

Interviewer:

Could you state your name, please?

William Haneke:

Yes; William Guernsey Haneke.

Interviewer:

And could you spell your last name for the record?

William Haneke:

H-A-N-E-K-E.

Interviewer:

And your age today?

William Haneke:

My age is 69 years of age.

Interviewer:

And your unit in Vietnam?

William Haneke:

My unit was Military Advisory Command, or MACV. I was with Advisory Team 37 in Binh Thuan province, southern II Corps.

Interviewer:

And your tour in Vietnam was from when to when?

William Haneke:

The tour was from the 1st of July of 1968, and I was wounded and medically evacuated on November 13, 1968.

Interviewer:

And your rank upon leaving the country?

William Haneke:

Well, rank upon leaving the country was Captain.

Interviewer:

And today's date is?

William Haneke:

Today's date is September 22, 2011.

Interviewer:

Actually, it's the 23rd.

William Haneke:

Okay.

Interviewer:

I don't mean •but that's close enough.

William Haneke:

Okay.

Interviewer:

The 23rd is close enough. You're second-generation Army.

William Haneke:

Yes, I am.

Interviewer:

And •you're West Point class of?

William Haneke:

West Point class of 1966, and my father's class was of West Point 1936.

Interviewer:

And not only are you second-generation Army, but your father was actually •was big brass.

William Haneke:

Well, he was a Major General in the Army, and he was the last Chief of Finance for the Army.

Interviewer:

What happened to Chief of Finance after him?

William Haneke:

Well, they abolished that particular position, and they rolled it into the Comptroller of the Army's responsibilities after he finished.

Interviewer:

When did he retire?

William Haneke:

He retired in '67. Let's see, I believe it was the end of November of 1968—excuse me, '67. '67.

Interviewer:

Gotcha. So did you grow up an Army brat?

William Haneke:

Yes, I did.

Interviewer:

Where did you live growing up?

William Haneke:

Oh, gosh—all over the place. I mean we were—it was World War II, you know, when I was first born, and my dad moved frequently at that point in time, and I've been to—we were stationed in Hawaii at one point. We were stationed down at Duke when my dad was with the Finance School down there. We were in—went to Japan. We were the first of the dependents into Japan at the end of World War II, and my dad was serving on the staff that worked with General MacArthur in his attempts to, you know, rejuvenate the Japanese society. And my dad played a major role in rebuilding the economy, the Japanese economy, and as he used to laughingly say, when he first got into Japan, it would take five five-ton trucks of yen to buy a loaf of bread. And by the time we had been there two years and he was sent back to the States, you could do the same thing with only a wheelbarrow load of yen. So he was, you know, quite successful in helping to rebuild the economy.

Interviewer:

How old were you when you were in Japan—do you remember much of it?

William Haneke:

I remember a fair amount. I was born in 1942, in December—or in April of 1942, and we were over there from probably late September or early October of 1942 until—or 1945, I'm sorry—1945 until about mid or late 1947.

Interviewer:

In your book—I just want—I should try—I'll work in your book title here. I was reading your book last night, I Trust Not, and I just want to go on the record that if I seem a little weary today, it's because I couldn't put it down. I was reading it till 2:00 in the morning. But I found it very amusing that you said that your first language was—was your first language Japanese?

William Haneke:

Well, I spoke English, you know, tolerably fair for a youngster. But under the Status of Forces Agreement at the end of World War II, our family had five servants, and they spoke very little English. And—but they taught—we had a maid and we had a houseboy that used to spend a lot of time with me and my two sisters, and they taught us a fair amount of Japanese. So I actually became the translator for the family after a short period of time. And I think it scared my mother so bad that when we came back to the States that she ensured for about five years that I didn't speak Japanese with anybody, 'cause she was afraid that I would not learn English. And through that, I learned that, you know, young children are very easy to become bilingual.

Interviewer:

Has any of it stuck with you? Do you remember?

William Haneke:

I can count from one to ten and, you know, I know a few phrases in Japanese, but overall, my abilities have not, you know, continued on 'cause I haven't reinforced it. *

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Interviewer:

Well, that puts you ahead of two•three hundred million other Americans, though.

William Haneke:

Right.

Interviewer:

So it was basically was it preordained that you would go to West Point?

William Haneke:

No, no, never. I mean I got no assistance in getting in, and my father basically said, 'Look, if this is what you want, then you're going to work, and you're going to go, you know, through the whole procedure. And in so doing, if you achieve that, then you will appreciate that much more.' And I think he had seen a number of instances where some of his classmates had tried to make it easier for their sons, and in a lot of cases it didn't work to their advantage. I mean I think they didn't make the cut and stay on till graduation. So I think my father felt that he wanted me to have sufficient motivation, and so I could make it through okay.

Interviewer:

When did you decide upon a military career and to enter the Point, though?

William Haneke:

I probably decided when I was in the 10th grade. We were•my dad was stationed at Fort McPherson down in Atlanta at the time, and I was attending a Junior ROTC program in high school, and got very enthusiastic at that. And, you know, with the preparation of the uniform, the shine of the shoes, the brass belt buckles, the brass, you know, for the uniform and so on, was•impressed me. And the, you know, strict requirements of the military•I mean I just thought that this would be the kind of environment I'd like to get into. And plus having lived around or lived on Army bases all my life, I was well aware of, you know, what Army life really was. But that was something I decided at that point in time I wanted to work for, and.

Interviewer:

So you came to West Point in 1962?

William Haneke:

I came earlier. Because of the public school system in Georgia, I had a very weak background in mathematics. And as such, when I•my dad was transferred when I was in 11th grade up to Fort Monroe, Virginia, so I really attended high school in Hampton, Virginia, and they were quite advanced in mathematics compared to what we were in Georgia. So that required that I spend a year in prep school•I went to Sullivan•Sullivan Prep School in Washington, D.C., and got a lot of good tutoring in mathematics. So I actually entered with the class of '65, and so we came in•5 July 1961 was my entry date to the Academy, and I spent my first plebe year here, and struggled with calculus. I mean to this day, I don't see a real need for calculus. But that's just one man's humble opinion. But at any rate, I struggled with calculus, and ended up getting turned out and found in calculus at the end of the second semester of plebe year. And I will mention that one of the problems I had in studying was I was in Company D1, which tended to be one of the more strict companies, particularly from the extra time that the upper class likes to spend with us. And that extra time in harassing us and tearing our rooms apart and requiring that we have short turnaround times in getting them fixed up again didn't leave a lot of time for study. So after that, I went to prep school again for the summer, and took a reentrance exam and passed that, and joined the class of 1966, which I was very proud to stay with and graduate with. *

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Interviewer:

When did you first become aware of the situation in Vietnam, and when did it first begin to dawn on you that hey, I may be sent there?

William Haneke:

I would say probably in yearling year. We had the first rumblings of the fact that there was some advisors that were going there and some military people that were doing some advisory work over there that was more than just a simple foreign relations or military consulate type of thing. And there were some rumblings, and particularly, we had some tactical officers and some instructors that were here who had recently come back and were telling stories about what it was like to operate out in the countryside, you know, without not a lot of support. So we began hearing, you know, some of these people whoâ€™d been working in Special Operations. And there wasnâ€™t a lot of information available so that we could, you know, tune in or get background on the political or the religious structure of the country, so we just noted in passing that there was something that was going on, and you know, didnâ€™t take a whole lot of notice because it didnâ€™t look like it was going to flare up in anything major, at that point. By the time I got to be, you know, a junior or senior, or cow or firstie, you know, then things had really, really perked up. To the point that by the time I was a first classman, we began seeing casualties coming back that were upperclassmen who we had served with, you know, in our companies. And we had the sad task of serving as pallbearers in some of the funerals. So it became a reality at that point in timeâ€•it was a shooting war, there were casualties coming back, and we pretty much knew what we were getting into when we graduated.

Interviewer:

Did you have any trepidation?

William Haneke:

Not really. I mean I always trusted that the preparation in the education that I got here would help me to, you know, do well and be prepared for any kind of, you know, combat that they would send me into. * {:.time} 0:10:30

Interviewer:

But where were you posted to after graduation?

William Haneke:

My first assignment was at Fort Riley, Kansas, with the Ninth Infantry Division. The Ninth Infantry Division, theyâ€™d just been brought out of mothballs that, you know, where it had been since the end of World War II. Theyâ€™•this being the draft age, a large percentage of the recruits that wereâ€™•that came in there to be trained were draftees. And the non-commissioned officers that they used to staff the unitsâ€™•they called them volunteers, but I can guarantee they were not all volunteers. Some of them they went around to other units and said, â€œI want volunteers for thus and such,â€ and so it was one of these little deals where you take the people they want to get rid of and send them over. So basically my assignmentâ€™•and I was a platoon leader at that point in time, and the Ninth Infantry Division was taking the new recruits through basic training and advanced infantry training, and then some small degree of specialized training for Southeast Asia, and then putting them on the boats and sending them over. And the Ninth Infantry was first assigned â€œ they were the first regular American unit to be assigned into the delta area of South Vietnam in IV Corps.

