

with malaria. But when Chloroform resistant malaria came to the province, it changed completely. And even adults got really severe malaria, like cerebrum malaria and black water fever, things like that. And died of malaria. Because they were not semi-immune to Chloroform resistant malaria. It was a new strain for them. And I should also admit they were harder to treat because we couldn't use the old standby, Chloroform. And we were all the time having tremendous numbers of people with intravenous quinine running and that sort of thing, treating their malaria. And this was a gift the North Vietnamese brought. It must have been, oh, sometime in the '60s that this happened. Sometime after '65 I would guess. Evidently what had happened was they didn't have it when they left the North but they picked it up coming down through Laos, and then brought it into the area. And in fact, one of the special services doctors told me one time, they used this as a test if a fellow was -- in the early days before it was really in the indigenous population yet, and if they wondered if someone of their men, usually a Vietnamese, was actually a double agent sort of thing and was working with the North Vietnamese, if he came down with Chloroform resistant malaria he was highly suspect that he'd had contact with the North Vietnamese.

Now this was what the special forces used as a test?

Yes. Special forces doctors felt that -- and this was indicative, unless of course there had been some operation where they'd gone over into Laos or something. Of course, they were doing that way before there were ever any Americans in Laos, or supposedly special forces were going over there. Sometimes dressed as North Vietnamese or VC.

Tell me about your hospital, how you established it, how you got the funding?

Well, actually from the time that we were first there, I think within the first few months we had to think in terms of we needed a hospital for the people because trying to take care of them the way we were was very, very iffy. Not really having the equipment and stuff you needed. So by 1961, actually, we had proposals in to the German Bishop's relief fund, Caritas, that gave us the money to build the buildings which as I said, were built about four Kilometers north of the town in an area between two Montagnard villages. The Montagnards donated the land for the hospital. We built a forty bed hospital. One large ward with two sides to it actually. I think at the time we designed it we were thinking of men on one side, women on the other which was silly of course because the families always came with them and it didn't matter where the men were or where the women were we had the wives and the children there anyway. So you could have anybody next to anybody as far as that went. And actually -- let me think, I think it was 48 patients we had the first day of actual operation. And from then on it never got any smaller. And actually the thing was always terribly overcrowded. It always looked a total mess. But, I must say that our cure rate was really pretty good for most of the people that we saw. Most of what we treated was infectious disease. We did, of course as the war got on, we got more, and more casualties but even at the worst times of the war we had more people dying of infectious

disease than we did of war injuries in spite of all the propaganda that went out. There again when the American military came to Vietnam, especially up to our area it helped us a lot because they would bring people that helped us but also kept us busier even cause when they heard of action in an area they would evacuate the wounded with the medevac helicopters and would land it at our hospital if they were montagnards. In fact I think we had a chopper pad there before they ever had them at hospitals in the United States -- just outside the hospital proper. And so they would bring down more wounded. Sometimes they'd just bring down sick. They found them in the villages when they'd been in the village for some reason. So we had a lot of people being taken care of there. The one time this probably was not true was during the Tet Offensive of '68 when we were totally surrounded by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. The only ones who were really getting in to us were the wounded. And they were people from the villages nearby. The Bishop of Kontum was a crazy Frenchman, was going out to the villages to visit in spite of the fact that VC and NVA were all over the place and bringing in wounded to us. He was carting them in in his land rover.

And they didn't bother him?

No. They didn't bother him at all. They didn't bother us all through the Tet Offensive. The one time that it became terribly harry was just towards the end of the Tet Offensive when the Americans fired on us.

By mistake?

Well, that's a good question? They were shooting from the airport which was maybe three kilometers from us with these fifty caliber machine guns. This was the first time we turned on our generator because we'd been afraid to turn it on. We turned on our generator one evening and these shells started coming. And a German nurse and I were out standing at the fence looking kind of off towards the village at the time it started. They pinned us down. We slid on our bellies back to the buildings and said cut off the generators for gosh sakes.

