don't know if it was a decision of the individual skipper or not, but I know that there were some boats, 82-footers, that either never did it or did it very seldom.

INTERVIEWER: It just depended on the skipper --

MR. GILLIES: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: -- and his forward-leaning whatever.

MR. GILLIES: Exactly. Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever encounter in your initial missions any hostile fire or have any firefights when you were on board the small boats when you did those missions in the summer of --

MR. GILLIES: Nope.

INTERVIEWER: Summer and fall?

MR. GILLIES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Find any important intelligence that you passed along as far as you knew?

MR. GILLIES: I don't know. We found stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Right, and reported back.

MR. GILLIES: We went at all different times of day and night. The night operations, I remember one in particular on the north end of Phu Quoc Island -- it may have involved several boats actually -- and I think it's why we didn't do missions with several boats, because it was just a mishmash of, "Are we doing it now?" and you'd get to the mouth of the canal and you'd have to wait for somebody to decide whether you're going to go in, and there was always somebody in the mix who was cautious or overthinking stuff, I don't know what the hell, but, god, it would just drive you crazy, you know, sitting here in this 14-foot Boston Whaler while you talk to your mother or something, I don't know what's going on.

INTERVIEWER: You could have been sitting ducks out there if you were waiting for orders or whatever.

MR. GILLIES: That was the expression that was used over and over, we are sitting ducks, because not only are you sitting, but you're making an ungodly amount of noise in a country that's pretty quiet, not a lot of machinery, and everybody knows you're coming, they know who you are, they know you're armed, they know you're available, and lining these canals, some of them, were old bunkers left over from when the Indochina War was going on.

INTERVIEWER: With the French.

MR. GILLIES: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: Built by the Viet Minh, I assume, mounds of mud with a mailbox like slot. They would dive into the back of it and fire out, and that's where the guy was who shot me. Brilliant.

INTERVIEWER: Just kind of stepping back a minute. When you changed skippers, did the tenor of operations change, too? I mean, I don't want to necessarily place blame or anything, I'm just curious from Hamilton to Collom, things changed?

MR. GILLIES: Hamilton was very aggressive. Hamilton wanted something to happen, and if it was going to happen, he wanted to be in the mix. And Collom did what he was told, I don't think he initiated. I don't remember having conversations with him about whether he questioned what he was being told, he might have questioned the wisdom of it. He was a good officer and he ran a good boat, but he didn't have energy like Hamilton did.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, or the gusto or whatever.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, and that energy could have gotten us all killed.

INTERVIEWER: Hamilton's.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So when you did these small boat operations, typically who crewed them? How did you decide who was going to be on board the small boat when it went out on a mission?

MR. GILLIES: I don't remember that dynamic. I'm sure that the skipper and I would have discussed it. I'm sure nobody went unless they wanted to.

INTERVIEWER: So it was volunteer.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, I'm sure of that. I don't know. I know there wasn't a wheel of rotations.

INTERVIEWER: Do you suppose maybe the enlisted just decided these guys have gone, it's my turn, I'll volunteer perhaps?

MR. GILLIES: Maybe, maybe.

INTERVIEWER: I'm just guessing.

MR. GILLIES: There was some rotation among the enlisted men. Some did not -- the chiefs did not go that I remember.

INTERVIEWER: They had two chiefs on board?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, nor should they have probably. The skipper obviously could not go.

INTERVIEWER: Right. And you went every time?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, no, I don't want to say that.

INTERVIEWER: But most times?

MR. GILLIES: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: And you volunteered or it was expected?

MR. GILLIES: I wanted to go.

INTERVIEWER: You wanted to go.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And you felt as a leader of the --

MR. GILLIES: We were on a boat. No, no, it wasn't any of that. It was give me a boat.

INTERVIEWER: You're a boat guy.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. I mean, the boat that they ran back and forth from the APL to the officers club, I wanted to run that thing. It was one of those LSM, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Landing ship mechanical or --

MR. GILLIES: Or medium. I can't remember what the "M" stands --

INTERVIEWER: But it was landing craft basically.

MR. GILLIES: Landing craft.

INTERVIEWER: Large landing.

MR. GILLIES: Operating from the stern, noisy as all hell, because they brought the cargo down from the --

INTERVIEWER: It had a ramp on it.

MR. GILLIES: Exactly. And, oh, I'm dying to drive one, and they wouldn't let me drive it. And so I wanted to do it, but I also -- and I was obviously consequently the senior guy in the boat, so I get to drive.

INTERVIEWER: Are you talking about the LSM or the --

MR. GILLIES: No, no, the small boat.

INTERVIEWER: At this point, I mean, midway, or you were there for 6 months, but 5 months into it or however long, did you feel like this was working out? I mean, it wasn't like you were just really hot to get out to Vietnam and serve there. I mean, you did it because you felt that you were trained for it and you were going to go, but once you were into it, several months, did you feel like, well, I'm going to make it through this, or I'm glad I went? Or how was your -- at that point, did you feel like you were fitting in -- do you know what I'm saying?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, I do. If you had asked me the day before I was wounded, "How are you feeling about your service in Vietnam?" --

INTERVIEWER: Right, exactly.

MR. GILLIES: -- I would have said the learning curve was very steep. I mean, at one point, for instance, we were sitting in the galley. I think it was Hamilton, Hamilton and I, and I said, "I'll bet you 5 bucks that in 10 minutes, by myself, I can get this boat underway."

INTERVIEWER: He said that to you or you said --

MR. GILLIES: I said that to him. I had to light off the engines, start the generators. There's a lot of mechanical stuff, but I had learned how to do it because that's what I did in my spare time.

INTERVIEWER: What? You trained yourself to do it?

MR. GILLIES: I took the fireman's course, for instance, while I was there, because I wanted to learn what these engine guys do. I was an English major, I would have loved to have read, but I didn't have any books. There wasn't anything else to do, and I'll be damned if I'm going to sit around and stare into space, so I tried to learn stuff. I didn't learn navigation.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like you really wanted to learn how to operate boats and anything associated with boats.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, I loved it. So as long as I was learning something and making some progress, I was okay with it. The politics of it, the efficacy of it, I was a 24-, 25-year-old nimrod who didn't think seriously about anything until I got back, and then I did.

INTERVIEWER: But you thought perhaps prior to early December, when this event took place on the small boats, that perhaps you might have a career in the Coast Guard.

