

Bob Hull

Bob Hull, a United States Navy veteran, served in the Vietnam and Cold War. He was born and raised in Southern California. In his free time, Hull was a competitive, traveling firearms handler and teacher. His hobby of handling guns occupied most of his time before enlisting. Hull also enjoyed teaching others about this profession. In addition to professionally handling guns, Hull also enjoyed to casually hunt. He said that this hobby and skill set would later prove to be very helpful in combat. Spending his life committed to working in aircraft management within the Navy, Bob Hull showed true insight into what veterans experience while in combat overseas, sacrificing their lives fighting for their country.

After enlisting in 1954, Hull was first assigned to be a part of a search and rescue team in the Navy. While expecting to be helpful and find fellow American soldiers or prisoners of war, Hull was affected negatively realizing the cold truth that all he would find within this program were heavily wounded and passed soldiers and civilians. This had a major, devastating effect on Hull, which has stayed with him throughout his entire life. Later, Hull was re-assigned to be a casualty assistance officer, where he was responsible for notifying the family members of passed soldiers. In one experience, Hull had to take care of informing eight wives of prisoners of war. This proved to be a difficult situation where the wives had moved on with their own lives, not having had closure about the state of which their husbands were left. Unfortunately most of the men in this situation were indeed alive, and Hull had to be the one to let both parties know of what had occurred. Although most of this job was hard and emotionally devastating, Hull found this job to be the most interesting in his own experience.

One of the most memorable experiences for Hull while in service was when he had to miss his first date with his future wife because of a tragic event in combat he had to stay and assist with. In this event, an American C-54 cargo plane coming from Hawaii crashed near Hull's base where he was stationed at. His job was to go and assess the problem. When he arrived it was a disaster, there were parts everywhere and 38 people died in the crash on impact. He put most of the body parts in bags and when he finished he had heard on the radio that he and his group were to stay at that location and not to leave because there was another situation near the base. During the time there Hull was exhausted and he decided to climb up a tree and rest. Then came along two Catholic priests who decided to take a picture of him and it was in the newspaper the next day. His sergeant was enraged when he saw the picture that day.

Hull took his Navy training very seriously, which earned him respect and taught him how to survive if ever in a dire situation, like becoming a prisoner of war. Part of his training consisted of being held upside down with his head in a barrel of water testing how long he could hold his breath. Having had prior experience in scuba diving, Hull was very successful at this aspect in training. He said in some situations, he would start drinking the water his head was in to take up time and help him stay under, water he would later find to be disgustingly brown and full of dirt. One of the things that really got to Hull was being aware of the fact that people were dying, and he couldn't do anything to help save them. Seeing the dead or mangled bodies of soldiers he

knew affected him and later put him into psychiatric treatment.

After returning home from the war, people treated Hull and other veterans horribly. They were spit at, paint cans and feces were thrown at them, treating them as animals or criminals. He felt he needed to distance himself from people to avoid this negative attention. Having initial signs of PTSD, including horrible dreams of being treated terribly by those around him, Hull put himself into psychiatric treatment. He now has to take nine pills when he wakes up and eleven before he falls asleep. Because of all of his injuries in war, Hull required 14 surgeries, 6 of which were on his back. The war caused Hull not only extreme psychical problems, but mental illnesses which will affect him for the rest of his life. Bob Hull put everything he had into being apart of the Navy throughout the Vietnam and Cold War. Even though he learned a lot of life lessons, skills, and met the love of his life whom he has been married to for 56 years, war took a major toll on Hull. He ultimately gave his life to serving in the war, and is a representative of the true strength and sacrifice every veteran has taken to serve and protect their country. He is the definition of a true American Hero.