Did they do any damage?

No. Well, a few nicks in the buildings and stuff. Fortunately they didn't hit anyone. But they were really after us, it seemed. And we found out, actually this was a group they had brought in to the airport and they, the next day they came down to the hospital and we said well how come somebody was shooting at us last night? Well, to begin with they were extremely cool when they came to the hospital. These guys came in and, you know, we were being friendly and you know, "Would you like a beer," and "where ya from," and they weren't even talking to us. Then one of them stepped off to the side and got on the radio and a little while later he came back and all of a sudden the whole thing changed. "Yeh, we'd love a beer." Real cozy. They'd been told when they were dropped at the airport the night before that everything in front of them to the north was enemy.

thought things were calm enough that I could go out. And actually during that time there was some worry and then when that was quiet, I was just about ready to go out -- I had my hand on the door handle. I was gonna go out and see how things were when I heard them come into the hospital. They didn't make any bones about it. They were shouting, throwing grenades, they were shooting.

Shooting the patients?

Yeh. Yeh, they shot patients. They didn't deliberately kill patients. They did kill patients but that was because they were sleeping inside the lab where they threw the grenades. The lab and x-ray department they threw grenades and killed people in there. But ever since the time -- the time of the Tet Offensive -- we were always having bullets and things at night so we had told everyone that usually would sleep out on the veranda, because we always had too many patients to possibly fit inside the ward, we told them go in anyplace and sleep at night -- we'll leave the doors open, so at least they would have some protection against the firing. So we had a bunch of people sleeping on the floor of the lab and x-ray room and they were the ones where they threw grenades and killed them. The ones that they deliberately shot, they kind of picked them out and shot them in the legs and kind of let this be a warning to you sort of thing. So when finally all this stopped, and I dared to go out, I found that Renatta's door was ajar and she wasn't there so I went to the ward immediately. Everybody was just frozen sitting there. I said, "Where's the nurse?" They said, "They took her." And they took two of our Montagnard employees too. They were on the job trained nurses we had.

Women?

No, men. All of our on the job trained nurses were men because the women -- women didn't really have enough -- for one thing they practically didn't have any education. I take that back, not all of them. The Montagnard Nuns we had were also women and some of them were working as on the job trained nurses. But other than that it was the men. Anyway, the women didn't either have education or enough get up and go to really get into nursing. When I went into the hospital, the patients said, "we're afraid they're still here. Get down here because they're going to take you too." So they hid me under a bunch of their blankets and kind of a whole bunch of them half lying on me inside the ward. And I've never seen anything like that in my life. From then until daylight, there wasn't a sound. Usually at night the ward was a fairly loud place. We always had a bunch of infants and children in there. If daddy was sick, mother came with the babies -- big crowds of people. That night, the terror must have communicated itself to the babies. There wasn't one single whimper out of one baby the whole time. There was just deathly silence. And at one point there was a little moan from somebody who had been shot. And so at that point I said, "Well, let me crawl over there and see if I can do something, give him a shot or something." And they bodily held me back and said, "No don't go. They might be here still." So I spent the night on the floor. When it got light in the morning of course, then we could assess the damage and start

treating the wounded. And that was the time when the French Nun, Sister Ann, generously donated half of their school for us and we had a hospital in a school house -- dormitory actually. That's when we moved into the town itself.

What about Renatta? The German nurse.

Oh, she was turned over to the VC and held captive for a year and was then released by her birthday.

Did you ever communicate with her about her captivity?