MR. GILLIES: I loved the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and you thought this might work out in Vietnam, I might make it through the whole deployment fine.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, sure. I wasn't worried about dying. Uh-uh. And I think if you put me in a room with every other 25-year-old who served in Vietnam, they'd say the same thing. You don't want to think about that.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Yeah. I just wanted to find out a little bit about Eddie Hernandez, too, before we talk about the December 5th small boat operation. I guess it sounds like he was one of two Hispanic Americans, as far as you know, that were on board? Was the chief --

MR. GILLIES: Two at the time. There was another enlisted man, Rocha I think his last name was -- R-o-c-h-a. I can't remember his first name. And I think he was a deckhand or third class boatswain mate, but Rocha I remember. So then it would have been -- but they wouldn't have been all at the same time, and they may not have been, they may not have even overlapped at all. Santos --

INTERVIEWER: He was there when you got on board.

MR. GILLIES: I think so. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And was it unusual at the time to see Hispanics serving in the Coast Guard? Had you been on board boats where there were that many or had seen that many minorities on board?

MR. GILLIES: In my experience in Baltimore --

INTERVIEWER: You may not have thought about it.

MR. GILLIES: In Baltimore, there were none. As a matter of fact, in the entire Captain of the Port crew -- I don't know how many there were, but there were 6 or 7 officers, so there have got to be 70 or 80 men, I would guess?

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. GILLIES: There was only one black SA that I remember. It was a pretty white group.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So there weren't a heck of a lot of minority people generally, not certainly as many as you see today, for example.

MR. GILLIES: Uh-uh.

INTERVIEWER: Not that you've been in --

MR. GILLIES: No. However, in the Navy, the swift boats, there were a lot of African Americans in swift boats. I don't want to say a lot, but there were, relative to us.

INTERVIEWER: Compared to the Coast Guard.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Anything you remember about Eddie? When did he come on board? It was after you came on board.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. He was really young.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MR. GILLIES: Short, very muscular, really muscular, handsome, handsome kid.

INTERVIEWER: Did he work out? How come he was so --

MR. GILLIES: I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Because everybody says that about him.

MR. GILLIES: I don't remember him working out on the boat, but he was very muscular, very, very good shape. Pearly white teeth. Handsome boy. Wonderful temperament.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MR. GILLIES: Just an easy-going, happy guy. Tell him a joke, he'll laugh for an hour. He was just a heck of a nice kid.

I know he had a girlfriend, and I know he had -- and this is the sort of thing a kid his age might have told me when he did, but he told me he had a '56 Chevy, lived in San Antonio. I'm not sure I remember anything else.

INTERVIEWER: I've seen pictures where he's flipping burgers or steaks or something. Did he like to cook on the grill sometimes? Do you remember any of that?

MR. GILLIES: I don't think in the -- I have a picture downstairs of one of those occasions. I don't think we probably -- we had the capacity to have some fun. If you'd ask me how many times we grilled on deck, I would say in the 6 months I was there, once. And it wasn't because we didn't want to have fun. The weather just stunk. We were there during the monsoon season. One of you, you'd go up and look on the radar screen to see how many waterspouts you could count. I mean, it was just --

INTERVIEWER: I didn't realize it was that bad.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, the weather was just foolish. And these pictures -- I have a picture somewhere of the 82-footer sitting in calm water with its reflection? What's that?

INTERVIEWER: It was the only time it ever happened.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: Oh, the weather was just awful. I mean, the thought of going -- I remember some of these Boston Whalers would go waterskiing once.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MR. GILLIES: Which was actually pretty good idea. We just had enough power so that a guy that wasn't heavy, you could get him up on the skis. We didn't have any water skis. I don't know where the guys got these water skis.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: It was one of the other boats. But they went in a canal, water skied up and down the canal.

INTERVIEWER: Wasn't that a little dangerous?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, stupid, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Wow! I heard that he was a boxer. Had you ever heard anything about that?

MR. GILLIES: Well, that rings a bell.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know if that's true or not.

MR. GILLIES: That rings a bell, that he might have been. And if you looked at him, you'd say, mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER: He was built for it, I guess.

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Okay. He was a fireman on board.

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: In other words, and he stood watches down in the engine room, doing that?

MR. GILLIES: Yep. And I think the general quarters, he manned a machine gun, I think. And his favorite weapon was the .30-caliber machine gun.

INTERVIEWER: That's the M-60, I guess that's what you call it?

MR. GILLIES: It wouldn't surprise me if he was the only person on the whole squadron that could fire one single-handedly because it's heavy. Well, let's put it this way, he sat on the bow of the Boston Whaler with the M-60. If he had turned, you know, let's say off the port side and fired it, it would have spun the boat around.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It had that much kick?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. And he handled this weapon by himself, not mounted.

INTERVIEWER: So you had to kind of hold it to your --

MR. GILLIES: He had to hold it, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Hold it under the barrel?

MR. GILLIES: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: So it had some kind of cooling mechanism on the barrel, I guess.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. And he always wore the bandoleers, and we would kid about Emiliano Zapata.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MR. GILLIES: You've got the deed box and you --

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like he was pretty lighthearted. I mean --

MR. GILLIES: He was a good kid.

INTERVIEWER: He would laugh a lot.

MR. GILLIES: Good kid.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So this event that took place on December 5, I guess there was a new -- was it a commander or lieutenant commander that came?

MR. GILLIES: Blaha?

INTERVIEWER: Blaha?

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, Charles Blaha, I guess his name was.

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: So he boarded the boat? Can you kind of describe what happened that he got involved in the *Point Cypress* and how he came aboard and all that?

MR. GILLIES: I think somebody delivered him to us. I don't think we met him in An Thoi. I think he was delivered to us by another 82-footer, so we knew he was coming. And as I remember, his job was to come down from Saigon to check out these small boat operations and to make a report back as to whether this is a stupid idea or not.

And I don't remember having a -- I'm sure -- you know, he shared a bunk with us, so I'm sure I ate with him and chatted with him, but I don't remember any of that.

INTERVIEWER: There was always an extra bunk on board for an officer.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. Yeah. I think actually in some boats the chiefs might have stayed in the state room, or the officers, or one chief.

INTERVIEWER: Senior chief or --

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: Anyway. So on the day, the 5th of December, I was going to take a small boat up the -- I think it's the Rach Gia River. Eddie was going to be in the bow with a .30-caliber. Blaha was given an M-16, I think, maybe a grenade launcher, one or the other. One of us had a grenade launcher and the other had the M-16.

