

in Kontum. You know, all the conspicuous consumption and the unhappiness in the United States with really practically no reason to be unhappy compared to the people that stayed happy, even though they lost everything, you know, including several members of their family because there was practically not a family in the province that wasn't touched eventually and had some of their family killed. They were happy people. And they would still be happy. They would still -- I mean of course they mourned when somebody was killed, and they weren't terribly happy when they had to leave their villages with just what they could carry on their back which wasn't much, in the first place they didn't have much to begin with, and living in a refugee camp, living under terrible circumstances, and yet they would be happy and smiling and play with the children -- living for the moment. They're beautiful people. I think the Vietnamese are much less like that. I used to say that the Montagnards are in many ways like children. Vietnamese are like adolescents which makes them much more difficult. So it was -- the Vietnamese were a very devious people. Very, very different from the Montagnards who were very simple. The Montagnards, really, they couldn't lie because they didn't know how. If they tried to lie you'd spot it immediately. Whereas with the Vietnamese, a straight answer is considered impolite. You never just told somebody outright what you thought or what ever. They were different people. But --

What did you do when you came back to the states?

Well, within a few days, actually, I was working at the University of Washington, teaching in the family practice department. A friend of my with whom I'd graduated from medical school was teaching there at the time and he called within a few days from the time I got back and asked if I'd be interested in coming to work. Why not, I had to work. And then following that, actually, I told them it wouldn't be for very long because the only sensible thing seemed to be to go someplace where I could make some tax free money in a hurry because I had zero. I had two little income tax dependents and nothing really to -- income tax -- nothing. You know, we came out pretty much with the clothes on our backs. And so I started looking around for a job overseas and Saudi Arabia seemed to be the place to go. So I went to work in Saudi Arabia for two years which was a terrible experience. All the difference in the world after finding people that you could really relate to and work with and enjoy, the Saudis were totally stand-offish, especially to a lone woman. I mean it was a terrible thing not to have a husband. You had to wear your long skirts everytime you went out in public and all that. And never show your arms or anything else. Of course, being a woman you were worth less than a camel. It was a pretty miserable place.

What group did you work with?

I worked for the Whitiker Corp. They were staffing hospitals for the Saudi ministry of defense and aviation. And I was assigned to Jetta which was one of their capitals -- where they had all their embassies in those days. I think they've moved them all to Rehad now -- which is in the center of their country. Jetta is the biggest city in the country and a seaport

on the Red Sea. I worked in their hospital in Jetta for the first year, and then I was made their director of preventative medicine and did a lot of traveling around the second year. Went to all the places where they had an establishment the second year. The boys enjoyed it. They had a good time.

Was there an American school there?

Yeh. There's an American school in Jetta that was started by Saudi Arabian Air Lines because they were set up by American Air Lines people to begin with and they had started the school to begin with and --not only Americans but all Westerners went there because there wasn't any school for Europeans either and European kids just learned English and went there. The kids got a lot of friends, especially among the European kids. Among the American kids, there was a lot of, you know, you're dark skinned so you're no good kind of stuff, but European kids are different. And they had some very good friends among the Europeans. To begin with we had to stay in hotel in Jetta which was terrible. Then an apartment house in Jetta. And then we did -- they were building these places on the Red Sea for the staff, and so we had a home, pretty much on the Red Sea and there was another American company right next door to us that had a club house and pool and things like tennis courts and showed movies which are illegal in Saudi Arabia other wise. There aren't any movie houses for the Saudis. And so the kids, they had fun. They played in the Red Sea, they went to all the free movies, and they really enjoyed it. But it was dreadful.

You came back with very little in the way of worldly goods. What was your pay like in Vietnam?

I think --what did I do --maybe \$200 a month, that what it was? So of course it did go up at the University of Washington. When I got my first paycheck from the University of Washington it was more than I made a year in Vietnam.

Was \$200 adequate living on the economy?

Oh, it was more than adequate. You know, take care of food and all those things and some of it went in to helping out at the hospital sort of thing. But we couldn't pay everyone. The Catholic Relief Services continued to take care of my stipend. Other people that we hired ourselves we had to pay less to because we couldn't really afford it but we had to collect it ourselves through the various groups in Seattle and Milwaukee. And we got a considerable amount of donations from the military in cash too. You know, when they would take up a collection in church services, frequently it would end up with us. Sometimes the orphanage, sometimes with this, but we frequently got some of that. We had to pay salaries of the people we brought over ourselves and salaries of the local people because we had to pay them -- not very much, but we paid them what seemed to be a reasonable living wage for them.

Was your equipment primarily donated?

Yeh. Occasionally a group in the States would get together and send us a special item of equipment. Our first respirator was that way. Our EKG machine was that way.

What about stress. How did you handle stress?

I think I got addicted to adrenaline. Cause when I came back I felt a tremendous let down. And I think it's just a question of so much adrenaline going all the time you get addicted to it and you don't really feel like you're functioning normally when you don't have it. Because there was so much all the time either in the way of severely injured or seriously ill people that had to be dealt with or in the way of rocket or mortars landing close by. There was always something going on. So that I think I felt less functional when I got back than I did when I was over there.

After Saudi you came back to the States?

