



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA  
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



# Oral History Interview

with

## Tom Hulfish

---

**Interviewer:** *Francesco De Salvatore*

**Narrator:** *Tom Hulfish*

**Location of Interview:**  
*510 King Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314*

**Date of Interview:** *09/27/2022*

**Transcriber:** *Bridget Nakamura*

---

### **Summary:**

*Tom Hulfish describes his early memories growing up in Alexandria, Virginia. He recalls the area of what is now known as the Old Town area and the waterfront. Hulfish also describes his memories serving in the Navy and then continuing on with a career in healthcare. Additionally, Hulfish describes his involvement with Alexandria's politics and healthcare.*

### **Notes:**

## Table of Contents and Keywords

Minute	Page	Topic
01:00	3	T describes his earliest memories growing up in Alexandria.
03:00	3	T describes what the Old Town area was like in Alexandria when he was growing up.
05:30	4	T describes his memories about the waterfront in Alexandria.
9:00	5	T recalls the pool hall he used to hang out in.
10:30	5	T recalls his neighbors while growing up.
14:20	6	T describes his family history.
17:30	7	T describes his parents and sister.
22:00	9	T describes his education in Alexandria.
27:00	10	T recalls leaving high school and on the sea.
30:00	11	T recalls how he joined the Navy.
39:00	13	T describes his experience serving as a pharmacist in the Navy.
43:00	13	T recalls improving healthcare in Alexandria.
54:00	16	T recalls meeting his wife.

---

<b>General</b>	Military Experience; Childhood; Family history; Career; Education; Student; Siblings; Marriage; Politics; Healthcare; Polio
<b>People</b>	Thomas A. Hulfish Jr; Thomas A. Hulfish Sr; Miss Klein; Mrs. Snipes; Jimmy Colasanto
<b>Places</b>	Old Town Alexandria; St Paul's Church; Baltimore, MD; Bainbridge, Maryland; George Mason Hotel

