

Yeh, usually they'd get right up there. This man was very patient and he was just waiting his turn. I don't think anybody asked him what was wrong. He managed to get called. And then things began to get even more interesting disease wise during the time we were at the school because that was the time we started to get bubonic plague and that was when we started to get cholera for the first time. Before that, the highlands had been pretty much exempt from both of those. But the plague, especially, I think, came about because of the transport of rice by air. Before then, if any rice moved from one place to another it came by truck and the sick rat that had the plague carrying fleas on them would die before they got up there. They wouldn't make it up to the highlands. But with the transport by air they seemed to bring them with them. We started getting bubonic plague and it became a real problem. And, like I said, cholera came. Didn't last too long, maybe a year of cholera where it was really bad. And that seemed to be pretty much over with fortunately. And of course, always the wounded to some extent. And of course in 19-- let me think, was it '72 that they took everything except the ground itself. And that was when we were evacuated. The Bishop wanted us to get out. He didn't want any Westerners there. He stayed and the French Priests and nuns stayed. But he said should he have any Americans there -- we expected the town to be taken too, and he thought this would put the local people more at risk and put the French and Vietnamese more at risk if we were there. So he told us to leave. And we did. That was the time -- by then I had my two little boys. And evacuating Kontum, I'll never forget. We were suppose to go out on a plane that was coming in and we were being shelled almost continuously -- the whole town. And unfortunately that plane was so mobbed by Vietnamese that nobody could get on it. And it didn't even stay down on the ground long enough to pick anyone up. So we missed that. So then the military advisory group said that they would have helicopters going from time to time down as far as Pleiku and they'd get us out on those. So we went over to the military advisor group after -- out of our old bunker and into theirs, and waited for something to come in. The first one that came in actually had room for just two adults and they said as many children. Well, the only children that were there were my two plus the son of a Vietnamese woman who was married to one of the fellows that was working with us. He was actually with the Vietnam Christian Services -- he was a Quaker from Philadelphia, but anyway, Bill had married this Vietnamese woman and she had this little boy, so the consensus was that the children got out first and that their mothers went with them. So she and I, and my two and her one got on the chopper we thought headed for Pleiku. I had my younger boy on my lap and the older boy was sitting on the lap of one of the military in the group on the chopper and almost immediately after we took off we were landing again. It turned out they needed to refuel and the only fuel was at the airport and the airport had about three burning trucks on it and was being shelled continuously. When we set down there I just knew that this was it. This was the end. I just closed my eyes and said, "Well, that's it good-by kids, good-by everybody." But miraculously enough we took off again without having been hit even though the stuff was coming in all around us. Got down to Pleiku, and by golly,-- we were gonna get a plane out of Pleiku to the coast, to Nha Trang, and while we were waiting for a

plane in Pleiku, darned if they didn't start shelling the airport in Pleiku. We got to Nha Trang that night and I'll tell you -- and the kids were so wound up they just couldn't stop. They just went wild. They had been so subdued all day with all this stuff and being closed in and obviously we communicated our fears to them but, -- they were three and five at that time, and they -- We got to Nha Trang where it was safe and some fellow was a friend of somebody or other in our group, we were up at his apartment, which didn't have an awful lot of room, but it didn't matter. But those kids just wouldn't stop. I think they were awake most of the night. Then we went on down to Saigon and then it became a question of trying to get some documentation for the kids so we could get them out of the country. This was not easy. The older boy had already been adopted but on the way down to Saigon the suitcases were stolen and it had all of his papers in them. I didn't have any other copies in the country. The younger boy I hadn't yet started to adopt. I'd only had him for a few months. And his father had said -- his father was still living but his father found it very difficult to get down to Kontum, so to start accomplishing the paper work was going to take awhile. So I thought I can at least get the paper work on Det when I get up to Pleiku. So I flew up to Pleiku to go to the Court there and get a copy of his papers from the adoption, and while I was up there, I discovered that the provincial hospital in Pleiku was completely abandoned. That all the doctors and the nurses had left because they were afraid that the fighting was going to get down there even though it wasn't yet, it was kind of close, but it wasn't in the town at all like Kontum. Kontum was just in the streets fighting. And so, I talked to some of the military, and some of our people, and what have you, and we decided that we would try to bring most of the hospital down to Pleiku and take over the province hospital. So I lined up a big chopper and put on it all of our sickest patients. Left a few behind who didn't have anything much wrong and were well anyway, the Montagnard volunteers who stayed behind and the Montagnard nuns. The Montagnard nuns were told to stay behind by their superior in Kontum and take care of the people that were left. And then we had a number of our staff that volunteered to stay behind and help out there rather-- so we divided it.