Interviewer:

And I think in your book it says a lot of your non-coms were actually World War II veterans at that point.

William Haneke:

A good many of them were World War II and Korean veterans. I mean it was not unusual to see some of your Platoon Sergeants and, you know, your First Sergeants in the company that were wearing not only the combat infantry badge, but they had two stars on because theyâ€™d been in World War II and Korea. So we had, you know, a fair amount of experiences in infantry and, you know, combat, which was good. I mean at theâ€™•we relied heavily on them, and as a very junior Second Lieutenant, you know, I learned early on that to take direction from my senior non-commissioned officers, that that helped, you know,

quite a bit.

Interviewer:

And where were you posted to overseas at that point?

William Haneke:

Well, the unit I was with was posted to the delta area, and the area they went to there wasn't enough solid ground for them to build a base camp on when they arrived. So they spent the better part of five to six months living on the ship, and then going out on some of these riverine operations during the course of the day, and then they'd come back to the ship, you know, at night or at the end of that operation.

Interviewer:

But you were, at that point, still in Kansas, or?

William Haneke:

Well, what happened to me is during the time I was there, because it was mandatory for all West Point graduates and all ROTC graduates at that point in time to go to Ranger School and Airborne School, my orders came through on September the 12th of 1966. I was posted to Fort Benning, Georgia, to go through Ranger School. And after we had just about reached the end of the Benning phase, and I badly injured my knee—I tore the ligaments on both sides of my right knee. And I ended up in Martin Army Hospital, where I had major surgery to, you know, correct that, and to hopefully rehabilitate the leg. And by the time I finished that procedure and arrived back in Kansas, it was late December. The unit was posted and ready to go, and they had a little more training—they had three weeks of training yet to go through. But it was determined by the doctors that my knee was not stable enough to go to combat with this particular unit. So instead, I put them on the train to go out and catch the ship in Oakland, and then my orders were cut for me to go to Germany. So I went over to Germany and served for a year with a mechanized infantry outfit over there, with the Fourth Armored Division. Which was in a different kind of war—I mean we were very much involved in the Cold War over there, in realization that the camp where I was stationed, in Bamberg, Germany. And we were about maybe 18 kilometers from the East German border, near the town of Kohlberg was where the closest border was. And it presented a daily threat, you know. We had one-third of a division—we had one brigade of the Fourth Armored Division that was stationed in Bamberg.

Interviewer:

That was approximately how many men?

William Haneke:

Oh, gosh. I would say roughly 30,000 men that were, you know, in the Bamberg concern. That's not just the Fourth Armored Division. We had part of an armored cavalry regiment there as well. I'd say maybe about 38,000 men we had there at that time. And across the border from us, it was rumored that there were 70 Soviet and East German divisions, so, you know, it was just an overwhelming thought that we were so badly outnumbered that if the balloon, as they say, ever went up, you know, and armed conflict ever developed, that, you know, what kind of tactics would we be involved in. We did have some nuclear weapons at our disposal, which, you know, we'd never been trained in, but that's one of the things that scared me. We had the Davy Crockett missile that was in the infantry company's, you know, list of weapons systems, but had we ever had to deploy it, I think we probably would've hurt ourselves worse than we would've hurt the enemy.

Interviewer:

That's basically a short-range tactical missile.

William Haneke:

Short-range missile. It would go out, you know, maybe somewhere between one and two and a half miles, and I forget what the yield was, but it was about a half a kiloton or something like that, or megaton, I can't say whichever is lesser of the two. My math has gotten foggy over the years. But at any rate, it was far too much oomph for something that was going to be detonated that close. And finally they had the good sense to say, "Well,

you know, we realized with the Vietnam thing that we had not had time to train these units on how to actually fire these things. Weâ€™d better take them back.â€

Interviewer:

Thank goodness for that.

William Haneke:

Thank God for that is right.

Interviewer:

But you told me that, I mean, even though it was called the â€œCold War,â€ you told me on the phone that you actually were shot atâ€

William Haneke:

Yes.

Interviewer:

A few timesâ€

William Haneke:

Yeah. Wellâ€

Interviewer:

By people on the other side of the border. Can you tell that story?

William Haneke:

That evolved. When I was first over there deployed to Germany, I was infantry platoon leader. And during the course of the first six months I was there, I went from that first company and I became executive officer of another companyâ€these were both infantry companies. And then at that point in time, we had had a battalion commander that wasâ€did not like West Pointers, and made no bones about it. When I first reported in, he looked at my 201 file and say, he said, â€œYouâ€™re one of these blankety blankety blankety blankety West Pointers. Weâ€™ve got no use for you.â€ He said, â€œYouâ€™re going to do ten times the work of my regular ROTC and OCS officersâ€and thatâ€™s the source of commission for them, andâ€to prove that youâ€™re worth, you know, anything.â€ And he did go out of his way to prove that, and there were a number of my classmates that were already assigned to this battalion. So it was a very, you know, contentious relationship between him and the officers in the battalion. We had a situation that kind of brought that to a head in my particular case. Some of the replacements that they brought into the unitâ€and keep in mindâ€let me digress for a secondâ€that there were a number of the soldiers that were in this unit that periodically were deployed for Vietnam as they needed, you know, replacements over there. So we would have new soldiers that were fresh out of basic training and AIT come over to replace them.

Interviewer:

And all draftees, I would assume.

William Haneke:

And a majority, the large majority were draftees. And it was during this period of time that the very strong black militant movement. And I mean I had no prejudice against minorities at that point in time, but there were four of these gentlemenâ€I use the term â€œgentlemenâ€ looselyâ€that came from Chicago and were militantâ€I mean strong militant Black Panthers, I guess you would call them. And they created quite a stir in basic training, and afterwards they had each been given three Article 15s for missing a movement when they refused to catch the plane to come over to Germany. And why they didnâ€™t court martial them, or why they didnâ€™t put them in the brig, I donâ€™t know, but. And the greater travesty there was they left them all in the same unit, and they all ended up in my platoon. So we had some real problems with that, and if youâ€™ll pardon my terminology here, the battalion commander liked to have the â€œbitch night,â€ as he called it, which allowed the troops to come up there and register their complaint one night a week. You know, on any subject of anything dealing with the battalion. So these four guys were first in line, you know, several weeks in a row, and of course, I was their favorite target because I was trying to get them to comply with the regulations and the orders and whatnot,

you know, to become regular members of the platoon. And so I had a little sense of, you know, that the battalion commander was not real pleased with me, and before he left—he got his orders, finally, for Vietnam. And before he left, he gave me a scathing negative endorsement, along with a couple of my classmates that were also—had gotten his attention, you know, in several ways. And it wasn't because of any kind of incompetence or, but just because he basically didn't care for us.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

William Haneke:

And the new replacement battalion commander came in there. And instead of, you know, doing his own evaluation, he accepted the written evaluation that had come from his predecessor, you know, line and, you know, and verse, which didn't start us off on the best of relationship, either. So there was a border camp up on the Czechoslovakian-East German border, Camp Gates, in the town of Marktredwitz, Germany—

Interviewer:

Would that be in Bavaria?

William Haneke:

It was in Bavaria, and as I say, it was right on the East German-Czechoslovakian border, and ran as far south as the town of Weiden, or Weiden, however you want to pronounce that. And it was about 120-kilometer responsibility that we had. But at any rate, this particular camp, it had a series of three commanding officers in a row that had been relieved, or, you know, were no longer there. The first gentleman was relieved from command and, you know, sent to Vietnam, because that was the remedy of choice. If you didn't want somebody there and you wanted to get rid of them, and you weren't real pleased with them, you know, just put them on orders and go to Vietnam and, you know, and they're gone. The second gentleman was not only relieved, but he was court martialed for, I guess, gross incompetence and perhaps some, you know, taking some things that didn't belong to him. And a third gentleman, apparently the stress was too great, and he committed suicide, so.

Interviewer:

Wow.

William Haneke:

You know, I didn't have a real good situation to walk in, and I think they—it was designed for me to fail, so that's why they assigned me there. But I'm happy to say that I had a very good supporting officer with the cavalry regiment who was stationed just down the road in a town of Hof, and was readily available if I needed his help. And we started off at the end of the first week with some of the senior NCOs in my camp going AWOL, and they all went into Nuremberg and had a great time, and I became aware of their absence when I went around to find the NCO that was in charge of the camp and a couple of the top squad leaders.

