

Montagnard nuns over to Qui Nhon to learn anesthesia from the New Zealand team that were working over there. And they came back and started giving our anesthetics. And -- I think I'm getting mixed up. I think we sent them over there even earlier. Yeh, that was around '65, '66 when they went over and got anesthetic training. And then the three nuns we had from Catholic Relief Services were the ones that started the lab training and they also did the real surgical training. Up until then we pretty much relied on our foreign staff for surgery. Then we also sent two of our Montagnards -- one a Montagnard nun, one a boy, down to Qui Nhon and they learned X-ray down there. And we had a little 15 MA unit which is portable -- I don't think they even use that small of one in the United States for portables anymore, but we did everything with that. And had our own X-ray unit. So, little by little -- anyway, the most nurses we ever had was probably around that time when we had about seven foreign nurses including the lab tech. And then at the time of the take over we were doing pretty well. We had, let me think now -- a New Zealand nurse who had been down in Qui Nhon and when her tour ran out down there she decided to come and work with us. We had Peggy Brail who was Dr. Brail's daughter. She was a -- actually she was a pediatric nurse and she did everything exceedingly well, and then when she came back to the states here she decided to go to medical school, and now she's a pediatrician. Actually I think she sub-specialized in neonatology. But she was with us. Another girl from the states was with us -Mary --let me think-- she wasn't with us very long in this area. Let's see -- we had Marion, and Mary and Peggy and who else did we have at that time of the nurses. I can't remember. We did have a much bigger complement of foreign doctors than we'd had before.

How large did your patient flow get to be?

Oh, hundreds. Practically uncountable actually. And after we moved back to the other hospital buildings in '74 -- 1st part of '74. No, wait a minute --that was '73. After the so-called peace. Somebody commented, you could sit out on the veranda and listen to the sounds of peace when all the shells went up. Cause we were getting shelled regularly even after the so-called cease-fire happened. And we had an international control team in the town who were kind of cute. We thought we should be friendly so shortly after they'd come into the town, why I went over to ask if they'd like to come to dinner. And the guy, he was one of the eastern Europeans that was there, I've forgotten what nationality he was -- Hungarian I think, I'm not positive but anyway, I said to him, "We were wondering if you'd like to come to dinner with us. We're kind of an international group too." And he said, "Oh, well, we have food here." And I said, "Well that wasn't really the point." Well anyway, eventually they decided that they'd come to dinner. And so they came to dinner and I'll never forget it, I went to the door to welcome them, and every one of them kissed my hand. I thought, boy, I never expected this. It was really quite impressive but we never really got very cozy. They just -- pretty stand-offish. They were mostly older people. They were men -- anyway we went back in '73, the first part of '73, to the hospital. It was a real problem because the South Vietnamese Army had used the place during the fighting that went on around

the town and very nastily just messed everything up. I mean they just deliberately fouled things. This was a Montagnard -- you know, this had the reputation of being a Montagnard place. And they did things like defecate in the wells that we had on the property. As Drew Horst put it, this was a crime against humanity. And deliberately destroyed things. Really, it was pretty sickening to go and see what they had done when we came back. There was a fair amount of repairs and an awful lot of cleaning that had to be done. And then also they had planted mines all over the place. And I'll never forget when I spent four hours with the commanding general of the South Vietnamese forces in Kontum. First of all, he had lousy tea, it was terrible stuff. And talking to him about, please, couldn't we get those mines taken out. And it finally developed, they didn't have any map of where they put the mines. So the people in the villages near by were getting killed, and we never did get the mines really dug out. In fact we had one of our staff severely wounded when he'd gone out back to -- we had a little cemetery in the back where people who couldn't get back to their village to be buried if they died. And taking a body to the cemetery one day, one of our staff stepped on a mine. So it was not funny but anyway, we did get back into operation there. We put up some more buildings too, because the number of people was so much greater than we'd ever had before. And we developed a pediatric ward, which was just kind of a ramshackle building. But it was a place to put the kids together anyway. And our intensive care unit, which was kind of out in the open, but with some plastic draped around, for people on respirators or whatever, in that area, it was really quite a production. But also we had our pig project going by then. A fellow from CARE was doing a pig project and was doing it in cooperation with the hospital. We had some CARE people with us -- when did they leave? They left sometime before the final takeover at the airport. But -- not all of them though, because Cary was still there at the time of the take over. He was doing the pig project.

Were there any women with CARE?