INTERVIEWER: So you were pretty heavily armed.

MR. GILLIES: Adequately, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Adequately.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. The grenade launcher is -- you know -- it's like a fat shotgun, big, big barrel, like this, and the grenade looks like a fat bullet.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: It doesn't look like a grenade, it looks like just a big bullet.

INTERVIEWER: It's an M-79 or something like that?

MR. GILLIES: I think that's right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Okay.

MR. GILLIES: I've forgotten. You could fire it point-blank, but you'd be pretty stupid to because it sent out wire, its fragmentation was wire, which was wound inside the head of the bullet, and it exploded on impact. So it was meant to be launched this way. So it wasn't a terribly useful weapon.

INTERVIEWER: And you all knew that you couldn't fire at close range --

MR. GILLIES: You could, but you better --

INTERVIEWER: Have a good reason to.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. It would have been perfect if you could have hit the mail slot.

INTERVIEWER: Did you talk to Blaha much at all before you went on that small boat operation?

MR. GILLIES: I'm sure I did, but I can't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. But it was all basically for his benefit.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. And we didn't do a dry run, and I'm sure we didn't talk about if this happens, then we'll do this, because you had to make it up as you went along because --

INTERVIEWER: You had no idea what was going to --

MR. GILLIES: Nothing ever happened twice.

INTERVIEWER: And in the past, I guess you'd done these small boat operations, you gathered your intel or seen what you saw and brought it back, but you had no indication that you were going to wind up in some sort of combat operation.

MR. GILLIES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. GILLIES: So we launched the boat, crossed the bar, went into this canal, going with the current, which means we were going pretty fast.

INTERVIEWER: How fast would they go fully loaded with three men and weaponry on board?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, without a current probably 15 knots.

INTERVIEWER: Between 15 in 20 miles per hour?

MR. GILLIES: So we were probably going 25 knots with the current.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

MR. GILLIES: We were hauling ass going up this canal.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And they're loud, so --

MR. GILLIES: Loud.

INTERVIEWER: -- so when you go by, people hear you, or --

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, this was an old two-stroke engine, it's loud. And I don't remember exactly how far up, certainly a mile up the canal. And --

INTERVIEWER: Was there a reason why you picked that particular one?

MR. GILLIES: No.

INTERVIEWER: It was just random perhaps.

MR. GILLIES: No, no, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: They picked it, you didn't pick it.

MR. GILLIES: They picked it. And I don't know whether it was only in the Point Cypress or whether it was generally, but I wasn't part of the strategy or the tactic decisions.

INTERVIEWER: That was all up to the COs.

MR. GILLIES: I think it all came down from the operations officer in An Thoi, the job that Harry Hamilton took when he left the *Point Cypress*.

INTERVIEWER: He became operations officer for the squadron.

MR. GILLIES: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Squadron?

MR. GILLIES: Flotilla.

INTERVIEWER: Flotilla.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, I think it was the flotilla.

INTERVIEWER: So do you think that because of that, the operations might have been a lot more forward-leaning and aggressive than --

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. I would have expected that. So a mile. I remember the weather was not remarkable, not a bad day. I remember coming around a corner, a bend, and seeing a man -- no, I saw a dog running on the shore. And we had passed several bunkers.

INTERVIEWER: Are these levies? Are they kind of higher up or are they just flat shoreline along these --

MR. GILLIES: At high tide it would be maybe 2 feet above the water level, not much.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, wow.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. So you could take the bow of the Boston Whaler, for instance, at high tide and beach it and step right ashore, you wouldn't have to climb up a bank in mangrove swamp. And I'm sure full moon after a week of rain, you would not want to be there, and these bunkers were made out of mud, there was not a lot of grass and topsoil. So anyway, I see this black dog on the left-hand shore running --

INTERVIEWER: And you're going with the current.

MR. GILLIES: Going with the current. So I slowed down --

INTERVIEWER: Did that indicate something to you?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That there were people around?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, yeah. It never occurred to me this would be a wild dog. A dog means somebody is going to be around here. And I would also look for geometrics in the brush, two sticks at right angles, for instance, that would tell you. Nature didn't do that. You'd look for signs like that, that you were approaching something that might be inhabited.

INTERVIEWER: You had done this dozens of times before. You really kind of knew what to look for.

MR. GILLIES: I can't remember, just dozens.

INTERVIEWER: You were experienced enough that you knew what was natural and what was not natural.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And you were looking for things.

MR. GILLIES: In a mangrove swamp it's not that hard. For instance, we'd find footbridges that were built across the canals, and they would show up quite clearly, and they've have nets hanging from them sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: To trap? Or for fishing?

MR. GILLIES: Fishing. And the question would be, is this a footbridge, is it a booby-trapped footbridge? You know, we had to treat every single one of them like this is not how I want to die, you know, so you had to figure it out. I have one of the slide shows, Eddie Hernandez dismantling one of these footbridges. And that was part of the job, is we were just supposed to make life difficult. We found -- I don't even know what it was. It was like a tent platform. I know we sat it on fire. We were constantly supposed to make life uncomfortable for them, both with just fire random 80-mm rounds into the crap, if they were there, just to keep them awake.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So that was kind of what -- did you do that on some of the small boats?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Harassment. Harassment and Interdiction, I think were the two terms, now that it comes back to me.

So I saw the dog, and then I saw this man wearing black pajamas carrying an AK-47, run behind the dog toward us along the shore, and then he got down into a bunker, and at that point the bunker was maybe 15 feet ahead of us further up, and I turned toward the bunker, not to engage it, but to start to turn around.

INTERVIEWER: To get out of there?

MR. GILLIES: To get out of there, because I didn't want to get beyond it. If I got beyond it with this current, we would have been toast.

INTERVIEWER: So you already knew that you'd be going very slow, to fight that current.

MR. GILLIES: You are very aware of the current when you're in a 14-foot Boston Whaler because it's right there. And this wasn't a lot of thinking going on here. I just turned toward the bunker for the purpose of turning around, and I think he fired and shot Eddie Hernandez as I was completing the turn.

INTERVIEWER: And this was the guy with the AK-47?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Was in the bunker firing at you.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. And he had it on single shot. He was firing one at a time, "boomp, boomp, boomp, boomp," not automatic.

INTERVIEWER: So nobody from the small boat had fired at him.

MR. GILLIES: Nope.