Interviewer: *[:.text] How many men were at the camp?

William Haneke:

We had approximately maybe 200, 225 men that were on this detail. And I mean we had—this was not a training mission. This was an operational mission, which made it much, you know, higher in the priorities that we received, or had to undergo. But at any rate, when I discovered that these people were missing, I went around and did a little head count and find out that we had about eight or ten of these gentlemen that were missing. And I went and talked to the sentry on the front gate and see what he knew, and he was, you know, a little reluctant to answer my questions. I said, "Well, you've got one of two choices. You can answer my question, or we're going to put you in the brig over here." So he—his tongue loosened up real quick, and he said, "Yeah, I saw them go over the wall at approximately, you know, 10:00." And so I said, "elf you see them come back, you let me know." And my deputy, who was only a Second Lieutenant—I was a First Lieutenant by this time—you know, we're not talking about a rank-deep

assignment. But at any rate, he and I were keeping watch over there, and when they finally came back in, we confronted them and asked them to account for why they were gone. And they had no excuse, other than the fact they wanted to have a good time. Well, being AWOL, or absent without official leave, from a training assignment is one thing, but being AWOL from an operational mission, that's a horse of another color. So I called up the squadron commander, and asked him what he wanted me to do about it. I said, "These people, you know, deserve to be disciplined heavily." And he said, "I will be down within an hour," and he showed up, and he had the team from the team the team was based in Nuremberg, and they sent out two buses from Nuremberg with armed security. And they took them out of the camp immediately and put them in handcuffs and put them on the bus and sent them out there, and had court martial hearings beginning the next day. And these gentlemen did some time in the stockade. But they were no longer a part of my camp, so we were able to get some replacements who were sufficiently motivated. And during my 90 days running that camp, we turned it in from the worst border camp on the entire East-West German border system into the best, and got rave reviews, I'm happy to say. I mean which certainly didn't hurt my career any, but.

Interviewer:

You also mentioned that that was very much, even though it was called the "Cold War," you the sentries on the other side used to take pot shots at you.

Interviewer:

And the border zone was actually like, what, a couple hundred yards wide, I would think, at least, if not more.

William Haneke:

In some places, yes—in some places it was a couple thousand yards. So I mean you had some cleared areas that went way back, and some of them that, you know, the trees were—the bank of trees were closer. Well, within a bank of trees we found that they had machine gun nests, and they had radar units, and they had all kinds of, you know, more extensive security that we couldn't readily see, but it was there. And then along probably two-thirds of that sector where I was, they had a electrified fence that was up there that they probably cranked out about 40,000 volts, and anybody that touched the wire would be, you know, fried in place. During this period of time, they had a massive, you know, electronic failure of that entire system, so the whole system had gone down.

Interviewer:

A power failure.

William Haneke:

Power failure.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

William Haneke:

And it didn't take long for the locals to get the word, "Hey, the fence is down. Let's make a run for it." So a lot of people who had been having that in their plans, you know, decided to do it. And we had a fair number of folks that came—

Interviewer:

They made it. They made it across.

William Haneke:

They made it across, and we had several of them that, you know, were brought to our camp, and we attempted to, you know, talk to them and get a little bit of information, and then send them back to Nuremberg to our headquarters, where they were, you know, decently treated and provided with a place to go, and, you know, resources to live with and a home.

Interviewer:

Were these East Germans or were these Czechs, or?

William Haneke:

Well, it was some of both, and some of them were from people who had traveled further, you know, on the Soviet side, who were lining themselves up to make a break when things became fairly clear. Soâ€• * {:.time} 0:27:41

Interviewer:

How long did this episode last? How long was the power off there?

William Haneke:

Power was off almost a month.

Interviewer:

Oh, wow.

William Haneke:

So that provided some interesting things. But of course, the security forces on the East German-Sovietâ€•I mean East German and Czech side increased their security, because they had to take additional steps in view of the power failure. And it was during this time that we did some pretty heavy patrolling on our side, and there were a couple points where we were within maybe 50 to 75 meters of the border. And they didnâ€™t like that, so when we would show up there and be, you know, looking with our binoculars, and we had some of their snipers would take some pot shots at us. And I like to believe they didnâ€™t intend really to hit us, â€™cause if their marksmanship was that bad, then, you know, there would be no serious threat if, you know, if we got into combat with them. But Iâ€™m sure that it was a warning shot that was fired, but it got my attention real quick.

Interviewer:

So you never walked up to the actual border.

William Haneke:

Well, weâ€™I did.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

0:28:46

William Haneke:

But generally, you know, there wasâ€•I didnâ€™t do it very often, and one of the things that they liked to do in our region, because we had some very wooded and hilly area in there, they changed the border stones around, you know. On our side, it was DBB, Deutches something or other Bavaria. On the other side, it was CS for Czechoslovakia. And so every now and then, weâ€™d look and see the border stones had a CS on it, and the idea was they wanted us to think weâ€™re on the wrong side of the border and go over there, and then they had some teams set up that would capture us. But fortunately, we never made that mistake. But at any rate, this was an interesting period of time, and that was the first time Iâ€™d ever been shot at. * {:.time} 0:29:25

Interviewer:

The Czechs were not as strict, shall we say.

William Haneke:

No. I would say that, you know, they hadâ€•Iâ€™ll talk about the trizonal point. Trizonal point is where East Germany, West Germany, and Czechoslovakia all come together, which was clearly, you know, in the middle of my region. On the East German side, the East Germans were not friendly to the Americans. They did not like us, and they made no bones about it. The Czechs, on the other hand, were a lot moreâ€•a lot friendlier to us, because they hated the Soviets, but they were occupied forcibly and didnâ€™t have any choice. And from the trizonal point, five kilometers in either direction, you had the Czechs that were, you know, going over on the East German side to make sure there werenâ€™t, didnâ€™t have any gaps in that protection on the trizonal area, and vice versaâ€•the East Germans would come five kilometers into Czechoslovakia. And behind all them, there was a massive Soviet presence, just to make sure everybody else was doing their job, so itâ€™s Big Brother watching Big Brother watching Big Brother kind of a setup that was going on there. And the Czechâ€•I mean the East Germans, we could never, you know, establish any kind of a relationship withâ€•it was just very militant and very hostile. The

Czechs, on the other hand, when you got further south from the trizonal point, were very friendly. Many of them spoke English, and we would be able to go over there and swap cigarettes or chocolate or, you know, some kind of thing that they liked or we liked, and theyâ€™d come on our side, you know, several hundred yards, and weâ€™d sit under a tree and share, you know, a picnic lunch with or something like that. And vice versa, weâ€™d go on the other side and, you know, I wonâ€™t say that they were sharing their beer with us, but, you know, I learned that Czech beer is very good. But they were very friendly, and as long as the Russians were not, you know, close by, we had reasonable rapport.

0:31:14

Interviewer:

They were biding their time, I think.

William Haneke:

Yes, they were. In fact, this was the area that was within a year after I rotated out of there and went to Vietnam, they had a major, major incident there where the Soviets came in to crack down on the Czechs because they were becoming too Westernized, shall we say. And they just, you know, did a terrible number on a good many of the Czech military people in the area.

Interviewer:

Really. Oh, you were there right before the Prague Spring, I guessâ€•

William Haneke:

Yes.

Interviewer:

In 1968, too.

William Haneke:

Yes.

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Interviewer:

Anyway, moving to Vietnam, when did you get your orders for Vietnam?

William Haneke:

That was my Christmas present of 1967, you know. It was on theâ€•I canâ€™t remember if it was the 24th or 26th of December. It didnâ€™t really matter, because theâ€•well, when Iâ€™let me digress for a second. When I rotated off the border, I went back to Bamberg, and at that point in time, then, they said, â€œYouâ€™re not going back to the infantry battalion because you have distinguished yourself, and weâ€™ve got greater needs for you.â€ So I went on to the Third Brigade staff, and I became the Assistant Plans and Training Officer for that. And I had a very good gentleman, Major Berry, who had just gotten back from Vietnamâ€•infantry officer who was a great trainer of us, and, I mean, ran a good, good, shop, so I was privileged to be with them. And but again, my Christmas present was my orders for Vietnam, and so that made it a little hard to relax and enjoy the time.

Interviewer:

And when did you find out you were going into theâ€•going into sort of the advisory group?