Yeh. But they went out quite a bit earlier and they were working on various things like -- one of their projects was to try to get a market for Montagnard handicrafts. Develop that -- but it never really got off the ground. But Cary's pig project worked quite well. They got American pigs that would interbreed with the local Pot Bellied Pigs and end up with ones that were more resistant to the local diseases and yet were still a lot bigger. And get these pigs out to the villages and then we had some of them for the use of the hospital to help feed the people. Cary was quite interesting because Cary fell in love with a local Montagnard girl, a girl from down in Ban Me Thuot who used to travel with -- she was kind of working for CARE with this project of Montagnard handicrafts and she came to visit Kontum and stayed with us and Cary was most intrigued with her. He was a typical American boy, but she was a beautiful girl. So anyway, at the time of the take over she -- he was still with us because she was still down in Ban Me Thuot which was the first part of the highlands to be taken in '75. They attacked Ban Me Thuot first which was a big shock to every one because Ban Me Thuot had been a relatively safe place. And when she -- she was

there visiting her family at the time of the take over. And when we got down to Saigon after our evacuation from Kontum, Cary decided that he was not going to leave until he found her. And so of course he couldn't possibly travel up to Ban Me Thuot, and he got stories that she was dead and this and that and the other thing. He simply stayed on through the take over. Stayed on in Saigon and eventually did get up to Ban Me Thuot, found her, married her and brought her to the United States. They're living in Florida now.

He was there throughout the takeover then. Did he get out at the end?

No. He got out on his own. Oh, I think it was a year or so after the takeover. I haven't talked to them since then. I just got a -- I get word of them but --

Tell me about your getting out. Hadn't you already taken your children back to the states?

Yeh, but they'd gone back with me. They came back to Vietnam once they were U.S. citizens. Which of course as it turned out, didn't mean a darn thing because the South Vietnamese, and the Americans backed them up on this, wouldn't recognize their U.S. citizenship as long as they were still Vietnamese citizens. And the American government said too that their Vietnamese citizenship takes priority. So the first thing I did after I got back there and discovered this, they traveled on American Pass Ports, I started the process of renouncing their Vietnamese citizenship which turned out to be a much more arduous thing than I thought it was going to be because I started with the court in Pleiku which was the court for the whole area, but it turned out that I was going to have to have the signature of the President himself in order to renounce their Vietnamese citizenship. And the take over came way before that could happen. It hadn't even got to his desk by the time the take over came. But he personally reviewed every renunciation of citizenship. So anyway, so we were in Kontum and on Monday, we heard that Ban Me Thuot had been attacked. The South Vietnamese were officially denying it but the grapevine had it. And the Montagnards all knew it and I said, well, you know, this is the beginning of the end. There's no question of it. We're going to be going very quickly. In fact, we hear that Ban Me Thuot had been overrun. And it was true. They were overrun just like that. And we'd been in Ban Me Thuot just a couple of days before that. The boys and I had gone down there to visit their father, a refugee down in Ban Me Thuot because he was earmarked for extinction up on Kontum area. We were down there and we visited with him and about two days later, it seemed so peaceful down there, no mortars coming in -- nothing. We -- so Tuesday, there was an Air America plane in, and we sent out everyone that agreed to go. I sent the children, I sent all of out staff that agreed to go and that was primarily the ones who had family responsibilities elsewhere, and again responsibilities back in the U.S.. One of our nurses had an aged mother, and so forth. They left and we had just a skeleton staff at the hospital. There were the two doctors who stayed on and myself -- so there were three doctors left. And I think there were three nurses. Yeh, there was Marion, and Mary, and Peggy.

Were these American nurses?

Yeh. American nurses. And we stayed on. The rest of them all went down to Nha Trang on Air America. It wasn't until Saturday that one of the people from the military advisory group came over and said, "You have 15 minutes before the last plane leaves." Of course we'd been kind of prepared for it and some of the things that I really didn't want to leave behind -- one small bag was all that your gonna have anyway, that I had already put together before hand so that there wouldn't be any last minute rush on that. And George and Edrick had already decided they were going to stay on. So the rest of us got out on this small plane to Qui Nhon. It was only the nurses and myself and Cary. We were evacuated as far as Qui Nhon. And it turned out actually they were going to make one more trip. They went back to pick up a few Vietnamese officials. So it wasn't really the last flight out but we were told it was going to be. We got down as far as Qui Nhon that night and then the next day we flew down to Nha Trang where the children were, then got right on down to Saigon. And actually, down in Saigon, this was March 15th, -- you know, the rest of the country was being very optimistic. I wasn't. But everybody else was. But it was March 15th that we left the Highlands. The Vietnamese were saying that they were not going to give up the highlands but the Americans found out about it when they saw all these high class officers arriving down in Nha Trang. They'd come from around Pleiku. Then they realized what was happening.