INTERVIEWER: He started firing.

MR. GILLIES: Eddie Hernandez never fired a shot, and he was -- I'm pretty sure I'm correct. I think he was hit in the very first volley, three to four shots, and Eddie Hernandez collapsed in the bow. And I couldn't tell if he was dead or he was just wounded.

Blaha, because he's sitting on my left-hand side, would have to shoot through me or over me to get to shoot this other guy, and he's ready to. He's got the M-16 or the grenade launcher -- I can't remember which -- poised to fire, but he has to wait until I get just a little further away, and he can shoot then and put it behind me and fire. And somewhere in there, he's wounded. I think he's hit in the thigh, the groin, and his hand.

INTERVIEWER: Blaha, three places.

MR. GILLIES: I can't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Something, yeah.

MR. GILLIES: I know one of them is in his groin. He drops his weapon.

INTERVIEWER: Because of the wounds.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. And I'm driving.

INTERVIEWER: So you're left.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. And I obviously have the throttle wide open, and it seemed like we were going like a half-a-mile an hour, and this guy is "boomp, boomp, boomp." He keeps firing. And a banana clip on an AK-47, I don't know how many rounds it holds, but it's a lot. Fifty rounds maybe?

And I'm hit in the right shoulder, and my right arm falls, and then I'm aware that I've been hit in my head. Head wounds, you know, it wasn't a big deal, but blood was just pouring out. I remember my father -- we raised horses, and one way he would get a disobedient horse to behave is he'd get on board the horse with a beer bottle full of water -- he chose a beer bottle because they were notoriously thin glass, and he'd break it over the horse's head between his ears, do the horse absolutely no harm, the horse would barely feel it, he'd hear the noise, obviously, and then the next sensation is all the liquid pouring. My father developed this theory that it would scare the shit out of the horse and he would behave.

INTERVIEWER: I bet.

MR. GILLIES: I have no idea if it worked, but anyway, that was what I felt. Blood is coming down my face and I'm like, god, I've really been hit because I felt no sensation in my arm. It just went limp.

INTERVIEWER: You knew you were hit, though.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, oh, yeah, and I couldn't move it. But I didn't think it was serious because it didn't hurt. So I'm operating the throttle and the tiller with my left hand, and it's a straight shot. Just waiting for time to go by while I get the hell out of there listening to these rounds go off. And I don't know whether he stopped because he ran out of ammunition or whether we went around a bend, I can't remember what caused the end to come, but it did. I got on the radio, called -- I think maybe Blaha did this, I think I did, got on the radio, called Collom and said we've taken fire, we have wounded, and I'm headed for the mouth.

INTERVIEWER: Did the flak jackets provide any protection whatsoever for any of you?

MR. GILLIES: No. They were leftover flak jackets probably from World War I.

INTERVIEWER: They were old.

MR. GILLIES: They were old. The zippers were so encased with salt and rust that some of them you couldn't even zip, torn outer fabric. They were just pitiful. And the way the surgeon explained it to me is that when that round that went through my shoulder hit that flak jacket, all the flak jacket did was flatten it out to make it five times bigger than it would have been if it had gone straight through, which is why it did all the damage.

INTERVIEWER: How slow do you think you were going up when you were trying to get out against the current? I mean, you were going really fast going in --

MR. GILLIES: Ten? Ten maybe?

INTERVIEWER: So it would have been easy target.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, it was -- I'm sure time slows down, but it seemed to me like it took us minutes to get out of his range, and it's "boomp, boomp." I mean, he fired once a second. It wouldn't surprise me if he fired 40 rounds after he hit me. It was just it would not stop. And I had this overarching feeling that the next round was going to be the one, it's going to hit the engine -- that was my real nightmare, was that he'd hit the engine and we'd drift back. That I did not want. I would have done anything -- I think I would have, you know, taken the boat ashore or jumped overboard, I would have done

something, there was no way I was going to drift back to that guy. It wasn't that it complicated my thoughts, but I was aware that if he hits that engine, we're screwed.

INTERVIEWER: He was close enough that he had -- and he had a weapon that was accurate enough where he was actually hitting the targets he was shooting for. I'm kind of surprised he didn't try to shoot out the engine because he would have been smart enough to realize that he would have had you completely at his mercy if he had hit that engine, but he didn't.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. And the boat was apparently full.

INTERVIEWER: It's kind of like you said before we were recording, it was a miracle that he did not hit that engine or the gas, the fuel tanks, or it would have been curtains after that.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. And I know that he put holes in the boat because when we got back to site of the *Point Cypress*, there was a lot of water in that boat, and it wasn't water that we took over the side. It was perfectly calm in the canal. It was water coming in through holes that he had made.

INTERVIEWER: So it's conceivable that you might have sunk before you got to --

MR. GILLIES: Well, they say a Boston Whaler won't sink, but --

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: No, I think you're right, we would have been awash. I mean, the bullet that hit my head came in like here on the helmet.

INTERVIEWER: Above your right ear.

MR. GILLIES: Just above my ear, followed the -- this is what I was told -- followed the concave of the helmet up above, and then exited the other side. It's like one of those old kid trick arrows you'd get. How the hell it didn't -- it took a chunk out of my skull, but it didn't kill me.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, wow. It's like you were pretty lucky, very lucky, that you weren't killed.

MR. GILLIES: Lucky 55 times, every round. And I think that is what washes over me when I think about Eddie Hernandez, because if there was that much luck for me, why wasn't there enough luck for him? You know?

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure. Absolutely.

MR. GILLIES: It wouldn't have taken a whole lot of luck, an additional amount of luck, for him to make it. He could have just been wounded.

INTERVIEWER: Right. And I guess the bullet entered -- it was just the particular angle and exited, and that was what caused all the internal injuries for him.

MR. GILLIES: One round?

INTERVIEWER: I don't know. Was it one round?

MR. GILLIES: I have no idea, I have no idea.

INTERVIEWER: I think there's after-action reports that indicate that the trajectory was just -- I won't say for sure guarantee that it was just the trajectory through his body after it entered was what caused all the damage.

MR. GILLIES: It might have been the flak jacket that turned it. You know what I mean?

INTERVIEWER: Right, right.

MR. GILLIES: Ridiculous. I think that would be the part of the Coast Guard that might have driven me out of the Coast Guard, was that it was so poor. I mean, the boats that we had in Baltimore, for instance, were leftover World War II patrol boats. I mean, they were a joke. The equipment was just crap.