William Haneke:

Well, I had my orders for the advisory group right off, and the one thing I had a choice, you knowâ€•do you want to just go over there straight from Germany, or would you like some additional training to become an advisor? I said, â€œBy all means, send me for the additional training.â€ So I was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where I attended the MATA, or the Military Advisory Training Course that was taught by the Special Warfare School. So our instructors were all Army Special Forces that had one or maybe even two or three tours in Southeast Asia as military advisors, and we got some very good information, very good training from them. And then we also learned how to speak Vietnamese, so we had a lot of these young Vietnamese women that were there. Kind of hard to keep your attention on the instruction, you know, with some of these good-looking

young ladies, but we learned the dialect we were supposed to learn pretty well. The only problem I had is when I got to Vietnam, the orders that they had selected for me, I was supposed to have been going to a team outside of Dak To, which is a very, you know, hot from a combat-level standpoint, and at the last second they changed my orders and decided they wanted me to set up my own advisory camp from scratch. And the area they sent me to spoke a different dialect of Vietnamese, so nobody understood what I was trying to tell them. Fortunately, you know, starting with high school and here at West Point, I had had five years of French, so I spoke French very well, and was able to utilize that quite extensively. And the realization that everybody in Vietnam, for the most part, the Vietnamese had been there for over 90 years—I mean the French had been there for over 90 years. So everybody in Vietnam over the age of five, you know, understood French, so I was able to do very well with that.

Interviewer:

Could you explain what the role of the advisor was? I think when a lot of people aren't familiar with Vietnam hear the role advisor, they think of it purely in terms of a military context. And really, the role, the advisor's job, was much more than that. * {:.time} 0:34:54

William Haneke:

Absolutely.

Interviewer:

Could you explain how the advisor's role was explained to you, or?

William Haneke:

Well, I think that, you know, the common sense of what an advisor is is that, you know, they go over there and they command the foreign military units. And that is not the case. At least it was not the case in Vietnam, and I don't think that's the case in Afghanistan or Iraq, either. The idea is that you go over there to advise, to give information on tactics and on procedures, and that's from the military side of the house. But you have to understand that in order to survive and be successful in a region, you know, such as where we were—I mean I was assigned as a district senior advisor, initially, and that would be a large equivalent of a large American county, where as a province would be the equivalent of a state in the United States. The province was made up of individual districts, which were the size of a large county. And in order to be successful, you had to be accepted or have some level of acceptance by the local populace—not just the military people you were advising, but the people, you know, to put some of your programs into effect. And that included everything from setting up an intelligence network, you know, where you could get information on what the enemy was trying to do, or was actually doing, within your area, to you know, where you would be working with the people to try to find programs or needs that they would have, and try to meet these needs. And that would make them more willing to work with you and support you, and that was what it was, mainly—to convince them that we are not the bad guys. I mean the Vietcong would go, or the Vietnamese Communists, would go into a village. And they'd line everybody up that had been against them, and they'd execute them in front of the rest of the village, and it was, you know, "We're going to rule you by intimidation, or by, you know, force of threat." And so it was not a very good working relationship. We, on the other hand, tried to meet with the village chiefs and find out, you know, what do you need? You know, what do your people need? Do you need water? Do you need a way of purifying the water? Do you need a water tower? Do you need a marketplace, you know, so you can bring your goods? I mean everybody went to market every day, because they had no refrigeration, they had no electricity, they had no ice. They had no means of, you know, preserving food, so to speak, for any length of time. So everybody went to market and did their shopping for the day, and so it was important to have a good—I mean—cause we had some areas around there that were barren desert that were just totally inhospitable. You know, nobody could—we had a lot of salt flats around there, so people just really couldn't spend a whole lot of time in these areas. Or they had the

oppositeâ€•theyâ€™d be along the river and itâ€™d be very swampy, so. And a lot of people were not willing to give up much, you know, space in the town to use as a marketplace. The other thing would be a schoolhouse. I mean these people realized that education was important, and although they were too poor toâ€•and the district didnâ€™t have the amount of resources that they could go out and develop these things. So I mean itâ€™s just the people lived in a base level. You know, in my area, they had no latrines or bathrooms in their houses. You know, their way ofâ€•if they had to go to the bathroom, they just, you know, out by the side of the road, or theyâ€™didnâ€™t go right by their own house. What they would do is theyâ€™we had a cemetery within the village, and theyâ€™d go and theyâ€™d find the graves of somebody elseâ€™s ancestors, and go on those graves. So I learned when I walked through the cemetery that you had to look very carefully where you were stepping so you didnâ€™t step in a pile of something that was, you know, left for yourâ€•

Interviewer:

And what was the name of the district and the village that you were inside?

William Haneke:

The district wasâ€•it was Binh Thuan province. The district was Hoa Da, H-O-A D-A, two words. And we had towns within the district that weâ€™ * {:.time} 0:38:50

Interviewer:

And the town you were posted to was?

William Haneke:

The town was Phan Ri Cuaâ€•Phan Ri Cua. Have to plug back into memory cycle and try to remember these things. But it was just a, you know, a couple houses along the main highway, Highway 1, which was the main north-south highway in Vietnam, went right through the middle of my town. In fact it was within maybe 250 yards of the front gate of my camp.

Interviewer:

And youâ€™reâ€•when you went to set up this new advisory group, you were 13, I think 13 Americans.

William Haneke:

Well, when I first went over there, I was it. You know, when I reported to Vietnam, I reported on the 1st of July of 1968, and theâ€•went to Keppler Compound, which is where all the advisors reported through, and we got our equipment issued to us and our jungle fatigues and everything that we needed at that point in time so that we were ready to go into our assignment out in the rural areas. And once I found that I wasnâ€™t going to Dak To as I originally thought, you know, and that they wanted me to start a new advisory team from scratch in Hoa Da, I of course did not have the experience to start one from scratch myself. So again, itâ€™s like other jobs Iâ€™d had in the Armyâ€•it was going to be learned by doing, or by consulting with some of the district advisors in some of the surrounding districts to my particular area. And so I got a lot of advice, or I asked a lot of questions. I mean some of them I didnâ€™t get good answers for, but asked a lot of questions to try to get to the bottom of what was going on. The next thing they did was they put us on what laughingly was referred to as the â€œMACV merry-go-round,â€ where within the Binh Thuan district, we would be shuttled around to a number of different military and civilian camps, where we would get an orientation on what advisor life was like and how they interacted with some of the regular American units. So we went to Pleiku, that had a large presence with the Fourth Armoredâ€•or Fourth Infantry Division, and a couple of other major U.S. units that were up there that were attached to the Fourth Infantry Division. Went to Ban Me Thuot, which was an interesting placeâ€•it was a hunting lodge thatâ€•for the emperor of Vietnam. I mean it dated back many years. It was gorgeous. It had all kinds of mahogany. They had red mahogany and dark mahogany, other types of mahogany that were theâ€•it was built from the logs of this thing. I mean it was just an incredible place, and they built an advisory headquarters there. And we went to, you know, four or five other

places, and then I ended up in the district just north of my district, where I spent a week with them and was able to pick the district, you know, senior advisor's brain for all the information I could get out of him. And it was very good, because he had a good secure area up there. He had a good relationship with his counterpart, who was a Vietnamese Major, and who was also very friendly and gave good information from the Vietnamese standpoint, so I was able to get both sides, a picture of both sides of how things were going. And I went out on two little operations with them where we actually had some enemy contact on one, and learned, you know, how these operations work, the problems—some problems involved with working with the Vietnamese, being different culture, different religion, and different orientation in total, you know, to what we were all about. So I learned about the fact that they like to stop on their rice-cooking breaks. Rice doesn't stay with you as long as, you know, some of the Western food that we ate, so they had to eat probably five different meals of rice a day. And that entailed stopping, building a fire, you know, which isn't very tactical—you can't sneak up on somebody when they see your fire, cooking fires, you know, coming over an area as you're approaching them. So we tried to develop ways of doing things, and the district senior advisor, he said, "Look," he said, "we've come up with something where we're just getting into it, where we will cook amounts of this and, you know, some foods that will stay. And then we wrap it up in rice paper or something. It'll preserve for a couple days so they can eat their rice without having to cook it." He said, "This is not a popular thing with the Vietnamese. You know, old habits die hard, and it's hard to get them—but it was a great idea. And so I spent the five days there, and then I went to—since the place in Hoa Da that I was supposed to start up had no facilities for anybody else to come in and set up, I went to a town of Song Mao, which was on the other side of the Hoa Da district. Song Mao had a well-established advisor camp there, had been run by the Army Special Forces for several years. They had recently stepped down and turned it over to the MACV team, and out of that camp, there were a number of different operations that were being run. There were two advisory teams that had their staff that were there. There was—these districts were interesting, because there were—this camp was at a point where three districts came together. And the Song Mao district was Vietnamese Buddhists, and that was one religious group. The one just to the northwest of them, I guess, was Chinese. It was—they didn't intermarry in this area.

Interviewer:

Ethnic Chinese, you mean.