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:00:00] Alright.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:00:06] I'm Tom Hulfish. I'm 88 to be 89 in a couple of weeks. And it's September 27th, 2022.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:00:26] Right. And my name is Francesco de Salvatore. Um, it's September 27th, 2022, and I am with Mr. Hulfish today recording his oral history. Um, so, yeah, thanks for having me here today, Mr. Hulfish. And I, I, I would like for us to start. Um, when and where were you born?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:00:51] Um, I was actually physically born in Washington, D.C., but I grew up here. I was brought home from the hospital here, and I've been here most of my life.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:01:04] Right. And what are some of your earliest memories from your childhood, you know, growing up here in Alexandria?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:01:16] I. I don't have a lot of early memories about growing up here. I was an only child and there were very few children in the neighborhoods. And that was that was basically it.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:01:32] Right. And could you describe maybe the neighborhood that you grew up in?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:01:38] The neighborhood that grew up in this neighborhood have normally been in for most of my life. I was born well where we lived when I was brought home from the hospital or after that was 200 Duke Street corner of Duke and Lee in Old Town and been here or nearby for many years.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:02:02] Uh, can you maybe describe, what are your memories about the neighborhood when you were a child?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:02:09] It was very nice. Uh, every corner had a grocery store. Uh, where there was no large stores, so forth. They were generally small mom and pop places with the owners living upstairs and in the intersection with Four Corners. It was generally at least one of them had a store. Uh, and there are many of those buildings still left in Old Town. If you drive around, you can look at what looks like a store, but many of them look like a house. Well, if you look carefully, you see the windows were that were larger for a store rather than a house. So, but many of the neighborhoods in the old part of Alexandria still have the grocery stores or the grocery store or a barber shop, so forth.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:03:10] Do you remember like what was a grocery store that you, you and your family went to growing up?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:03:15] It depended on what you wanted to get. Did you want to get meat? Or did you want to get produce? All of them had some of each, but some had more than the other. Some were better than the others. It was family run and it was all a neighborhood type thing.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:03:32] That's great. Do you remember the owners? What were their names?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:03:39] Gelfan, Rosenberg. Certainly others. Well, Sefton. All sorts of family names.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:03:49] That's great. And what else about the neighborhood? Can you maybe describe what the homes look like?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:03:56] They look like they look now. Yeah, that's what we've been trying to maintain for years. Yeah.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:04:03] What about the streets? What were the streets like?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:04:07] Well, the streets were interesting. Alexandria had trolley tracks and trolley tracks were interesting. Some of them were yellow brick and slickers can be when they were wet. So forth, uh. And. And there were routes where the trolley went all the way to Mount Vernon and actually then to Fort Belvoir, which then called Camp Humphreys before it was called Fort Belvoir. It was interesting. But we had a number of streets with railroad tracks on trolley tracks and they were slicker as Hell.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:05:02] Was it?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:05:02] Oh, yeah. When they were wet. Uh.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:05:06] Could you maybe describe like what were the areas as a kid that you played in or hung out with friends?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:05:15] The area where I played early on was the industrial waterfront. I had a 20-foot sand pile. And if we wanted to go up to the north end of town, we got on a freight train as it rolled by slowly, and that wasn't legal and so forth. And it wasn't appreciated by the engineer or the conductor. Uh, but we had freight trains all along. If you look at Alexandria's maps, you'll see where the railroad tracks were along U Street [Union Street], for example. And if you look at the early maps of the town, say, in the town map in 1877, you'll see where the railroad tracks went out on the piers to unload the ships. It was an interesting town. Yeah.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:06:21] What are your other memories about the waterfront? Like, you know, you said that you used to play there. Used to hang out there, like. What would you do there?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:06:30] We would play World War II and so forth and so on. Yeah, we would do all sorts of stuff.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:06:37] What was World War II? What? What was that game?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:06:40] It was not a game, we divide up sides and this, that and the other. And things like an old concrete truck on its side was an opening that would be a tank and we'd play with them and so forth. Yeah, we were kids. Yeah.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:07:00] Well, maybe. Yeah. Because, like, I mean, the waterfront looks so different now. So, I'm just curious, can you tell, describe more like what are the waterfront look like? When you were growing up?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:07:11] It looked like an industrial waterfront, looked like it should. There were ships at the docks. They were warehouses with produce going in and out. Major commodities, coal, uh, fertilizer from South America. Uh, well, uh, newsprint from Scandinavia for the Washington Post, all sorts of stuff. They would often be two or three ships here at the same time. Yeah. Often two at the wharf and one outside waiting to come in.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:07:50] That's great. And, you know, you mentioned hopping on the trains. Are there any specific stories or any specific time that year you did hop on the train and go up north?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:08:05] That was the north end of town and which kids from the south end of town weren't too welcome up at the north end of town and vice versa. And we tried not to have a problem. One of the tracks that we went, we we didn't go into, we were kind of afraid of going into the tunnel on Wilkes Street, the tunnel still there. And people can ride their bicycle through there now.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:08:33] Why were you scared to go through that tunnel?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:08:36] Well, it was a track under a tunnel with no lights and so forth. And so going through there would be a train. And they were quite full, full of coal generally. And you don't want to get your foot cut off.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:08:54] Are there any other areas that you hung out in growing up in Alexandria? You mentioned the waterfront, the train tracks anywhere else that stands out in your memory?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:09:04] Well, as you grew older a little bit, and there was a pool on King Street. And but there were several bars and only one pool hall, which is frequently. And that building is still a very popular restaurant.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:09:26] Gotcha. And so, it was just a pool hall?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:09:29] That one was. Yeah. Actually, it was a gambling place behind it. Well, we didn't realize that as kids.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:09:40] It's great. One thing we haven't talked about is, like, is the people you hung out with, and you know, as you were doing these things, like are there any friends that people that you hung out with during this time that you want to describe?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:09:53] Oh, yeah.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:09:55] Excuse me?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:09:56] Are there any friends or people that stand out from this time that you hung out with?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:10:01] Various people and so forth. Most of them are gone. Mhm. Uh, there was the next-door neighbor to us. The father was the resident manager of the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. Down the block around the corner on Lee Street was the number three man in the FBI. And several blocks south of that was Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black. Two doors away, three doors away from my front door was the head of the Air Force. General Tooley [General Carl A. Spaatz]. And when the war was over. The Army Air Force brought him with some fanfare home and there was a band in the street and so forth, and the honor guard and what have you. And they presented him with a beautiful, lacquered propeller from Japan. It was just gorgeous pieces, several pieces of wood put together a beautiful, ornate propeller. And he looked at me when they handed it to him. He asked me if I wanted it. I said, thank you very much. And I got that. And I kept it in the basement, in the house figured I'll do something with it later. And while I was away in the service, my father gave it away.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:11:43] That's a great story.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:11:45] Yeah.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:11:46] Do you maybe describe where, you know, that the home you grew up in on Duke Street? What did it look like? What did your room look like?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:11:55] There's pictures of it all over the place. It's 200 Duke Street. It's got a white picket fence. And so, it had a coal chute, and the furnace was coal fired. And my first job in the morning was to put coal in a furnace. There are a lot of houses in Alexandria that look pretty much as they did.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:12:27] What was your favorite part of the house?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:12:29] What was that?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:12:30] What was your favorite aspect of the house?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:12:32] I like the whole thing. I, I, I don't remember a favorite part.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:12:40] And do you know who your parents bought it from? or did you know who previously lived there?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:12:45] Oh, yeah. My parents bought it, and my mother did it over. It had been in the family prior to that on my father's side of the family. His mother's side of the family was a sail maker for sailing ships at the corner of Union Street and or Union Street and King, where the torpedo factory is now.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:13:24] And that's what your father did? No?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:13:28] That was from my mother's side of the family. A great grandfather.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:13:41] Got it. Yeah.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:13:42] It was a great grandfather.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:13:46] Yeah. I mean, you're already getting into your family history and I'm just curious, can you maybe describe, um, just how long your family's been in Alexandria? First of all.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:14:01] I've been told six generations. I think it's a couple more, actually. When you when you think about it.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:14:07] So. So, when did they first come to Alexandria?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:14:12] The first one that came was in 1780. He was a Scottish sea captain, and he left the left the sea in the year 1800. He stopped sailing and he opened an establishment on the corner of Prince and Lee called Ship's Tavern. So, I come by my proclivities naturally.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:14:42] That makes sense, that's great. And, you know, you kind of describe your parents. But yeah, like, can you tell us like, who were your parents? What were their names? Let's start with that. What was both of your parents' names?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:14:56] My father's name was Thomas A. Hulfish Jr. His father was Thomas A. Hulfish Sr. And he [Sr] was with the Southern Railroad after the Spanish-American War. And he built that house. I showed you.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:15:20] Right. I know the house in Rosemont, which is a neighborhood in Alexandria.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:15:25] And his wife was a voice teacher in Washington, D.C.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:15:32] Did you grow up with your grandparents?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:15:35] No. They had their house, and we had my parents, my grandparents on my mother's side lived just a block away. Well, no block around the corner a block away.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:15:49] Do you have any special memories with them?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:15:51] Oh, lots of them.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:15:54] What were some of them that stick out to you?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:15:59] They were all very nice people. Yeah. And they had certain recipes for certain things. And it was interesting. Interesting.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:16:14] What were some of the recipes that you can remember?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:16:17] About a chocolate sauce for ice cream and so forth. When it was poured it turned brittle. And it was interesting. Mm hmm. I grew up, my parents had 8, 9 excuse me, 9 fireplaces in the house, and most of them were working. And my wife and I later in life lived in that house and we only kept three fireplaces working.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:16:49] This is not your grandparents house or?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:16:52] That that was lots of parent's house, but it has been our house for a long time. And since that house had been in the family since. Hmm. I think. 1804.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:17:10] Wow. Okay. That's great. Can you tell us more about your parents were like, what were they like?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:17:20] They were nice people. Yeah. My mother went to the Corcoran School of Art, and she enjoyed art very much, so forth. Um. Later worked with it as a hobby, decorated furniture, um, did some paintings of people and what have you. But mainly got involved in trying to fix houses and what have you. My father was in the finance business. And before that, he was selling cars. And before that, he was with the Tennessee Valley Authority as an engineer. Um. He was also a saxophone player for a local orchestra. He played on Saturday nights at the boat club. They had a singer, girl from Baltimore named Kate Smith. None of your friends will probably remember.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:18:27] No, I don't think so.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:18:28] Kate Smith was world famous. And so, anyway, those were interesting times. I mean, late teens and early twenties.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:18:43] What are some of your favorite memories that you remember with your parents?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:18:52] It was a lot of good stuff.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:18:55] Well, what were some of the good stuff?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:18:59] Nothing is sticking out. Maybe with more time I would be able to. They enjoyed the neighborhood, and the neighborhood enjoyed them. Yeah. My father was on city council for a while. My mother did over 52 houses. Uh, they were very active in the community.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:19:27] When did your dad serve on city council? You remember the years?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:19:31] Yeah. It'd be right after World War II for a number of years.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:19:41] And you didn't mention that your sibling because you have a sister, correct?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:19:47] Correct.