So we get back to the *Point Cypress* --

INTERVIEWER: You said you radioed --

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: -- Jon Collom. What happened between the point where you finally got out of range and the boat picking you up, the 82-footer picking you up?

MR. GILLIES: Nothing.

INTERVIEWER: Just trying to get out of there as fast as you can against a current which is extremely strong?

MR. GILLIES: Yep, yep.

INTERVIEWER: Hoping that you don't founder, I guess, with all the holes.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, I don't think I was worried about that, and I don't think I was worried about -- I don't think I was aware of the water in the boat until we got back. I wasn't worried about anything else happening because we --

INTERVIEWER: You were out of range at that point?

MR. GILLIES: I saw nothing on the way in that indicated there was something else waiting for us, we've got to go through this again. I mean, I was just driving. And that communication by radio I think was just one message, it wasn't a lot of chitchat.

INTERVIEWER: You just told them we've taken fire --

MR. GILLIES: We're on our way out.

INTERVIEWER: We're on our way out.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So I understand that he jumped the bar, which was very -- or whatever you call it, plowed through it, because the 82-footers have, what, 6 feet of draft?

MR. GILLIES: Probably.

INTERVIEWER: And there was probably about 1 foot of water over that bar, or a few feet at best?

MR. GILLIES: He dug a trench, let's put it that way. I don't know how deep the trench was, but I'm sure he dug a trench.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Definitely not standard operating procedure, I guess, for a cutter captain.

MR. GILLIES: No. And, I mean, as it turned out, he didn't have to do it, and that's what would have gotten him in trouble.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. GILLIES: Because I could have made it out, if I made it that far, but he didn't know that. I could have passed out just as I got to the bar. Well, then what do you do?

INTERVIEWER: Right. Were the two other men in the small boat, were they conscious at that point?

MR. GILLIES: Uh-uh.

INTERVIEWER: Both of them?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, wait a second. Blaha might have been conscious, not communicative, in shock maybe. That's a good question. I don't remember. I'm trying to remember the procedure when we got -- I can't remember whether I -- they used to raise the Boston Whaler onto the deck with cables from the four corners to --

INTERVIEWER: Some kind of derrick or --

MR. GILLIES: A bull one, it would swing out and would lift it up. And if you had asked me if you could lift that Boston Whaler with four inches of water in it and three men, I would have said no way, but it's possible that's how we did it. I can't remember how I got from the Whaler in on the deck of the --

INTERVIEWER: But you didn't climb up the side.

MR. GILLIES: I might have.

INTERVIEWER: Or is it hard to remember?

MR. GILLIES: I might have. I can't remember. Somebody would have helped me, of course.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. GILLIES: Anyway, we got all that situated, we got spun around, got out of there, and I remember I was lying on the deck of the *Point Cypress*, and it really pissed me off, two things. One is that they put me on the deck plate right above the engine, and that deck plate must have been 300 degrees, I was frying, and it finally dawned on me that it's not part of my problem, it's the frickin' deck. So I had to ask them to move me, I said, "Get me off this deck plate." And I remember also I was coughing up blood, and they didn't know what to do about that, and --

INTERVIEWER: Weren't there any medical procedures or somebody trained in EMT? I mean, I know none of you were a corpsman, but still.

MR. GILLIES: We were all supposedly trained, but they should have known that. So finally I got myself situated correctly. I want to be lying face down because I don't want to choke on my own blood, especially if I pass out. But it took a lot of negotiating with people. And they were upset and confused, but I just didn't think I had to be the one who was negotiating.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: And I don't know what was going on with Blaha, and I remember Eddie was in the other -- he was way at the fantail, and I know he was there, on the other side of the Boston Whaler. I couldn't see him, but I knew he was there. And I didn't know whether he was dead or not. And I don't remember how or when I found out that he died. They may not have told me for all sorts of reasons. I don't remember how I found out. But anyway, we had to steam quite a way off the coast to rendezvous with a Navy vessel that was big enough to accommodate a helicopter -- they called them DUSTOFF helicopters. So they got three of us onto the deck of the Navy vessel, and the helicopter came pretty quickly, as I remember, and they were doing some sort of triage, you know, "These guys have got to go first," or whatever, I remember that, and I remember a corpsman handled it correctly. He put me face down on the stretcher in the helicopter, which was probably -- it might have saved my life, but it also scared the hell out of me because the doors of the helicopter were gone, and I'm lying in the stretcher looking down at the jungle as we're flying, very low altitude, and it's just dusk. The helicopter makes a hell of a lot of noise -- if you think a 40-horse Mercury makes noise -- and we're taking rounds.

INTERVIEWER: You were taking rounds in the helicopter and you're watching this?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, tracer rounds, coming up from the jungle.

INTERVIEWER: Does not inspire confidence, does it?

MR. GILLIES: In the whole day, that was the scariest part of the whole thing because I felt -- I was strapped into the stretcher, utterly helpless, face down, looking at these tracer rounds.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

MR. GILLIES: So we get to Vinh Tuy, they take us off the helicopter on the stretchers and literally put us on sawhorses outside, outside this canvas M.A.S.H [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] tent and --

INTERVIEWER: You felt like just a piece of meat at that point.

MR. GILLIES: Well, it gets worse. So I'm lying there. I don't know how many -- there were lots of helicopters coming in, and there were stretchers of us. You know, this was the Tet Offensive, it was a busy time. I don't know how many people were coming in, but it seemed like a lot. And these two surgeons are walking up and down the row doing triage, and they get to me -- in fact, it literally was like a meat market, one says, "That's a debridement, I just did one, you do it."

INTERVIEWER: That's a what?

MR. GILLIES: A debridement, a cleaning, a wound cleaning. And they're arguing about who's done it, who doesn't want to do it. So anyway --

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Did you say anything?

MR. GILLIES: No, no. The guy who did the surgery on me is a Major John Todd.

INTERVIEWER: How did you know that? Got to know him later?

MR. GILLIES: No. Well, he came to see me after the surgery --

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

MR. GILLIES: -- which was probably pretty nice of him. And based on -- because you can imagine the number of medical evaluations I've had since -- apparently he did a really pretty crappy job.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

MR. GILLIES: But under less circumstances than how many other people he had to save in order to -- I'm not judging him a bit. He's a very nice guy, but under the circumstances, he could have done a lot more. So the course of the bullet came in, hit a rib, broke the rib, which was why my lung was punctured, why I was bleeding out of my mouth, the bullet hit the rib, followed the course of the rib around, and came out my shoulder, which is why I've lost the use of my arm, because the nerves that run my arm were severed.