William Haneke:

Ethnic Chinese. They did not intermarry in this, so, you know, the one district was all ethnic Vietnamese, or as we called them, the "slant-eyed" Vietnamese. Then you had the slant-eyed Chinese, and then the other one just to the east of that was Montagnard, and they were round-eyes. A lot of people didn't understand. They thought the Montagnards were very much like the basic Vietnamese. They're not. The Montagnards are of the same group as the Polynesians are—you know, the folks that settled the Philippines and Hawaii and other Pacific islands. It's the same stock that those people came from. And they're round-eyed, and they are dark brown-skinned, and they're various religious groups. Now, we had—the ones in our area were called Chams. They were a little more civilized than some of the Montagnards that were up in the Central Highlands. These wore full clothing. I mean some of the Montagnards in the Central Highlands wore barely a briefcloth or nothing at all. The women there had something from the waist down, but, you know, they were bare-breasted, a lot of them. The Chams, on the other hand, you know, were fully dressed. The women were clothed from the neck all the way down to their ankles, and—just a second.

Interviewer:

Was there—how did the Chams get along with the Vietnamese? Was there hostility?

William Haneke:

There was some. The Vietnamese didn't play well with their neighbors is what it boiled down to. They have a lot of negative feelings about the Chinese. They didn't include them in on their operations, for the most part. They looked upon the Montagnards—they called them "dirty boys," which is not a very complimentary term at all. The Montagnards, you know, were very bright, and they may not have been as educated, but they were extremely intelligent. The ones near where we were were Mohammedans. The ones closer to the coast there was

Interviewer:

You mean they're Muslim?

William Haneke:

Yes. Well, when I talk about religious beliefs, you got to understand that underneath all of this is a very strong ancestor worship culture. And it's not just the—and I can't remember the term, what it is, a nomism or whatever, where you worship the trees, the live

Interviewer: * {:.text} Animism.

Animism, yeah. You worship the trees, the rocks, the rain, the sun, the moon, you know, all these tangible things. And so that is a very strong subculture to these religions. The district I was in, Hoa Da, was a Roman Catholic district, and to say that is, you know, is not exactly correct to think that they're all Christians. Again, they had that underlying spirit worship, which I'll elaborate more on in a minute.

Interviewer:

Even though they were nominally Roman Catholic.

William Haneke:

Even though they were nominally Roman Catholics. Now, the Portuguese were the missionaries that came over there and spent a number of years, and spread their religion to them. And I think the Portuguese knew at the time they weren't being successful by strictly trying to take the Roman Catholicism and ram it down the throats of the Vietnamese. So they incorporated some of their pagan holidays, like Tet, and some of the other big ones that they had, and you know, kept those going. And then they had certain other practices that they had for when somebody became a man that they had this service, or when somebody became a woman, they had certain pagan rites that they would go through. So they incorporated all that with the Catholicism, and so it made for an interesting study in things.

Interviewer:

Getting back—moving a little forward to your sort of arrival, is it Hoa Da? * {:.time} 0:48:51

William Haneke:

Hoa Da.

Interviewer:

Hoa Da. What was the situation when you finally were posted to Hoa Da? What did you find there, I mean?

William Haneke:

Well, what I found was the fact we were the first Americans, you know, as a unit, to be in that area. There had been no American presence in the Hoa Da district since the French left in 1954, you know.

Interviewer:

And this is—how far were you from Saigon? This is basically in II Corps, right?

William Haneke:

We were about 100—probably about 150 miles north of Saigon.

Interviewer:

And you were the first American there, and you were the only American, I guess, for dozens of miles, 20 miles, 30 miles?

William Haneke:

Probably the better part of 25 miles. I mean there were some Americans that came through

there at the time. I mean Route 1 passed through there, so there were convoys that used to go through there. Route 1 was a mass of bomb craters, and the bridges, for the most part, had been blown out, south of where we were in some other districts. And so it was impossible for any kind of an organized on-ground convoy to pass through this area. They just couldn't do it. But at any rate, we were the first round-eyed Americans that had been in this area since the French left, and the Captain that was the district chief was more of a political appointee than a military appointee. He had had not a whole lot of military training. His father was very politically active and high up in the Saigon government, and the man was very wealthy, so in effect, what he did was he bought his son a position. And his son, trying to figure out where his real priorities were was difficult. I mean it became apparent early on that his priorities were not chasing the Vietnamese Communists. It was told to me before I went into this area, laughingly, that this could be the Vietcong rest and recuperation area, the Vietcong R&R area, because they felt so safe in operating in that area that they weren't threatened that they came and went, you know, as they chose, and were never harassed or shot at or attempted to, you know, stop their operations. But at any rate, I soon found out that this gentleman was involved, the district chief was involved in some degree of smuggling, some degree of working with the drug lords, enabling them to ship their product through his district. He was involved in aiding and abetting groups of pirates that were raiding certain communities along the coast, and he also had a very high level of protection money—these weren't taxes, but protection money, that he collected from some of the village chiefs or people that were prominent along the coast.

Interviewer:

And I just want to sort of stress here that, basically, whoever—the district chief was, basically, his word was law. He was basically—

William Haneke:

He was God.

Interviewer:

He was God in that district.

William Haneke:

He was. He set the laws or enforced them the way he would like. He collected the taxes. He collected the protection money, if that was the name of the game. Anybody who wanted to register to get married in the district had to go through his headquarters. If you wanted to register a new child, you know, and get him a certificate you had to go through that. If you wanted to get an education for your family you had to go through him. And you wanted a business license you went through him. So basically, if you wanted to have a normal, active life, you had to go through him.

Interviewer:

Sort of like a old-style Chicago alderman.

William Haneke:

Exactly—exactly. So I mean—but it became relatively apparent early on that he was all-powerful, and that he had his police department or police chief was trained and controlled strictly by him, and there wasn't anything he did that wasn't ordered by the district chief. *{:.time} 0:52:49

Interviewer:

And he made it pretty clear he was not—he was no friend of the Americans, didn't he?

William Haneke:

Absolutely. When we went over there and I was ordered jointly, by the American senior advisor of the Binh Thuan province and his Vietnamese counterpart, who was a senior Colonel in the Vietnamese Army, that I was to go over there and set up, you know, this new camp. So I had all the written orders I needed, both in Vietnamese and in American English. And when I presented myself the first time—and he knew I was coming in advance. But when I presented myself he acted like it was a big surprise, and, you know, didn't attempt to communicate with us. He left us sitting in his conference room for the

better part of two, two and a half hours before he finally, you know, showed up. And didn't really want to talk to us, but he did the motions, or went through the motions. And initially, you know, we thought that he didn't speak English and didn't speak French. I knew he had to speak French, but he wouldn't—he refused. And so it wasn't until the second meeting we had with him that I let it slip, you know, it was a mild curse in English, and it was, you know, registered at his parents, or his parentage. And he, you know, the sparks flew, and he suddenly, you know, is rattling off a string of English. And I just looked at him and I said, "Ah. I thought you didn't speak English." So the veil was dropped, and we conversed in English, you know, after that. Apparently, he was well-educated, you know, in civilian university. But it was a situation where he did not want us there. We tried to get him to give us space. He wasn't going to, and sort of as a little token that he threw our way that the headquarters was built in a large quadrangle, or I mean buildings around a small inner court. And it was an old French hospital is what it had been, so it was well-built, very thick walls, very, you know, solid ceiling. And in the tropics, that is a little bit of natural air conditioning, or natural cooling, as opposed to being in the hot sun all the time. And it was a very hot area. We were in the tropics. We were in the desert area of Vietnam, which a lot of people never realized there was such a thing. I mean the sand was so white it was like the Sahara Desert. They had to issue us special polarized glasses to keep us from getting the equivalent of snow blindness.

0:55:20

Interviewer:

Really.

William Haneke:

During the course of a, you know, bright, sunny day. And—but at any rate, he had a set of two rooms out back of where his quarters were, and it had been turned over to the animals. They had pigs in there, and they had chickens, and they had guinea hens, and I forget—you know, all kinds of, you know, farm animals that they had over there. And of course, these animals had been in there for years, so, you know, the amount of animal feces—I won't say it was, you know, feet deep, but it was many inches deep by the time that he offered us that little token. And—he fully expected us to say, "No, this is not sufficient," and of course, his next thing was, "Then I have no room for you." So I kind of bit the bullet. And on some recommendations of some American advisors in Song Mao, and I said, "Thank you. We'll be very happy to take that, and we'll be over here within two days to clean up the area, and we would appreciate it if you could have the animals removed so that we can get on with our work." Well, I mean, he was a little—he looked like he was going into shock when I made that statement, 'cause he fully did not anticipate we'd do that. So what we did is we came up with, you know, gallon-sized jugs of PhisoHex, which is a very strong disinfectant, and we came up with shovels and brooms and, you know, chisels, and God knows what else we had. And went over there and began the process, and then we

Interviewer:

At this point, how many men were on your team?