**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:19:47] Yeah. So do you have any early memories in childhood with your sister?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:19:53] She was ten years younger than I was. So, we didn't have too much. We were kind of in different groups and what have you. Mm hmm. And I probably went away pretty much before she grew up. I remember coming back from Guantanamo, Cuba, in the Navy one winter. And I'd been in the sun for a long time. She didn't recognize me when I came to the house, but she was very nice. Good.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:20:41] What's her name?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:20:42] Sherry. As a little girl, she got hit by a car and banged up pretty good. She was in the hospital for a number of months in traction.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:20:58] I'm sorry.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:20:58] Yeah. Yeah. Well, she turned out just fine. She's the mother of one and a grandmother of one.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:21:11] When was she hit by? How old were you when she was hit by a car?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:21:15] I was young. She was only about four, I think, when she got hit. So, I was 14. Uh, it was ten years difference.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:21:25] Do you remember that day when she was hit?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:21:27] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:21:29] How did you feel when it happened?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:21:32] That's a silly question. Didn't feel good. Yeah, no. And I wasn't there when she. When she got hit and when I got home, I understood she'd been hit and taken to the hospital, but she was hit by a drunk driver and right at the corner. She was waiting across the street. They hit her. Anyway. But that's, you know, life goes on.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:22:00] Yeah. I'm sorry about that.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:22:02] Yeah, thank you.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:22:03] I am glad it turned out well.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:22:04] Turned out well.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:22:07] Yeah. So just moving out of your family history, I think maybe let's talk a little bit about your schooling. Um. What schools did you attend in Alexandria?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:22:20] Public schools.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:22:21] So. Okay. So, where did you attend elementary? Elementary school?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:22:27] Washington Street School. Which is were, it's the historic building on Washington Street. And it's, uh, it is a facility to take care of folks and children.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:22:52] Do you remember what? What memories stand out about your time there for elementary school?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:23:00] I was bored. We were also next to it across the way a little bit was a very historic building. It was a school built with funds from George Washington and so forth and the Alexandria Academy. And that was a neat building and. Uh, but uh, it was interesting in those days and all through high school we walked to school, we didn't ride a bus. We didn't have a bus to ride. And I'm amazed that there is so much school busing. It never was even considered as far as I can remember.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:23:56] So you went from Washington Street School to where did you go after Washington Street School?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:24:02] I think it's called Jefferson School.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:24:05] Was that middle school or?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:24:06] Yeah, that was I guess so that's where you went after you went to beginning school. And that was the former Alexandria High School. Then I went to the George Washington High School, which was the newer one, but that was new for World War II.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:24:29] So are there any teachers that stand out during your high school years?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:24:38] Well, there was. It was a grade schoolteacher name, Miss Klein. She was very nice. There was a Mrs. Sipes when I was in high school. Her son was a drummer for Claude Thornhill's big band, which was a national thing. Uh. I don't remember. There were other people, but there was nothing significant. Mm hmm. Uh. But, uh. And I didn't stay there long. I ended up going to St Paul's School in Baltimore, uh, because I wanted to kind of get out of Alexandria, and I was beginning to hang around with the wrong folks and so forth. And there was something going on in Baltimore I wanted to get involved in. I found out was that was a game of lacrosse and there was no lacrosse in Virginia except at the University of Virginia. And I didn't even know about that till I discovered it by accident. Mm. Through an oarsman at the boat club. And one thing led to another, and I went to St Paul's for a year. But the one thing I remember about my schooling there. They had about every week for the chapel in the morning, and the chapel was just sitting on, uh, bleachers at gym. Uh, there was be a fellow come in who was a member of St Paul's Church or the community. It was a gentleman who would talk about his life of things that he had been through and gotten through and what have you. And he was very, very instrumental. And it was a different