So he did his debridement and sewed me up, and the condition that I was in then is the condition I'm in now, even though I spent almost a year and a half in physical therapy, first as an inpatient and then as an outpatient every single day, seven days a week, for a year and a half, at the Marine Hospital in Boston. If I were pissed off any, it was the year and a half of my life that was wasted going to that fricking physical therapy.

INTERVIEWER: So it really didn't do you much good, but you --

MR. GILLIES: Bless their hearts, they thought maybe the nerves would regenerate, and I'd get my -- because I can't extend my fingers. I can't move my thumb. I can grip, so I can carry a briefcase or a fishing rod, but I can't open my fingers. So shaking hands with somebody, for instance, I have to consciously open my fingers. And this half of the bicep doesn't get nerve endings, so it doesn't work. It should be a --

INTERVIEWER: So your bicep is kind of shortened.

MR. GILLIES: It's about half of it, yeah. And a lot of my forearm muscles don't work. But that's been the same since 1969. So I was in that field hospital for a couple days.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever see Blaha or hear about Eddie Hernandez after you were medevac'd out by helicopter?

MR. GILLIES: Nope.

INTERVIEWER: That was the last you saw of any of the crew, anybody.

MR. GILLIES: Right. Flown from there to Saigon. I was in an Air Force hospital there for just one night maybe, maybe two. Packed.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MR. GILLIES: Packed.

INTERVIEWER: Did they segregate officers from enlisted or was everybody all together?

MR. GILLIES: No, not at that point. You could barely get between the beds it was so packed. And this was a staging hospital, I think, for med evacuations.

INTERVIEWER: Back to the States.

MR. GILLIES: Right. So nobody is there very long, so they just packed them in. But it wasn't to the States in my case, I had to fly to Yokosuka, Japan, and I spent maybe a week there, so addicted to morphine because all the business was done by staples, "joont, joont."

INTERVIEWER: Wow, they stapled it all.

MR. GILLIES: It hurt like holy hell. So I was so addicted to morphine that at one point, I got up and I woke up in the night, I crawled from my bed down to the nurse's station begging to get -- but I was segregated there.

INTERVIEWER: But you begged them for morphine.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, I was dying for it.

INTERVIEWER: And you got it?

MR. GILLIES: Nope. Oh, no, they were --

INTERVIEWER: Strict about it.

MR. GILLIES: They were tough --

INTERVIEWER: Only so much.

MR. GILLIES: Thank God. But I did have one very funny experience, probably the only really funny experience in my whole Vietnam experience. There was another Navy junior officer in the ward, just the two of us, and then there was, I don't know, an admiral or something, I don't know, having his gallbladder taken care of in another wing, but the two of us were really the only ones in this huge room with nothing to do. He was a little better off than I was. This was in December in Japan.

INTERVIEWER: Mid to early December, yeah.

MR. GILLIES: So he gets the idea that we ought to go to Tokyo.

INTERVIEWER: Were you ambulatory at this point.

MR. GILLIES: I could walk.

INTERVIEWER: You could walk around?

MR. GILLIES: I could walk. I had paper slippers, little cotton pajamas, and a cotton bathrobe. And I had no uniform, I had no personal belongings, nothing. I did have cash because, believe it or not, they paid me while I was in the hospital, so I had cash, I had like 500 bucks on me. And all pay in Vietnam was by cash. Why I don't know. So you would spend it. I can't figure out what the motive was, but they paid us in cash. So he gets this brilliant idea of calling a cab, sneaking out of the hospital, and going to Tokyo, and we did.

INTERVIEWER: Did you just have pajamas on?

MR. GILLIES: Pajamas.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: We hired a cab for the night, we went all over hell in Tokyo, but the only place I remember was we went into an electronics store, and I bought everybody in my family a reel-to-reel tape deck, which those were the big deal then, Akai, I think, and I had them shipped. And I'll be damned, they all came.

Got back to the hospital. We were in -- and his expression was, "What are they going to do? Send us back to Vietnam?" We were in such trouble, and they didn't do a damn thing to us because there was no harm done. You know, we were okay. They were upset they couldn't find us, but they got it.

So then we flew from there on a big C-130 with the ramp down the back, which had been turned into an airborne ward, lots of stretchers, decks of them, wheelchairs, and had seats, same pajamas, paper slippers, and we fly from Japan to Anchorage for fueling.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, right.

MR. GILLIES: This is December 23rd, I think. They lower the ramp of that plane and that cold air rushed in there, and I thought we were all going to die. I had to walk down the ramp. I remember I was with a Marine, the two of us helping each other down this ramp to the tarmac, and standing at the end of the ramp were five or six high school kids, 24 hours a day, came from the local high school to sing Christmas carols.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

MR. GILLIES: So, of course, we had to stand there while I was freezing. Of course, they've got all their mukluks and their fur-lined collars on and stuff.

INTERVIEWER: And you've got your pajamas on.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah. So anyway, we listened to Christmas carols, and then we went into the building and waited until they fueled the plane and then we took off. And I was the last one out of the plane. They delivered me to someplace in Maryland.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't go through Alameda, Oakland/Alameda?

MR. GILLIES: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: You went all the way back to the East Coast.

MR. GILLIES: To Maryland, and then a puddle jumper Navy plane to the airfield outside of Boston -- Hanscom I guess it's called. And the Coast Guard was told I was coming, and I was going to be transferred to the Marine Hospital in Boston, and they sent the duty driver, driving from Boston, the Boston group, driving an ambulance out to Hanscom to meet this Coast Guard officer who was coming back from Vietnam, he's been wounded, and that poor seaman apprentice desperately feared that he would somehow screw this up. So, anyway, I'm riding back in the ambulance with him, and he takes me to the Marine Hospital. I was the first, and maybe the only, combat-wounded Coast Guard officer they'd ever had.

INTERVIEWER: Were you an ensign still at this point?

MR. GILLIES: No, I was a JG [Lieutenant, Junior Grade, O-2]. I was a JG.

INTERVIEWER: You had become a JG in Vietnam.

MR. GILLIES: Yep. Harry Hamilton handled that ceremony. You can imagine what that was like: "Here."

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: That was awful.