Now were these Vietnamese staff?

Montagnard staff. So they ran what was left up in Kontum, and whatever helicopter was available, they would send it down to us in Pleiku. Well, we moved the whole hospital and then I also managed to get Wier legally adopted. Well, not legally, but illegally adopted because I had absolutely no paper work on him. I didn't have a birth certificate, I had absolutely nothing. And I talked to the Bishop and I told him, I don't know what I'm going to be able to do. I certainly want to get him out of the country. He says, "well, you certainly should." So he goes to the Vietnamese Priest who was his delegate down in Pleiku and says he was to go to court and tell them that this child was abandoned at birth and that he was now deeding him over to me-- that he was giving him up for adoption to me. And so we got a birth certificate, which was total baloney. The child wasn't even born in that area -- he was born up in Kontum province-- a little bit north of Kontum, but anyway, we got a birth

certificate and then we got an adoption contract and then we got a decree of adoption, all within ten days. The fastest adoption on record. And in the process, well they were in a hurry too, so the judge and the court lawyer could leave too. And, but I kept saying they can't leave until this is finished. So we got it done. And I treated the Judge's irritable bowel syndrome at the same time. Then I brought the kids here to the states, and the divided Kontum-Pleiku thing kept going. Eventually, got so that some of our people would fly into Kontum on the choppers and pick up the ones that were the worst. Our Montagnard people who stayed behind just did fabulously.

These are the ones you trained?

Yes, well, I shouldn't say I trained -- it was more our nurses that trained them. They're actually now, the ones like little sister Gabriel who just happened to be the boys aunt, but that's another story, anyway she got sharp enough she worked with me in the clinic, and she got sharp enough that she was diagnosing and prescribing like mad. She was taking care of meningitis, she was taking care of cerebral malaria, the whole nine yards. Another boy that we trained to help in surgery, was doing the surgery. He was doing amputations and things. They did exceedingly well to the point where when the take over came in '75 two of our doctors stayed behind, one American and one New Zealander because they thought they might be allowed to work, especially the New Zealander was very optimistic that-- New Zealand hadn't been involved in it all that much-- that he would be allowed to stay on and work. Well, they got to work for ten days and then they were taken and sent to a prison camp in the jungle and spent six months in the prison camp and then were expelled directly to -- went down to Saigon then to Bangkok and eventually went on to America. Came back to the United States and the New Zealander went to New Zealand. But when we heard-- it took a while for news to reach us-- but after they'd been sent out they put in a North Vietnamese who supposedly was a doctor and we heard that--later, because we didn't have any communication with anybody to begin with, but later we heard that he would wander around with a stethoscope around his neck and obviously didn't know up from down. And if anybody sick came in he'd ask the Montagnards what should be done, let them take care of them. And then, eventually, the Montagnards continued to run the place and actually take care of the people while this figure head was running around, though they eventually essentially closed it by prohibiting people from traveling in that direction. They simply said you can't go north of the town. And then, the Montagnards close by, they eventually told them you can't go there either and eventually just closed it. And now I understand, the buildings are just being used in some sort of administrative capacity for the province. They've done terrible things to the people. They've even got them living in huts on the ground like the Vietnamese do instead of their traditional houses on stilts. They've got them wearing Vietnamese type clothing. They've got --they're trying to wipe them out as a cultural entity. Some of the refugees we've sponsored over here, one of them made a trip back last year, she and her husband came over along with their children and her brother, who was quite young at the time, '75, and it was her mother that was very sick back in Vietnam, so a