guy every time. And these people were very impressive to me. At that time. And it was after that year I ended up going to sea. To explore a little more of the world.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:26:55] What did you learn from those guys?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:26:59] Well, all sorts of stuff, I think how to live and how to take care of people and so forth. Um, I learned a whole lot. I learned how to grow up on the waterfront of New York, Manhattan. Our home port was Pier 9.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:27:22] And this was when you went to sea?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:27:26] Right.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:27:26] And you can maybe describe? So, you went to St Paul's and then what came after St Paul's?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:27:34] I had a friend at St Paul's who's who had an opportunity to go to sea with the federal government. And his father arranged that and boom, we went. So anyway, it was a very interesting and it's a great way to grow up. When you were 16, 17.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:27:56] What did you do at sea?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:27:57] I was a seaman.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:27:59] What was the boat doing?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:28:02] We were charting the North Atlantic, it was a hydrographic vessel and did all sorts of tests on equipment and what have you and the water. It was a small vessel. Only 23 in the crew. But it was a great, great time to get to grow up. And wooden boat, wooden decks. We had one cook here. And of those 23 people in the crew. 18 of them were from the town of Knotts Island, North Carolina. And they were real seamen. And they got one letter a week for everybody. And, you know, it was an interesting time. I went from seeing the aurora borealis at night to things down in Cape May, New Jersey. So, we did a lot of moving around.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:28:59] What were your responsibilities on the boat?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:29:03] Being a seaman.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:29:04] What does it mean to be a seaman?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:29:07] Maintain the ship, do what's necessary docket, and release it. Go up in the crow's nest to see beyond the clouds. I mean, the fog do what you have to do at sea.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:29:22] And how old were you?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:29:24] 16. 17.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:29:25] Wow. And so, you just learned.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:29:28] No, you were taught.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:29:29] You were taught. Yeah, but.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:29:30] They were grades of quality in your work. Mm hmm. It was able seaman to ordinary, you know, starts off with ordinary and I made able and so forth. But these were the things you had to do for the Mariners union. And that was it in New York at the harbor in Manhattan. You know, we have to go in and get checked out on things.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:30:01] Right. And so, following this experience. What did you do after you left?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:30:08] I tried to go back and go to high school, and It didn't work. So, they gave me an opportunity and don't come back again. And so, I went in the Navy. Well, before that, I had gone to work for Capital Airlines, but I banged up a foot and decided to do something else.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:30:36] So yeah, like how did you decide to join the Navy? What were the steps that led you to join them?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:30:42] I had enjoyed being at sea, uh, and, uh, I was sitting on the beach in Nags Head, with a young lady I had known for since we were kids, we went to dancing school together. And I got to talking about wanting to do something. And we talked for a while. And then I decide, I think I'll go in the Navy. So that's what I did.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:31:13] That's great. Um, so, yeah, maybe walk us through. So, like. So, you join the Navy. What happens after you join the Navy?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:31:25] My life changed. It was a whole new world. And I found it very interesting.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:31:35] So. So, so you joined them and then where were you sent after you joined them?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:31:43] Well, I had to go to training, and I did that at Bainbridge, Maryland. And while there a friend of mine who had earlier joined the Navy was home on leave, and he and a former girlfriend of mine, was just a gal that grew up in a neighborhood a block away. She'd always gone with people like the midshipmen in the Naval Academy and this, that and the other. And he brought her up to Bainbridge one day when I was in boot camp. And this isn't supposed to happen, but he got on the base and so forth. But he was in uniform, and he got me out of working in a scullery for, for a day on a Sunday anyway. And we talked and one thing led to another and when we graduated from boot camp. When I graduated, she was there with my parents, and she decided we ought to get married. So, one thing led to another. And a year later, we were married.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:33:09] Wow. So, you met your wife? Kind of through the Navy?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:33:13] No, we were play friends.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:33:18] Right.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:33:19] Right on the same street and the steps that I sat on to woo her when I was a kid were right across from her house. So that house is still there.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:33:35] But you got married? Well, like in the beginning of joining the Navy or no?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:33:42] It took a while to get married and so forth, but I was in the Navy.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:33:46] During the-