So we get to the hospital, and it was like every fuse in the building had been thrown. They had no idea what to do with me, how to handle me, or what they could talk about. Anyway, it was charming, but it was weird. So I spent the next year and a half in that hospital.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any thoughts about trying to get out at some point, or you just wanted to go along with the program?

MR. GILLIES: Well, I wanted my arm to work, and they kept thinking, you know -- every day I would go in and they'd put electrical anodes and put current through it to make my arm do this. And I dated one of the physical therapists, which helped a little bit. You know, it was a long year and a half.

INTERVIEWER: What was going on with the Coast Guard at this point? Were they sending people in, or were you assigned to Boston?

MR. GILLIES: I was assigned to Boston, the District headquarters, and when they discharged me from the hospital, I spent 12 months maybe, my final 12 months, working for the District personnel office. And they as well had no idea what the hell to do with me. One of their brainstorms was that I would help enlisted men who were consistently failing exams because they couldn't read well enough. So I took the Evelyn Wood Reading Dynamics class, dated that woman, too.

INTERVIEWER: Evelyn Wood? Oh, the trainer.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, the woman who taught the course.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I got you.

MR. GILLIES: And then I would go to boat stations and so on, meet with the enlisted men who were doing badly on exams and try and teach them how to read better. And what I learned was that almost invariably the enlisted men who were not doing well on exams didn't want to do well on exams. They didn't want to get promoted.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a reason for that?

MR. GILLIES: First class boatswain's mates, "No way in the world I want to be a chief, I don't want all that crap." And so they had to take the course. They had to take

the exam. They would flunk it on purpose. And at first, I thought they're just giving me the scam, but I think they were right.

INTERVIEWER: So it was kind of a losing proposition.

MR. GILLIES: Oh, it was a total waste of time. So they finally decided what they were going to do with me. If I had been a Marine, they would have kept me. I could have gone to law school and been a Coast Guard lawyer, I could have been whatever, they could have found something for me to do. But, anyway, they retired me.

INTERVIEWER: So you had disability or whatever?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That's how they do it?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, disability retirement. So I had the benefits of a retired officer. I get health care. I'm on Medicare now anyway, but I got health care through the VA [Veterans Administration], and I can go to the commissary, if there were one.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MR. GILLIES: So then after a while, because I was in Boston mostly, I started to think more clearly and got involved in the Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a local chapter there or something, or a group?

MR. GILLIES: There was, and then I went to graduate school in New Mexico, and I was the head of the chapter there, it was the Southwest basically. And basically took a year to do that while I was in graduate school getting a master's in Latin American Studies, which didn't tax me a whole lot. Participated in the March on Washington.

INTERVIEWER: Did you meet anybody within the organization when you did that?

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Or did you meet any politicians?

MR. GILLIES: That's where I met John Kerry. There's a PBS video series on Vietnam, and my giving a speech, I'm in one of those. Yeah, I really worked hard for that. Met my wife, went to law school, practiced law for 15 years, got tired of that, taught seventh and eighth grade English for 15 years, got tired of that, and now I'm a fishing guide.

INTERVIEWER: You said that you could think more clearly after your experiences in the Coast Guard or maybe while you were just about at the end of your tour of duty there. I guess that was a result of your experiences having been through Vietnam or your head cleared after you had recovered from your wounds from Vietnam or -- it sounds like you had a different way forward after you --

MR. GILLIES: My psychotherapist wife could explain this more clearly than I, but I have no idea what was going on with my brain. That part of my critical thinking, analytical brain when I was, in particular, in Vietnam, but even while I was in the Coast Guard, I think I loved the work so much that the implications of it didn't dawn on me as they should.

INTERVIEWER: Implications of?

MR. GILLIES: What in the world we were doing in Vietnam to begin with.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, war implications.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, right. It wasn't until I got out of the Coast Guard and started to associate with people who were not in the military who were thinking clearly that I realized that I was -- I wasn't badly informed, I was uninformed. I wasn't a newspaper reader, I was just a kid who loved run boats, you know, and I should have been. I was intelligent, I was well-educated, I should have figured it out, but I didn't. So it makes me today feel doubly emotionally attached to the casualties in Afghanistan. It's just --

INTERVIEWER: You can empathize, sympathize. You have an idea what they're going through.

MR. GILLIES: They're the finest kids we've got, and it's too bad that they won't know until maybe it's too late that what we're doing is pretty complicated and it might not be right.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. When you came back from Vietnam, I know -- well, I think that combat people that served in Vietnam were probably -- I'll bounce this off of you, I'm not going to say it happened, but they may not have been received the same as, say, people coming back from World War II or Korea. Do you know what I'm saying?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, I know exactly what you're saying. It was awful.

INTERVIEWER: Was it true, then?

MR. GILLIES: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And how did that affect you? I'm just asking what that --

MR. GILLIES: It was awful. My contemporaries in particular. I remember dating a girl in Boston that I just thought was, whoa, I loved her, she was terrific, and she dumped me, and she said, "The thing I can't stand about you is that you're a Vietnam veteran and that you're not horrified by it." I remember at the time -- well, no, maybe shortly after that, Boston College amended its discriminatory policies to say that Boston College will not discriminate against applicants or employees, da, da, da, da, da, based on their age, their religion, their creed, and so on, and their status as a Vietnam veteran.

INTERVIEWER: They actually had to put that --

MR. GILLIES: Had to put that into their policy to stop people from treating Vietnam veterans differently. I remember riding on the subway in Boston to doctors appointments or my physical therapist, and I had to wear my uniform, a very handsome, good-looking dress blue uniform, you know, with the ribbons and all that on, but I had to wear a half cast on my forearm with a wire sticking out the end of it that extended beyond my fingers, and between the wire and the tips of my fingers was a rubber band to keep my fingers stretched so that they wouldn't turn into a fist, and I can remember people on the subway looking at me, looking at my uniform, and then seeing that on my arm, and putting two and two together, and you could see the progression of their thinking.

INTERVIEWER: You could see it on their faces?

MR. GILLIES: If I'm in an elevator with a young Marine in uniform, I can't help to say to him, "Thank you for your service," or something. I can't, I just can't do it, because I'm so impressed and so grateful. Not even close. And I didn't expect it and I didn't -- well, I did expect it, I didn't want it, but you sort of expect to get some --

INTERVIEWER: Reaction.

MR. GILLIES: Some reaction, positive. Nope. And to get the negative -- neutral would have been fine, but the negative, that hurt. How high do you want me to jump?