William Haneke:

Well, I had started out and when I reported into Song Mao, I find out there was a MATs team that was there, and MATs teams were composed of five people. So they were assigned strictly to my team.

Interviewer:

A MAT team? MAT?

William Haneke:

MAT.

Interviewer:

What'd that stand for?

William Haneke:

It was mobile advisor•mobile advisory training team. It's hard to remember what all the, you know, the initials stand for. But that was part of the effort after the Tet Offensive is to set these MATS teams up around Vietnam, with the idea that they would be more easily deployed and work better with the small units or the regional forces, popular forces, which is what I had. Now, just to clarify that, we did not have a regular Vietnamese military unit stationed in Hoa Da. The regional forces company was a organization of Vietnamese military that was recruited from around the province, so you know, recruited around the state. The popular forces or the PF companies were recruited within the districts, so these were all local boys, and it was local militia is what it boiled down to, because they would be there at night to guard certain things like a bridge or, you know, a marketplace or your compound. And in the daytime, they had, you know, jobs at home, so they, you know, 6:00 in the morning, they're gone, and the rest of the day, you have no security in that camp unless you provide it yourself. So I ended up going in there initially with me and five other Americans, and not happily so•these people did not like what I was trying to get them to do. And maybe I shouldn't say it, but I recruited•when I first arrived in Hoa Da, I found out that they were there quite by accident. I just asked the senior district advisor there that, you know, "Have there been any people who are assigned to my unit that have arrived?" He said, "I'm not sure if these guys are supposed to be working for you. I know they're not working for us. But we've had a MATS team here for a couple weeks that, you know, appear to be playing in town all the time." And I said, "I saw their jeep on the way in. It was parked next to a place that was called Ba Phong•that was the sign out front." And he said, "Well, Ba Phong is a local house of ill repute." And he said•and I said, "Well, they had their web gear and their radios and their rifles and weapons all out in the jeep for, you know, whoever'd want to come by and take it." So I went over there and started the jeep up, and I mean beeped the horn a couple times, and nobody came out, so I drove•it was only a couple blocks from where the camp was, so I drove it back into camp. And these guys came in probably about two hours later, cussing and, you know, screaming about the fact that somebody's stolen their jeep and all their stuff. So Major Elliott rounded them up and showed them into his conference room, where I was sitting, and that's how I introduced myself. So I got their attention real quick, because they were complaining about, you know, that they were sent out there and they shouldn't be there, they should be somewhere else. And I said, "Well, I have the written orders right here," which I threw on the table across to the Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, that was commanding them. I said, "Here are the regular orders that I'd gotten from the MACV headquarters that have your name and the names of these gentlemen, and your assignment." "And if there's any doubt," and I said, "and if there's anybody that has any questions about my authority here," I said, "I have enough on each of you for what you've been doing here to bring you up all on charges. You know, either Article 15, or we can go to a general court martial." So they thought about it for a few minutes, and I said, "You can either work with me and we'll get along just fine, or we can go the other route." They all decided that they would like to work with me, and that's how I got their attention when I first got there, and•

Interviewer:

My point is that you were•even, I think, later on, you got more men. But you're only, at the most, about a dozen or so Americans.

William Haneke:

13 is the max that I had on the team.

Interviewer:

And about 4 or 500•responsible for 4 or 500•

William Haneke:

No, it was more like•if you put the PF teams in with the regional forces company, it was probably close to 1,000 people, but they were scattered. The PF teams that we had some bridges that went within our district, and went further north that were critically important

that we had to have at least a platoon or more guarding these bridges, you know, day and night. So that was, you know, part of the extent of the overall responsibility that we had. But it was just—it was just kind of a ragtag bunch of Vietnamese that we were advising, and we had to train them all in marksmanship training. We had to train them all in, you know, in how to take care of their equipment and their weapons, and teach them that, you know, you just didn't shoot at anything that came around. You know, a little discipline on your ammunition. And you don't sleep on the job, and you don't disappear when it suits your purposes to go home or just to go do whatever you want to do. * {:.time} 1:01:50

Interviewer:

And you make the point in your book that many of them—at least for some of the Ruff Puff troops that you were advising, their allegiance was a little bit up in the air.

William Haneke:

Very questionable on some of them. Again, some of them had been specially recruited by the Captain, the Vietnamese Captain, and were, you know, followed his orders, you know, to the letter. And so I have to believe that they were well paid on the side by him to do what he wanted them to do—his bidding, I should say. And there were others that we didn't know where their true allegiance was, because during the day, they would be working for us, and some not very enthusiastically. And at night, you know, when we started getting more attacks on our compound, you know, in the morning you go out there and check the bodies that were lying around, either hanging on the barbed wire or lying on the ground out there. And lo and behold, you see several faces of people that were in your unit that had been working with you during the day, and that was very unnerving. And I know my first couple of patrols once we got these people better trained and we started taking them out on some limited patrols. And we would have the main body of the patrol going down the road, then we'd have our flank security out, and some of the guys on flank security or operating on point would be shooting and shooting back at us. And I'd try to put a stop to that, and my counterpart—or he—well, the Captain never went on patrol, but his two junior officers that went with us said, "Well, you know, there's nothing we can do about that. They're shooting at birds." I said, "Well, I haven't seen a bird yet out here in the desert area where we're patrolling." And I finally warned them after the second patrol. I said, "I'm going to take this as, you know, that these people are operating as Communists and trying to kill us." Because some of the bullets, you know, were zinging by my ear, or by some of the other Americans that were on the patrol with us, and so I could tell that we were not really their favorites. So finally, by the time we got to the third or fourth patrol, I'd warn them before they went out, there'll be, you know, fire discipline. Nobody's going to shoot, and you keep your eyes open and see what's going on. Because we were progressively taking them in a more unfriendly territory each time we went out on a patrol. Of course, you know, emphasizing the patrolling techniques that they were to learn and follow. And finally, you know, this fourth patrol, I guess is was that this guy fired at me and kicked up the dirt or the sand at my feet with three bullets. So I shouldered my weapon and put two rounds in him, one in the shoulder and one in his hip. And, you know, everybody's really shocked. "Why did you do that?" I said, "They were warned," you know, and got the endorsement of the Vietnamese to do that. And I mean the Vietnamese officers were shocked but relieved, because it took a lot of pressure off them. And they escorted this guy back and they put him in our little POW compound. And come to find out he was working with the Vietcong, and so we made an example out of that, and I never had any other problems with any of the rest of them shooting at us or shooting or not maintaining fire discipline on these patrols. So I mean it just got to be a point where they realized if we could hurt them worse than they could hurt us, then they got our respect—or we got their respect, so.

Interviewer:

Why do you think the initial district chief that you were dealing with, that you refer to him in your book as was it his name was Manh, I believe?

William Haneke:

Yeah, Dai Uy Manh, Captain Manh.

Interviewer:

Why do you think he disliked the Americansâ€•â€™ cause they represented a threat to the status quo, and he had a very comfy little operation there?

William Haneke:

I think there was some of that. I think that he was also supplying the Vietcong. I mean he was an entrepreneur of the biggest source. If there was a dollar to be made in some activity, he was in it. And the Vietcong in our area needed certain kinds of weaponry or certain kinds of ammunition, certain kinds of supplies, you know, food or whatnot that they might not be able to readily get or easily get. And they apparently had money to buy this with, or Vietnamese piasters to buy it with. And he was a ready supplier and, you know, lined his pockets with the materials.

Interviewer:

But everything turned around. Eventually you were able to engineer his replacement.

William Haneke:

Yes. Well, thatâ€™•there were a couple of elements that brought that to be. Now, I discovered later on that shortly after I arrived in Hoa Da, that there was an American State Department representative that had been there for a couple of months, which I found to be very strange. I mean Iâ€™•heard rumors of the fact that MACV or Military Systems Command was trying to set up a joint military-civilian relationship, where every other level of the organization would be a representative of the State Department, and then, you know, above and below would be somebody from the American military. But I didnâ€™•realize that this guy was thereâ€™•nobody had ever told me. And he was kind of a junior State Department. guyâ€™•heâ€™•been working for the Agency for International Development, which was one of the arms of the State Department. They were involved more in the civil affairs type of things of, you know, providing food and supplies and building materials and different things like that. They were not involved in the advisory military side of the house. But I was informed that he was to be my new boss, and he knew absolutely nothing about being a, you know, a military advisor. I met him one time, and that convinced me that this was not going to be a good working relationship. And then he disappeared. I mean heâ€™•be gone for months at a time. He went to some of theâ€™•Lung Tao was one of the big recreational areas in Vietnam. It had a beautiful beach and lovely young Vietnamese women and all kinds of things that apparently appealed to folks that wanted to take vacation over there. Or heâ€™•go to Bangkok, Thailand, and spend a couple months there. Soâ€™•

Interviewer:

Do you think he was simply just couldnâ€™•be concerned, or do you think there was something else going on?