**Tom Hulfish** [00:33:48] And I'd gone to Hospital Corps School in the Navy.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:33:52] Yeah. So, you went to training in Maryland and then you also went into training for hospital work?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:34:02] Well, that's what they put me in. I had worked in a funeral home for a while as a kid in Alexandria. It's still there. And the Navy decided that's where they thought I should go. So, I was sent to Hospital Corps School in Bainbridge, and that was almost a year. And then from there, they transferred me to Bethesda. That was the Navy's medical center. Mm hmm. And I work through a lot of different departments and so forth and got a lot of experience and after a few years. But I was given just a huge amount of responsibility as a 20-year-old kid. I was the mate of the day. I don't know whether that means anything to you, but it was Bethesda Naval Hospital. It's a big institution. And I was in charge of it from 11 at night to seven in the morning. 30 days in a row, month after month. When I was in charge, I had to muster the troops. Probably at 11 in the evening. Send them to work. See if they did everything alright ahead of dispatch. All the ambulances had to do this, that, and the other that. People in charge of me had gone to bed. There'd be a chief for the day and an officer the day. I had the key to the elevator. There were several elevators, but I had my own elevator in the tower. And it was a hell of a responsibility, and I enjoyed it. And that was just among other things, when my son was born, I was a patient actually in the hospital with infectious mononucleosis. But my duty station at that time was the delivery room. And in those days, uh, in the delivery room, there was a Navy corpsman like me. The doctor. The nurse was in the labor room. And I handled the anesthesia for it. I handled the baby when it was born. For as far the birth certificates are concerned, you know, clearing out this aspirating the sound system of the, you know, getting silver nitrate in the baby's eyes and so forth and getting it all set up. But at that time, I think I did that I was 19. Uh, it was a lot of experience. And, uh, in those days we didn't have all the equipment they have in hospitals today, all the. Mhm. So forth. If somebody was on a critical list or a serious list, they were put on a special watch and there was a corpsman with them 24 hours a day. So, you got 3-8 hour shifts and you'd be with that patient until they were discharged, either dead or to recovery. And that was quite an interesting experience. So, we were trained beautifully in the Navy because there were many more ships than there are doctors. And so, they train you to learn a little bit about a lot and be able to hopefully communicate to go with it and improvise. So, I did that, and I had all these departments and was again mate of the day quite often. Uh, lot of responsibility for a kid.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:38:02] Cause you end up serving-