year ago, she and her brother went back to visit. And she brought back pictures and stories of what happened. She takes it a lot more calmly than I do. She didn't tell me that they had them wearing Vietnamese clothes and had them building their huts on the ground like Vietnamese instead of like Montagnards did. It was only when I looked at her pictures and I saw these things I said, "How come." And she said, "Oh, they told them they have to do it that way now." She and her husband are going back together at the end of this month again. So I'll be able to send money and medicines again, because, you know the United States -- the U.S. customs totally prohibits sending anything of value to Vietnam. Can't send any medications, clothing, food, so -- anything. So that's the only way to send, is when Yen went over last year and this year I'll be sending things with the family when they go again. They're allowed to go pretty much anywhere they want to. They can go up into the villages and everything. One of our American nurses who worked with us about a year over there went over last December and she was not allowed to go up into the highlands at all. The Vietnamese prohibited it. So she was only in Saigon and on the coast. But having written ahead of time that she was coming, some of our Montagnard staff from the hospital who used to be at the hospital took a bus down to Saigon and visited her there and she hired a car and drove up the coast with them. But they didn't want to be seen in public with her anywhere. Either in Saigon or especially on the coast where it was closer to where they came from. They were afraid that word would get back to Kontum and that they'd be punished for that.

You said that originally the Grail was going to send you there for two years. What kept you there?

Well, in two years we were just getting started. It was the need of the people. I have never seen a group that needed help as badly as these people. And I haven't seen one since. I think they're probably some of the neediest people in the world--some of the sickest people in the world. And we were just beginning to get started at that point. We did have the promise of money to build the hospital. We'd been given the land, and we were kind of getting ready to start, and trying to -- after two years I came back and did some fund raising to get some money to start getting equipment and medicines and stuff. And I got some direct donations and that kind of stuff too to be sent over. We weren't at all ready to open the hospital when we did it. I would have stayed on indefinitely if it hadn't been for the take over because I felt more and more a real kinship with these people. We got more and more asked to village celebrations to come. And they would put on traditional Montagnard celebrations for us for New Years every year. And then they also started doing it for St. Patrick's Day since my name is Pat. We'd have a big party at the hospital that they'd put on for us. They wove me their traditional costume to wear. You know, it was just -- it was a very close relationship with these people. They were friends as well as co-workers and patients.

Now your staff was Montagnard. Only Montagnard? You didn't have Vietnamese?



We had one Vietnamese who was with us for, oh, maybe four or five years. A Vietnamese girl who spoke Banar, one of the Montagnard languages, quite well. Had been raised at the convent. I think she was an orphan, if I remember, Marie Josette was her name. And she had had -- she hadn't had any formal nursing training at all, but she learned very easily and did -- she spoke both French and Banar and worked very well with the people. So she was with us for four or five years.

What was the size of your staff?

The local staff? Oh, I think around 30, something like that. It's hard to say. It varied a lot depending upon the time and of course it got more and more numerous as time went by. We were probably most numerous at the time of the take over. Certainly we were doctor wise because at that time we had another American doctor-- no two American doctors besides myself. An Indian doctor and a New Zealander.

And these are full time doctors at the hospital?

Yeh. They were full time for the hospital. Before that time it had been usually just one American --just myself. When I came back to the states I would always get someone to cover for me so that was ordinarily somebody that was -- well '71, '72-- I didn't come back much-- it was this young ex-special forces doctor who decided to stay on for awhile after he got out of the military and covered the hospital while I was gone. And then, as I said, over the years we began to get a lot of help from military and also we had these volunteer physicians to Vietnam. When they came to the province they essentially came to us. They were suppose to come to work at the provincial hospital but the provincial hospital was a disaster and there really wasn't much they could do there so they -- generally speaking -- came to work at our hospital, even though officially they weren't suppose to be there. So we had a lot of those come for two months stays. One of them became a good friend. He's from the Seattle area, Dr. Brail. And in fact then would come back on his own sometimes, working without the VPVN program. He became a member of our Kontum Hospital Fund board in Seattle and was a real friend all the way around. In fact we still are in contact regularly while he's living in grand peninsula now. Plus some foreign nurses. One of our big influxes we had, now let's see, how many foreign nurses at the time of the Tet Offensive? I think we had Vinnie and Marie and Renatta, Jean-- I think we had five about that time. We had two Danish nurses and Renatta, the German nurse, and two American nurses. And then, of course Renatta was taken. We moved into the town and could use some extra help and at that time the Catholic Relief Services was bringing in all these -- mostly nuns from various orders to help out in all these places in Vietnam. And they managed to direct some of them up to our place, which was a tremendous help. We had a general nurse, a Mary Knoll sister who'd been in Korea. And then we had a surgical nurse who was a real boon for us because she started really training our people in surgery for the first time -- sterile technique and so forth and so on. And then we had a lab tech who started training our people in lab. And this was a tremendous leap forward for all of these. And it was shortly after that too that we sent a couple of our