William Haneke:

Oh, I think heâ€™•there was a lot more going on. He was involved in setting up a smuggling ring. And we found evidence of the fact that he was providing the materials for Dai Uy Manh to sell to the South Vietnameseâ€™•I mean the Vietcong. So weâ€™•there was aâ€™•

Interviewer:

He was involved in the black market.

William Haneke:

Yes, most definitely. We found that there was a large white building in the middle of the camp that only Dai Uy Manh had the keys to, and this was built by the Agency for International Development, allegedly to house some of the farming materialsâ€™•you know, whether it was the seed, the fertilizer, the lime, the plows. The different tools that, you know, the Vietnamese would need to develop a crop and plant it. Coughs Excuse me. And this gentleman had been very much involved in getting that place built. Well, one dayâ€™•and this was after several weeks when Iâ€™•been thereâ€™•somebody was putting, loading some stuff in a warehouse, and I just happened to walk by to see what was in there. I saw

no farming equipment or farming tools or anything in there, but I saw large crates of stuff that looked like it was armament or ammunition, or, you know, rations, food rations. And I thought, you know, "Something isn't right," because I knew it wasn't coming for his units, so he was in the process—he being Dai Uy Manh—was in the process of stockpiling it there before. And I didn't have a daily presence in the camp at that point in time, so he could be stocking up by day and then shipping the stuff out at night, and nobody'd ever, you know, be the wiser. But I did find this American State Department AID rep had a very large hand in this.

Interviewer:

So he'd gone native, in a sense.

William Haneke:

So he'd gone native. He was chasing the big dollars. And by the time we were able to get enough goods on Dai Uy Manh and the other thing, we—some of the district—other district chiefs went to the province chief with their complaint that Dai Uy Manh did not know about. And they had enough on him to where the district chief would either have to put him in jail or ship him elsewhere in Vietnam. And because he was—had such a high political profile, or his family did, then they chose to take him away from Hoa Da and send him to the northernmost district in all of Vietnam, which was totally unfriendly up there. So at any rate, he left suddenly and quickly, and they replaced him with a Major Xuan, who was an excellent gentleman. Major Xuan was a senior, well-seasoned military man. He had fought against the French—or he fought with the French, first of all, against the Japanese. I mean—let me digress. He had fought with the Vietnamese Army in cooperation with the French against the Viet Minh a long time before. He had been with the Viet Minh fighting against the Japanese during World War II, 'cause the Japanese had a major presence in Vietnam. And then he fought with the Viet Minh afterwards to convince the French they should not come back into the country after the end of World War II. I would picture him not as a Communist, but as a Nationalist. He was very loyal for his country, very proud of the Vietnamese heritage and history and whatnot. Did not trust the Americans, so I had a very large task ahead of me to convince him that we were not there to occupy his country or try to tell him what to do, but we were there to provide him with resources to help him in his—

Interviewer:

And how did you convince him of that?

William Haneke:

It was a process that took some time.

Interviewer:

One thing that—as I said earlier, one thing I find fascinating talking about this and reading your book last night is that you're very—explained that we think about the Vietnam—on the district level, it wasn't merely a matter of the Americans and the South Vietnamese against the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese regulars. But it was really much—the situation was much more complex, because of all the various regional alliances, regional rivalries, and personal agendas. That you're really having to play a very complex game on the district level—

William Haneke:

Absolutely.

Interviewer:

With the local powers and powers-that-be, and figure out how to get them on your side.

William Haneke:

Yeah. Well, for starters, there was no effective central government that was, you know, present in this particular area.

Interviewer:

Sort of like Afghanistan.

William Haneke:

Very much like Afghanistan. You know, you had your district chief, who allegedly was in charge of everything, but then you had the drug lords. I mean they had a very large presence in this area. Now, the poppy trade up in the Central Highlands was a very lucrative business, and the CIA nurtured that along because they got money out of that as well, that they were able to use, you know, for a variety of different purposes in their efforts over there. And so you had your district chief, you had your drug lords that had an influence. You had different tribal units that were around there for some of these Vietnamese cultures, who wielded a lot of influence within the tribe, you know, whether it was a Montagnard tribe, whether it was a Vietnamese or Chinese—I mean they all had a lot of power. They didn't all agree with each other. There was no central, you know, agreement or organization that they all belonged to. But depending on where we were operating, it had a very real influence on what we were trying to do. And then over and above that, we had pirate groups that would—we were on the South China Sea, so there were a couple groups of pirates that we had to contend with. We had groups of bandits—you know, just bad guys that were bandits that were out to steal money and kill people or do whatever they wanted to do. And there were several other groups that we had to contend with. And I've always maintained that if they'd all gotten together in one organized, you know, unit, and tried to do away with us, we probably wouldn't have survived maybe five minutes. But by virtue of the fact that they were all, you know, not working in concert with one another, then that made it easier to deal with. And I mean in dealing with some of these, the drug lords and their people were better armed than we were. * {:.time} 1:14:37

Interviewer:

Really.

William Haneke:

I mean these were some bad dudes. And these were big guys. I don't know if they came from Manchuria or where they were from, but my first confrontational meeting with it, the guy that was in charge of the detail that came to—we had inadvertently ambushed a group that was coming down, and it turned out to be a drug convoy that was coming down. And so when we figured out who it was, we knew who to get in touch with, and were able to get him. And he sent this guy in charge of the team, and he looked like, you know, somebody out of the "Terry and the Pirates" cartoon strip. He had the big Fu Manchu moustache. He had cartridge belts across his chest, and he was, you know, dealing with an automatic weapon.

Interviewer:

Was he ethnic Chinese, or?

William Haneke:

He could've been—he could well have been. That's why I say he looked more like a very dark-skinned Chinese, which probably would've been Manchurian or, you know, one of the cultures in northern China. But he was very much in charge, and he was about 6'7".

Interviewer:

6'7".

William Haneke:

6'6" or 6'7". The guy weighed over 300 pounds, and it was all solid muscle, and he was one of these people you would not mess with. And all of the people he had working for him were not too much smaller than he was, so we realized that, you know, this was a very—1:16:00

Interviewer:

And what was this convoy—was it mules, was it trucks?

William Haneke:

It was small horses, and they had packs of heroin that had been processed—you know, the raw and dried heroin. It was in rolls that were in protective bags, you know, on either side of the horses. But they were taking that down to the small village or a village port that

we had under cover of darkness, and then they would ship it up by sampan the next day to wherever it was intended to go. And apparently the rest of the Vietnamese in the district knew that this was coming, and donâ€™t mess with it, but we, the American advisors, never got the word, so. What we did get was some intelligence that there was a Vietcong convoy or Vietcong group that was going to be coming down the trail that night, so.

Interviewer:

So did you let the drug convoy just go on its way?

William Haneke:

Well, we ambushed them, so there were no survivors.

Interviewer:

Okay.

William Haneke:

So that includes the horses as well as the—we didnâ€™t know there were going to be horses. And it had—dark as it was, you know, you get the word, you know, you set your ambush up, and you got people in the front, or people in the back, I should say, that we had a radio set up, and theyâ€™d do a double-click when they passed. Or do a one-click when they passed through, the lead element, and theyâ€™d do a double-click when the last element comes through. So once we knew that they were all in the kill zone, then we opened up, you know, fire, and very effective ambush. But unfortunately, when I went in there and saw who it was, that it wasnâ€™t a Vietcong at all, it was this drug thing, thenâ€

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Interviewer:

What were the repercussions of that?

William Haneke:

Well, I was scared to death that, you know, there were going to be extensive repercussions. And we offered to see what we could do, you know, in talking to the—first, the drug lord on the radio. We got his frequency. I mean these people had radios and all kinds of communications that were probably more sophisticated than what we had. But at any rate, once I was able to establish contact with him, we negotiated. And I said, you know, “We would like to compensate you for the men and the animals that we have killed, you know, inadvertently. We didnâ€™t know you were coming.” He said, “I donâ€™t care about the men, and I donâ€™t care about the animals. All I care about is my product, and I want to be sure that it gets to its destination.” So I was told by my boss, “If you got some trucks, send them over there, load the stuff up in the trucks, and take it down to the port,â€ which we did.

Interviewer:

I hate to say it, but thatâ€™s pretty shocking.