The officers abandoned their troops?

The officers abandoned their troops. Yes. All of the field grade officers as they call them left the highlands by plane and troops with the lower grade officers were left behind. So that was how they found out about it when they saw this happening down in Nha Trang. And that's when they sent the word up to the rest of the people to get out. And it was simple "Go!" And then the rest of the South Vietnamese Army and most of the South Vietnamese civilian population started moving toward the coast on that horrible highway across to Qui Nhon where they were slaughtered like -- It was a terrible proceeding all the way along. There was no water available for them. There was no food for most of them. And the Montagnards just stood back and laughed and said, "Thank God, the Vietnamese are leaving." It was a miserable trip. A few Montagnards made the trek too, but for the most part it was the Vietnamese that were doing it. We, down in Saigon, started to think in terms of what could we do for refugees in Saigon and started to try to develop something. But things moved so fast, you could hardly believe it. Every night we would listen to BBC, which was the one that had the best news as to what was really happening and it would be just fantastic the number of places that had fallen during the day. We all kind of scattered around to various places, depending upon what we were doing. I was mostly working trying to get the kids out of the country again because they didn't -- they confiscated their American passports and there was no way we were going to get out that way. They said they couldn't have an exit visa as Vietnamese citizens because they had already had one. So that was that. But anyway, eventually we worked around

it and we got them out but -- Finally the minister of the interior with some pressure from Catholic Relief Services agreed that if they were on my passport as dependents they could go out with me. But anyway, those two weeks until the end of March, we were scurrying around all day, and we'd meet together at night -- we were all kind of staying in the same place with another New Zealander down there, and compare notes and it was obvious what was happening-- the whole place-- it was even worse than anything the BBC had on and we realized it wasn't going to last long. And also things began to happen in Saigon. Anti-American stuff. There were Vietnamese that decided that the Americans were responsible for all of this. They weren't giving them what they thought they wanted right then and there -- you know, more support right then, coming back and fighting their war for them again and all that. So there was beatings of Americans and that sort of thing happening on the street. And I decided my kids didn't need that and I would get out as soon as we could. So we left the end of March, came to the states. And of course Saigon hung on until the end of April. There were a couple of things that were amusing. When we got down to Qui Nhon at night, the New Zealand team was still down there, and we stayed with them. And that night they had a party for some reason or other and among the guests was a American CIA guy that I was talking with. And I told him that if they've given up the highlands that's the beginning of the end. I said, "The whole place is going to go down the tubes very quickly." "Naw, the Highlands don't count." that was the CIA. We used to call them the "CSA" Central Stupidity Agency. "Naw, that'll never happen. They're going to really fight for the rest of the country. They don't care about the highlands. Who cares about that part of the country anyway." And I said, "Well, it's too bad we can't bet on this." But anyway, while I was working --finding my way through the American embassy, I ran into him because of course Qui Nhon fell within a week, and he was down there in Saigon. And I said, "Oh, why aren't you back up in Qui Nhon." And the first week end we were down in Saigon I was invited over to the, what was it, not the ambassador but one of the lesser luminaries in the American Embassy, but still very high on the list, and I'm not quite sure why I was asked, but anyway, I was talking with the gentleman during the evening and I told him, "Well, this is it." He almost had a fit. You know, the official American line was that the Vietnamese were going to hang on and everything was going to be fine. And he was really very angry with me because I was so pessimistic. And I said, "But it's realism, it's going to happen." Well, he was evacuated not too much longer after that. But it was really peculiar that the official attitude was like this. Fortunately, the lesser luminaries at the embassy were a little different. There was a very young, very junior woman that I went to see about getting the kids on my passport so I could get them out of the country. She was totally different. She would expedite anything. She would take anything resembling a picture -- it didn't have to be standard passport size. She realized what was going on. So we got all of the formalities accomplished and got them out.

Was it difficult to adjust after coming back to the states?

Oh, well, of course. Each time I came back I was always appalled at what the states were like compared to where we were