INTERVIEWER: So that definitely had an emotional register on you and then people that you talk to or you know?

MR. GILLIES: I remember I received the Navy Commendation Medal while I was stationed in Boston, the processing, I don't know what -- anyway, it wasn't until Boston, so the admiral, commander of the First District, had a ceremony -- there were probably a couple other medals given out the same day, but anyway, there were probably 30 officers and enlisted men in the audience, calls me up, he reads the citation, pins the medal on, congratulates me, says some very nice things. I'm leaving the ceremony, I'm out in the hall, and some captain said to me, "You know, those missions that you were involved in, in Vietnam disgrace the Coast Guard." If he hadn't been a captain, I would have kicked him. What I thought of doing afterwards -- and before -- and I can never think of these things until after -- I should have taken him right back in and said,

"Admiral, I think you ought to hear what this guy just said. One of you is not telling the truth." That was a captain in the Coast Guard that said it to me within minutes of my getting a medal from the Navy, not from the Coast Guard, from the Navy. Yikes.

INTERVIEWER: I don't understand why that happened.

MR. GILLIES: I can understand you thinking negatively about the war, but not the people who fought it. I mean, they didn't make the war, they went because their country asked them to, or ordered them to, whatever.

INTERVIEWER: Right. People, when World War II was over, it seemed like nobody received troops that way when they came back from the front from Europe or the Pacific or whatever, at least that's my understanding.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What if they had behaved similarly when troops came back from Vietnam? I mean, would there have been as much -- you know what I'm saying? -- reaction from the troops themselves if they had received the same reception as troops coming back from World War II? Do you understand what I'm saying?

MR. GILLIES: Yep. I think anybody, anybody I know, who served in Vietnam did not expect when they came back to receive the thanks of the nation because it was a controversial war, and I think the vast majority of Vietnam veterans I know think it was, in retrospect, not even a whole lot -- like in 1969 they could have told you this, was a mistake. I didn't expect a parade, I didn't expect anything, but I didn't expect negative. That's what pissed me off.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Did you ever have contact or talk to or meet with anybody from your years in the service after you got out of the Coast Guard? Do you recall anybody, Blaha or any of your former crewmates or anybody you served with at the sector in Baltimore?

MR. GILLIES: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: And what was that like?

MR. GILLIES: Charlie Blaha and his wife sent me a Christmas card every year, and they would bring me the news of their family.

INTERVIEWER: So you became fairly close, or somewhat with them?

MR. GILLIES: Considering he was in Virginia and I was in Maine. He wrote once that if I hadn't been as good a driver, he wouldn't be alive, which I thought was damn nice of him.

INTERVIEWER: Probably the truth.

MR. GILLIES: Jon Collom, I met with him in Virginia. I can't remember why I was there, and I looked him up. It was okay. I wouldn't do it again. And I'm trying to think. I don't think I've had any contact with Vietnam people other than that. The XO I had in Baltimore, I was in touch with him because I really like that man.

INTERVIEWER: His name is John Thompson?

MR. GILLIES: Joe Thompson.

INTERVIEWER: Joe Thompson.

MR. GILLIES: Joe Thompson. He was wonderful.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. GILLIES: And Dick Penly.

INTERVIEWER: You're still in touch with him, I guess? Or were?

MR. GILLIES: We were in touch when I lived in Bethel a lot, yeah. Pretty good friends.

INTERVIEWER: Any other thoughts or things that I haven't asked about that you feel are important to include in the historical record or highlights, things like that, that -- I know you have some photographs of things that you wanted me to take a look at.

MR. GILLIES: I have about 20 slides that I could show you. Two of them in particular are very good of Eddie Hernandez that you might want, and I'm happy to give you all of them, or any of them, whatever you want.

INTERVIEWER: And we may just restart this briefly if it brings up any other thoughts or impressions, but beforehand, just in case, I just wanted to make sure you felt that we've covered everything that you can think of that is important to talk about.

MR. GILLIES: If I think of something, it will be tomorrow, and I'll e-mail it to you.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Sure.

MR. GILLIES: But I think we've covered it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well, I do want to thank you very much for taking the time. I appreciate you taking the time to give us your recollections and your memories of that.

MR. GILLIES: My wife insists this is very good therapy.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I'm happy to help out.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: But you are the only one that was actually on the small boat operations that can say anything about that, and you're actually one of only three crew members of the *Point Cypress* I've been able to locate --

MR. GILLIES: Really?

INTERVIEWER: -- that remember that, the other being Jon Collom and Dillenbeck, and I suspect there are others out there, but so far I have not made contact. And if I do make contact, I'll be sure to let you know.

MR. GILLIES: You have their names obviously.

INTERVIEWER: The crew members.

MR. GILLIES: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Right. I have a roster, and I'll show it to you, but I understand you have a Christmas card or something.

MR. GILLIES: I do, and it has the crew's name on it.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MR. GILLIES: If you remember -- I'm going to definitely contact Dillenbeck.

INTERVIEWER: Good.

MR. GILLIES: It might be really kind of fun.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, he seemed like a fun guy.

MR. GILLIES: Exactly. I have a picture of him downstairs that will confirm it. So if it occurs to you.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Did you correspond with the *Point Cypress* after you came back to the States? Did you send them any correspondence?

MR. GILLIES: I have a letter from Jon written, I would guess, maybe a couple of months afterwards bringing me up to date on what's going on with the crew, quite a

long letter, quite a nice letter, apologizing for not writing sooner, but it was really fine, and it was a very nice letter, and I think he wrote to my mother right after it happened. And that's all I remember.

INTERVIEWER: Just one last thing I forgot to ask about the small boat operations. It sounds like you weren't ever able to get off a shot on the small boat.

MR. GILLIES: No.

INTERVIEWER: You were shot at and shot up real bad, but by the time that happened, there was no chance to defend yourselves, it was just get out.

MR. GILLIES: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I just wanted to check that.

MR. GILLIES: It would have been pretty difficult for me to drive and do that.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Yeah.

MR. GILLIES: I wouldn't have been very effective. I really just had to drive.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay.

MR. GILLIES: Which is about all I was really good at anyway.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. It sounds like that was all you were able to do in the first place.

[Laughter.]

MR. GILLIES: Yeah, you give me a boat, I'll drive it.

INTERVIEWER: Great. I'm going to stop the recorder then. Thank you very much.

MR. GILLIES: It's my pleasure.

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