Oh, yeh. She was let go right on the outskirts of Kontum and came in. And she stayed with us for a couple of days until she was able to get a flight out. By then, of course, the journalists were all over the place. I had to order one of them off the property because she didn't want to talk to journalists. She was scared to talk to the journalists. She'd been told by the North Vietnamese and the VC that if she did they would get her and maybe get her family too even though they were over in Germany. And they had so convinced her of their omnipotence and what they could do that she wasn't about to talk to anyone. And it became somewhat difficult. Anyway, I must say, we had a real welcome home feast for her. A couple of days of rejoicing and then she went off to Germany. I visited her in Germany a couple of years later. Let's see that was '68 she was taken, '69 she was released so it was '71 when I saw her in Germany. And she was still kind of in the process of recovery. She did write -- after she got back to Germany she told her story to Der Spiegel and an article there and I think in a few others too, and then wrote a book in collaboration with someone about her story. She had a rough time but she told me to begin with that she didn't urinate for three days after they took her prisoner. She just had no urge to. Of course she didn't eat or drink anything for three days either. She -- the two boys, the two young men who were taken prisoner with her managed to escape on the trail. They said they would have liked to have tried to take her but she was being much more closely watched than they were and they didn't think that they could accomplish that too, so they managed to get away themselves. Actually they said, "You know, we thought maybe we should stay with her too, but we've got wives and children down here and we decided we'd better get back when the going was good." So they managed to get away.

Did she say what her treatment was like by the VC?

Not treated too badly, actually. She usually had just rice to eat. She did do some work in the fields. She wasn't required to. She volunteered to help them out as far as nursing went and they told her, well they had better nurses than she. They didn't need her. A lot of brain washing -- propagandizing. They had regular sessions on that. And I think she got pretty well brain washed out of it. When she came back she was wearing the classic black pajamas when she came back which they had given her to wear. And before Renatta was taken prisoner she was one of the most anti-communist people I've ever known. She was West German and she knew pretty much because of friends and relatives in East Germany what it was like. And so she was very bitterly anti-communist. When she came back, she wasn't. She

had a lot of good things to say about them which was kind of interesting. But I think it was mostly a -- just a very long mental ordeal for her, with nothing in the way of reading material or what have you. Now we did have an opportunity to send her some stuff. We heard rumors where she might be. And there was one old man that came from a village that was kind of half way with the VC and half not. But he said that he would go and take her some things. I don't think he ever saw her himself, but he was able to take stuff which eventually got to her. We sent her some reading material and things and some clothes and what have you. I think all of it got there. I can't remember for sure anymore. It seems to me there were some things missing. Oh I know, what was missing was the pencils and paper we sent. We sent some of that thinking that she'd like to maybe do a little writing while she was in captivity. And they took all those away before they let her have the stuff.

They let her have the reading material and the clothes?

But not anything to write with.

Tell me a little about your working day?

Usually we'd start around eight o'clock in the morning and make rounds which was usually the first activity unless there was an emergency. You know, emergencies played a big part in life and it wasn't unusual to be called out in the middle of the night and just keep on going the next morning. Usually I slept at the hospital. And after we moved into the town, there was a little room there at the girls school where the nuns who took charge of the girls had slept and I took that to sleep in. It was right off of the part of it that we used as a main ward. So I'd sleep in there at night. After '68 there really wasn't a real quiet time anymore. There was always stuff going on and you would likely hear, oh, shells coming into town and that sort of thing at night. And sometimes during the day. In fact sometimes you'd watch them come in -- watch the mortar shells go overhead. Anyway, we'd get started around eight o'clock in the morning after we'd eaten breakfast and first of all, see all the inpatients which took a considerable length of time. In fact that was most of the morning. In addition, there were usually some procedures to be done and sometimes surgery we'd be doing in the mornings. And afternoon was devoted to the outpatient clinic where we would see, oh, maybe a couple of hundred people in the afternoon and admit the ones that were sick enough to be admitted to the hospital and treat as outpatients the others. They would start lining up way before we would start the outpatient clinic. And we'd have lines going on for what amounted to blocks really by the time we started. Then we'd start giving them numbers as to what order they were to be seen in. I'll never forget one afternoon I called, I think it was number 51 or something like that and asked what the trouble was and he said, "I got shot." And sure enough, he had a flesh wound and it was bleeding. He'd been waiting quietly in line all this time for 50 patients before him.

Usually when there was an emergency they'd rush them to the front?