**Tom Hulfish** [00:38:05] Just one tour for 4years.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:38:07] Yes. Can you talk about that tour? What did you end up going?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:38:11] Well, after being at Bethesda for a while. They've, you know, they have to move you around. So, they figured, I need to go to sea. So, they sent me to an aircraft carrier. Which had just blown up prior 2 years before that with a bad accident. And we were rebuilt, and we had the first candidate, the first mirror landing system, the first hurricane vane. And, uh, we were quite the new thing. And, uh, I had to shake that down that Guantanamo and down at the Caribbean and then came back and then loaded up in New York and went on around the horn. You know what that means? going around the Horn of South America. Over the Atlantic. Mm hmm. Anyway, then, uh, went around the horn to the Pacific, and, uh, on that ship, uh, as we were leaving New York, we had a registered pharmacist on the ship, and the ship's crew was 5000 people. Uh huh. And that the day prior to leaving, to go around the horn, the pharmacist got emergency leave, and he was an officer. I wasn't. But we needed a pharmacist. So, I became the pharmacist that day and I stayed the pharmacist for the rest of the tour. Wow. And no one ever died. But it was interesting to learn how to do pharmacy when in corps school. I had, I think, 2 hours of pharmacy training. So that was interesting to then have my own pharmacy and so forth.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:40:14] And yeah, well, it was, you know, for those even like myself, I'm not familiar with the day to day of a pharmacist, but what like, what was it like? What did your day they look like as a pharmacist on tour?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:40:28] Yeah, well, I start out with a long line from my pharmacy to the end of the passageway where people were waiting for their prescriptions to be filled. And I had to fill prescriptions. Now, the thing was that, uh, you have to store a lot of stuff on a ship, and so I can't keep a whole lot of stuff in a pharmacy. I have to put it together, I have to somehow compound it. So, there are two books in pharmacy. There are two things, the national formulary, which tells you what the drug is. Then the U.S. pharmacopeia, which tells you how to put it together. So, I had to fill each prescription, and I would do that and so forth and get it done typed out for it and hand out the prescription. Then I'd have to start all over again because I had one mortar and pestle. One. You know, various tools. I had to clean everything and start again. And so, there'd been a long line for a while, but it all worked out and I learned to make stuff in bulk and what have you. I just had to learn. Well, it was an interesting challenge, but I had my own compartment and I had plenty of room. And it was, it was interesting. Over 18 months.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:42:06] You served on tour and then when did you return to civilian life?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:42:14] At the end of four years.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:42:16] Four years. And so, yeah, let's talk about that. Like transitioning out of the Navy-

**Tom Hulfish** [00:42:22] My father felt like I ought to go into business with him, in the finance business, and that didn't work out too well. I got a job with the post office, and then somebody in the insurance business offered me a better situation. And I took that and did that for a number of years and got involved with city and city organizations.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:42:50] Let's talk about your involvement in the city of Alexandria, because I think it connects to your experience in health care in the Navy, too, right? You know. Yeah. Can you maybe describe you know, you have many efforts, but can you describe your efforts in the city to really improve health care here?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:43:09] Well, I'm new in town and so forth. And I'm in the J. C's. And the J. C's are very active and doing stuff.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:43:18] And what's the J.C.?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:43:20] Junior Chamber of Commerce. And this is still an ongoing organization and got involved with some volunteer things and what have you. And, um.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:43:39] What did you get involved with?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:43:41] Well, first, I think it was the polio thing. Mm hmm. Uh, and polio was rampant and so forth. And a vaccine was discovered by Dr. Jonas Salk. And they were having trouble in Alexandria to getting people to get vaccinated for polio, for God's sake. And, uh, so I thought that was silly. And I complained about it in the J. C's, and they said, Well, why don't you do something about it? So, I went to the health department down here on Saint Asaph Street. I said, I think we need to have a vaccination clinic for polio. They said that's a good idea. One thing led to another, and we put it together. And then somehow, I got involved in the National Foundation. That's the organization that ran the March of Dimes and ran the polio thing. And as president of the Alexandria unit, I became vice president of the one for Washington, D.C. And then going to meetings there, I realized I was told that the iron lung facility in Washington was at George Washington University. They were going to transfer to D.C. General, which is the public hospital there. And no one seems to know how to do it.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:45:19] Before you before you describe this, I'm just curious, can you briefly explain what an iron lung is?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:45:25] It's a device that a patient is put in because the patient is paralyzed from the head down, can't breathe. The only way you can breathe is to breathe for them. And there has to be some device to do it. Well, they didn't have these small things in plastic and so forth in those days. They put them in a tank. It was a long tank. And there was a motor that ran a bellows on the south end of this tank that forced air in and out of this big tank. That was the breath for the patient.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:46:08] So you're saying that they were trying to transport this?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:46:12] They had to transform. Transform a number of them. Mm hmm. Did they, General? And no one there had any responsibility or any experience doing that, particularly. I mean, maybe once or twice moved one, but they hadn't done like 10 or 11. I think that's what we

had a number of that. So, and I said, Well, it's pretty simple. This is what I learned from the Navy. Improvise. So, I knew how to get, you know, generators in moving vans, so forth. So, we put it all together with the police department and all the moving vans. And, you know, over a period of just a few hours, starting at about 4 or 5 in the morning on a Sunday morning. We moved them without much problem at all and virtually no expense. So, and it survived. And nobody died and nobody had a problem but doing that gave me a feeling like something else needs to be done in this world and this sort of thing.