Yeh.

Then what did you do?

I started working for Group Health where I still am. It's an HMO in this area. And I started with them originally because the boys were still quite young and I needed a kind of schedule where I could know when I was going to have to be away and get a baby-sitter for them. And this is an HMO with the in house staff so we are actually employees and we have hours that are always predictable -- well there's always on call but on call just means that we're just on call to the hospital and it really means you just have to make rounds at the hospital but very rarely have to go into the hospital. But other than that we do work emergency room but we know the hours in advance so we can line up things in advance. So it made a lot of sense to go with Group Health.

How did you adjust?

Actually, I did feel that most of the patients were -- you know-- people were coming in with such ridiculous things, but you get used to that. And of course, Saudi Arabia was kind of -- there was some of that there too. It was more the Saudis coming in without anything seriously wrong with them. Just a lot of -- among the women especially, board stiff because they were essentially locked up all the time in their Harem. In a way it was sort of a good transitional period in Saudi Arabia. The other thing of course, it was a challenge to to come back to the United State and start to see U.S. patients because the diseases are totally different. And the expectations of the patients are so different. At times they'd make me want to throw up their expectations are so -- you know, everybody is going to have an absolutely perfect result no matter what's wrong with them, and that unfortunately is true with most of the younger patients in the United States. Not the older ones. The older one's are a little more realistic. But the younger ones expect absolutely perfect results from anything that might happen to them. And this was a challenge, and when I first started to practice here, working for the HMO, I did an awful

lot of extra continuing education. I took evening classes at the University of Washington. In those days, they had an internal medicine class that met once or twice a week for two or three hours -- really intensive stuff -- getting up to date-- things I hadn't been dealing with at all.

Did you ever experience flashbacks or dreams or anything like that that some of the people have experienced after coming back from Vietnam?

No flashbacks. Dreams, yeh, and usually they are dreams that make me wish I were back. It was a good time. Even in spite of all the war and all, I certainly would have rather not have had that because I could have accomplished a lot more without it--maybe--because we had a lot of help from the military too. Certainly it interfered with a lot of things we were trying to do in the way of immunization programs and trying to do with public health and teaching and so forth. It was a challenging time. It was a very satisfying time. You felt like you were -- you know, it was the one time I think in my life that I really felt needed twenty four hours a day.

In Saudi Arabia you said that women were treated very poorly. How were women treated in Vietnam?

Oh, quite well for the most part. The Vietnamese women actually have an awful lot to say. Now, on the surface they're somewhat down -- especially among the lower class Vietnamese or middle class Vietnamese, if you can call them that. The women would stay out in the kitchen and prepare the food. If I'd be invited to dinner I'd eat with the men. But the woman would have a lot of say behind the surface -- under the surface. Also in the circles that were a little higher the women control most of the money in Vietnam. Women were sharp businessmen, there were a lot of women doctors, lot of women professional people, lot of women business people.

Then they didn't find it unusual for you to be there as a woman doctor?

No. The Vietnamese didn't find that at all unusual. The Montagnards I don't think really -- I think the whole concept of western medicine was so unusual for them that they didn't -- Besides I don't think they were entirely sure which I was anyway. That's what I heard. Because they're tiny people and I towered over all of them and they weren't entirely sure which sex I should be identified with even though I'd wear skirts.

How were you treated by the military men?

Oh very well, very well. I would say uniformly they were gentlemen. The bones I have to pick with the American military were along more-- oh like the Special Forces -- oh this was horrible. The special forces-- it wasn't just the special forces now that I come to think about it-- it was the Special Special Forces, which you probably never heard about because they were directly under the CIA. But they had these groups in three different places in the country and Kontum was one of them. And they had, in our area, entirely Montagnards working

with them. And they were the ones who were doing a lot of covert operations and stuff. They set up a prostitute camp for the Montagnards. Now, this-- prostitution just didn't exist among these people. I don't know if they ever got any Montagnard girls but they certainly got Vietnamese girls for them. They had their own prostitutes camps so they thought their workers should have one too. For the Montagnard men that were working with them. Now that kind of thing made me very angry. They introduced them to pot. They introduced them to drinking too much. Of course the Montagnards would drink too much of their own stuff anyway. But they did it in a kind of controlled setting. It wasn't a question of drinking then going out and riding a motorcycle which was something like what the Americans got them doing. I had a lot of bad things that way, but not from personal contact. Personal contacts were always very good. This was later on. This was towards the '70s.

Is there anything else you want to comment on?

No, except that I think the American military got a bum rap here at home. I think our television went with them when they did things and I certainly can't approve of a lot of things that they did. On the other hand, there wasn't any TV there when the VC and NVA were doing much worse things. And they were doing much worse things. This one Swiss doctor who was in Kontum for a while and they worked with us from time to time. I'll never forget the first time that I met him he came out to the hospital because I needed him to help us do surgery. And we had the military advisory group there giving blood for the patients who had been wounded. And after we finished the surgery he said, "you know, back home in Switzerland, all I ever saw was Americans doing terrible things to the Vietnamese. When I get over here, what's the first thing I see? Americans donating blood so the local people can be operated on who were injured by the VC and NVA."