So, and I got involved then with the Mental Health Association and they asked me to be the chairman of that in Alexandria. And one thing led to another, there was an incident. I didn't like it in those days. The Board of Health had to inspect the jail. And you could see that they were some problems, but that was not unusual in jails and so forth. But we had no facility at Alexandria for anybody having a mental episode. None other than to put them in jail. And one day I found out we just had a young man, 19, die in jail. I said, what was the cause? And the courier said natural causes. How does a healthy 19-year-old die of natural causes? That isn't a cause of death as far as I was trained. So, one thing led to another. And I got cranked up and talked to the board of the Mental Health Association and said we need to do something about this. And I called a press conference. Nobody had ever done that. We did it at the George Mason Hotel. And that building is still standing. And I got newspapers there and so forth, and I explained what the situation was and that I didn't think the natural causes was the proper cause of death for a healthy 19-year-old person. Something ought to be done about it. And a few days later we had a meeting with the city manager, the head of the hospital, head of the medical association, and a few other people. About the problem and the head of the hospital, Charlie Goff kept complaining why it wouldn't be possible for the hospital to do anything about that, this, that and the other and so forth. And the chief judge, Jimmy Colasanto, got up from this table. Glass table. Much larger than this. And started with his hand and he swung it around the table, almost busted it. And he rarely ever broke. I mean, had a problem about anything with Jimmy. Slammed his desk, the desk, and said, God damn it, Charlie, do it. And then we got a psychiatric Romer, too. But that was what it took. Anyway, that was challenging. And I was in my early twenties and these days I was probably 25, 26. And I got out of the Navy when I was 22. So. Yeah, that was just a few years later.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:50:47] And can you talk about the business you started the health care business?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:50:51] Yeah, well. Well, I. I got to thinking that some things need to be improved and so forth. And one thing was the quality of ambulance service in the Navy was terrible. Even though I loved everything about what the Navy was doing in the Navy. One day I got a call for an ambulance for a Navy captain who's a senior officer nearby. Chevy Chase was having a heart attack. I thought. And the commanding officer at the hospital should grab an infant intern and so forth, and that's a doctor who's just starting out. And they said, there's resuscitator in the ambulance. Well, no one ever looked at it. No one had ever used it. No one knew what to do. I didn't know anything to do with it. I'd never seen one. So, we got in the ambulance and the ambulance driver didn't know how to get there. It was a civil service driver and the whole thing was screwed up totally. And the guy died. Now, he may have died anyway, but we couldn't run the resuscitator. The other thing is, is the vehicle, the ambulance itself wasn't built with a room high enough where you could sit the patient up, because if he was having congestive heart failure, which where the fluid builds up in the lungs instead of lying down, lying down, they'll be drowning. Sit him up. It's that simple. This guy



was dead before he got to the hospital. It didn't need to be done. The institution just wasn't set up to do things properly as they could have done. And that was my Navy anyway. And I saw these volunteer rescue squads doing the same sort of thing, not knowing what the hell they were doing. They never had a medical background or experience. They didn't know what the patient really needed. It wasn't anything fancy. Just sit him up. The fancy ambulance that cost a lot of money. You couldn't get them sitting upright enough. That's all they needed to do was lie down. So, you know, that got me pissed off, and that's when I started.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:53:36] And what was the business?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:53:38] Providing ambulance and medical services to cities and counties around the country

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:53:44] That's great.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:53:46] Started right here. With one ambulance. And the city still had its own, but I had mine.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:53:54] That's great. I just want to make sure we talk about your wife and children. So, I don't mean to pivot too much out, but I want to make sure that we have some time to talk about your wife. First of all, because you briefly mentioned how you met her, but let's return to that. So, like, how did you tell us when you first met your wife?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:54:24] Her parents moved here. Her father was head of the Scripps Howard Center of Washington. His paper that he served was the Memphis Commercial Appeal which is a big thing in the cotton world. And they moved here, and they moved a block from where I lived.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:54:51] And what are some of your early memories with your wife, you know, as children?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:54:56] She was a pretty girl. Yeah, she was a very nice girl. Mm hmm. There wasn't a whole lot of my time spent with her. As I mentioned, she'd been dating other people and this, that and the other. And all of a sudden, she decided I was going to get married.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:55:14] When was this?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:55:15] When I went in bootcamp went the Navy, and this guy brought her up there to see me there, because we'd seen each other off and on for maybe ten years. 15 years?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:55:27] Yeah.

**Tom Hulfish** [00:55:28] No. We know each other well.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:55:31] What's your wife like?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:55:34] Oh, she's. She's fine, but she's retired. She's living out in Warrenton, Virginia.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:55:45] Okay. And how about your kid? How many kids do you have?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:55:49] Three.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [00:55:50] And can you describe each of them for us?

**Tom Hulfish** [00:55:54] Well, there are two boys and a girl. They all the boys are the oldest. My first son was one, born at Bethesda Naval Hospital when I was a patient. Right. Well, I was a patient in hospital. He was born. And that's fairly unusual. Normally, I would have been in the room, but anyway. He's done very well. He's, uh, getting up there in years. He won't like that. Um, my younger son has been in and around the real estate business for years and mortgage business and what have you. My second son has four children and several grandchildren. A number of grandchildren. And, my daughter, the baby is, uh, 60 something, and, uh, she's doing very well. Retired in Michigan, and she has two grandchildren. And one of them is, uh, interesting. Those two grandchildren were self-taught and uh, one of them became a oarswoman rowing and they were in Saratoga, New York and rowing up in New York. There's not a lot of rowing activity up there. There's more in Canada. And she, uh, she and her partner became champion in Canada for doubles, two people on one show, she got an athletic scholarship from that and went checking out in school. And when she was there, I think that was at Bucknell. And she was asked what her major was and she said international studies and the coach said that isn't going to work with me in your junior year. What are your grades? And she told him and he called the university president. She had a full academic scholarship, and she went on to write a book later in Mandarin and so forth. She wanted to be a medical missionary, I think, in Africa. That was her desire. So, she figured she would need to learn Mandarin because the Chinese are going to be coming to Africa to get natural resources. So that was going to be her first semester in a foreign language. She did that and she liked it so much. It was a spring semester. She had a scholarship set up or an internship for this for the summer set up in Washington. She blew that off. Stayed in China, rented a bicycle or bought a bicycle and stayed and went to work for a Chinese real estate company. And then in the fall, instead of coming back here and going to Africa in a French speaking African country, she did another semester in China. Then came back here and did French speaking country here and then graduate and went right back to China teaching.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:00:06] That's great. That's great.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:00:08] Then one thing led to another, and she started with another girl who had been through the experience over in China started a business. Of helping students when they come to China get acclimated because there are so many different dialects and languages and so forth. Different places you'll be going. It's a huge country. Hmm. No one from before had helped them get oriented into where they were going with the language and so forth and facilities. So, she and this other girl started. There was actually three of the girls started this thing of welcoming the students into wherever they were going to be in China. Mhm. And get them squared away. And the price was \$5,000 a student and they did very well. And then the Chinese version of Snelling and Snelling bought them.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:01:09] So they are doing well.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:01:09] And then she got involved in the PR business and was on television over there. And one thing led to another. And, um. She got involved with TV people and she was involved in language skills and so forth, but. She was on a national jet dating show.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:01:47] Wow. She's done a lot. Yeah, that's amazing.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:01:50] And then.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:01:51] I'm curious. Is there anything because we're nearing times. I just want to make sure. Is there anything you want to mention in closing before I end the interview is anything that you want to end with?

**Tom Hulfish** [01:02:05] No. Do you want any more stuff?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:02:09] No, I think no. I mean, anything that that you want to share. But before we close out or anything that you feel like we're missing.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:02:18] Well, the thing about the daughter, I mean, the granddaughter.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:02:22] Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:02:23] Oh.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:02:24] That sounds good. Yeah. So.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:02:27] Well, anyway, she's there in China, and one thing led to another. She married a Chinese fellow who was six foot something neat guy, and she wrote a book about social media in China versus the rest of the world. And she was picked by. Are you familiar with Alibaba? Well, Alibaba picks up like 13 people every year that the world needs to know. And she was picked by Alibaba to be one of the 13, four or five years ago. And it was quite a thing for them and so forth, and the book went well and so forth. And then she's been working in the industry of helping Chinese and Americans and whatever countries helping. So, she's doing very well.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:03:26] That's great. Well, she sounds amazing.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:03:28] Yeah. Then the other daughter is doing well and that's two kids and so forth. And. No, that's right. Things are going, but there are nine great grandchildren.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:03:41] Wow. That's amazing.

**Tom Hulfish** [01:03:43] Yeah, that's amazing.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [01:03:46] Well, Tom, this has been great. Thank you so much for spending this hour and sharing your stories. Um, so. Yeah, thank you so much.