William Haneke:

Yeah. Well, like I say, the CIA had been doing business with these people, to a certain extent, either being paid not to interdict or to help them get through, and it was just a means to an end to them finding additional ways of raising cash. * {:.time} 1:18:38

Interviewer:

Which brings me to a point I was going to ask you about later, but since you bring it up, reading your book last night, I was surprised. I mean the CIA was everywhere, it seemed, or certainly very present in your district and sort of in your operations.

William Haneke:

They were—they had a wide presence in Southeast Asia. I mean they werenâ€™t—they were small teams. We didnâ€™t have a large presence within our area. But we had one gentleman that was our main contact, and he had a couple of assistants that would come with him from time to time, and he seemed to have—most of the people around knew who he was and didnâ€™t mess with him. So they probably paid a lot of protection money to the locals to just leave him alone. But he always had some very good advice for us, and it was very supportive.

Interviewer:

So you formed a working relationship with Colonel Xuan. * {:.time} 1:19:28

William Haneke:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

And you eventually rebuilt the compound and made a secure compound. * {:.time} 1:19:35

William Haneke:

Yeah. With himâ€•I mean he was a very good military leader. He knewâ€•he was a good infantry officer, so he knew what leadership was all about. And he knew he had a tough row to hoe with the Vietnamese military people that he was commanding. And, you know, he knew how ragtag they were, and worked with us to try to get, you know, better training going for them. But he also knew that he had a lot of people who were traitors among him, and was trying very hard to weed these out. One of the biggest problems that we had was the police chief and his staff, â€™cause they were all militant, militant Communist. I mean to listen to this police chief talk, it would look like he had the Marxist Handbook that he was, you know, â€œYou Capitalist dogs,â€ and different things like that. I mean where do you hear this kind of terminology in conversation, you know, other than somebody who has beenâ€•

Interviewer:

This is under Major Xuan, though.

William Haneke:

Yeah, but heâ€•Major Xuan did not bring him in. Heâ€™s one that he inherited from Captain Manh.

Interviewer:

And he could notâ€•he could not remove him?

William Haneke:

He was not able, readily, to come in there and clean house overnight, although that was his long-term plan is to find, first of all the deadwoodâ€•the people who were against himâ€•and to weed them out. And as it turned out, we had several attacks that occurred shortly after Major Xuan joining the group. And onâ€•after several of these attacks, thenâ€•and this police chief was getting, you know, more militant and more anti-American and more anti-Vietnamese, and as the days went by. So I mean I justâ€•I made a statement to my fellow advisors one night. I said, â€œMy prayer is is that next time we have an attack, we go out on the wires next morning and find this guyâ€™s body draped over them.â€ And thus it came to pass. The next morning, weâ€•or that night, we had a major attack. They were trying to breach the wire or find a way into the camp, and we were able to hold them off. And there wasâ€•it was a more organized attack than normalâ€•just obvious that it was somebody with more experience that was leading the group in there that night. And the next morning when we went out there, the first guide leading the attack that was draped over the wire was the police chief. And there were two other of his assistants that were also in that same attack that had also been killed, and the next day I think he had a force of maybe 15 or 20 of his deputiesâ€•they all disappearedâ€•left the area with their families. Just, you knowâ€•you know, a flash of smoke, and theyâ€™re gone, so theyâ€•I knew that they were all working with the Vietcong. And of course, that gave Major Xuan the opportunity to go out and recruit and replace them with some people that he knew would be totally loyal to the South Vietnamese and him.

Interviewer:

In your book it seems you knew that you were on the right track, â€™cause it seems like the Vietcong were increasingly testingâ€• testing the security of the compound at Hoa Da?

William Haneke:

Hoa Da.

Interviewer:

Hoa Da.

William Haneke:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

One of the things I found most eye-opening, though, is you describe a situation at a ruse is kind of how to describe it. You describe a situation where, basically, there were a case of an attack involving American defectors.

William Haneke:

Yes.

Interviewer:

That was eye-opening.

William Haneke:

That happened shortly after we got there and started, you know, building up the compound defenses. When I first got there, there was very little presence of any kind of camp security, and I relate the story in the book, and it's almost jokingly, where the first night I stay there, they have these movies. Now, keep in mind the white wall of this building is an excellent place for a projection, you know, for a screen. And the AID had these little three-wheeled Lambretta vehicles that they would have their camera on the back of it, or they had both a loudspeaker system so they could, you know, train or orient the Vietnamese as they went around to the little villages. And in the case that they had something that was substantial enough, then they could show a movie. And I mean the Vietnamese had propaganda movies, and again, you got to understand, propaganda is three-fold. Propaganda is white propaganda, which is the truth, or it's based on the truth, and it's good information. You've got black propaganda, which is a total lie, you know, which totally distorts the facts and is trying to win them over. And then you got gray propaganda, which is kind of a mix of the two. So AID was, you know, aiding and abetting the propaganda effort to try to orient the villagers for the South Vietnamese. We showed this movie on the side of the building that night, and I'm looking around, and there's several thousand people that are sitting there watching this. And I thought, "There are not that many people in this village by day. Where are all these people coming from?" So I asked, you know, the counterpart, you know, "Is there any compound defense," and he said, "No, not really. I have a guard on the gate, but that's it." Well, we got the whole rest of the, you know, the compound that they could come over the wire or through the wire and over the masonry fence, or masonry wall that we had there. And it didn't make me feel very comfortable. So we went ahead and secured the camp the next day, and made sure that people didn't get in the camp, particularly at night, unless they had some kind of ID to verify the fact that they were on the Ruff Tuff outfits or with an American unit or with the Vietcong or the Vietnamese village chief staff. So I'm looking the next night and there are only maybe a couple hundred people there, you know, so we got rid of all the extra folks that were coming to the movies. And it was shortly after that that we started getting the probing attacks at night. And as my, one of my top Sergeants told me, he says, "Sir, you know why we're getting attacked." And I said, "No, I don't." And he said, "Because you pissed off the Vietcong—you took their movie privileges away." So that's when the probing attacks started to try and find out exactly how good the compound defenses were. But we learned early on to try and improve those as much as possible, and that was no small order because the barbed wire fence we had around that camp, you know, predated the departure of the French, so it had been out there for 30 years or more. And in that kind of climate with the constant, you know, rain and heat, and sun that the temperatures around there sometimes got as high as 138 degrees. So I mean it just, you know, severe weather, and I mean the barbed wire was so rusted out I could just put my hand on it and it would, you know, slide through or break through, with no effort at all. And it was a land mine minefield that was around there as well, but again, these had all been put in there, you know, prior to the Japanese coming, most of them, so nobody ever knew if the mines would, you know, detonate or not. There had been some added in later years, but nobody

had a master plan of where the mines were, and so it was suspect at best of how effective the compound defenses would be. And we couldn't get barbed wire—I mean we just had absolutely no priority as a advisory team.

Interviewer:

It seems like it came through loud and clear in your book that you were basically on the bottom of the list for everybody's priority.

William Haneke:

That's it. That's it. And it just seemed—now, whether I went to Cam Ranh Bay, which was the main supply base that we dealt with, and with orders—I could have orders, you know, as official and as long as the day is long, and they wouldn't honor them. But what irritated me is we had third-country nationals that we were advising, like the Korean units, the Filipino units, New Zealanders, the Aussies, that would go in there and be, you know, their list of supplies, they got everything, you know, first time through, without any questions or any comments. And we had the hardest time getting our orders taken care of through the legitimate supply system—that's why we started going out and trading and bargaining and bartering and doing all kinds of things. * {:.time} 1:28:01

Interviewer:

Tell me about the incident, though, where the

William Haneke:

Oh, with the Americans?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

William Haneke:

Well, we had beefed up the defenses around the front part of the compound, and that was the only way in or out, you know. And after that had been up there several nights, we got word—I guess it came on the radio. I mean it was—we had a fairly common frequency, and we had alternate frequencies that we'd go to when things started getting, you know, really hot. But we had one common frequency that everybody around knew, both Americans and Vietnamese. And so we got a call on the system—it was about maybe 10 or 11:00 at night—that there'd been a convoy ambushed that was coming, bringing supplies up to a province north of us. And of course, I immediately became suspect of that, and they said there was several wounded Americans that they wanted to bring in our compound and give them first aid treatment. So I was immediately suspicious of that, because no convoys had been by there in probably two years. And so I got on the other frequency and called Major Elliott over in the Song Mao camp and said, "Are you aware of any convoys coming this way?" He said, "Absolutely not." He said, "It's probably a bogus attempt to get into your camp." So we set some things up. I had several machine guns at various places around the camp, and I brought the machine guns up by the front gate there, and I told them they'd have to wait—cause it takes us a couple minutes to take the security off and open the gate so they could come in. I said, "How many are there of you," and he said, "About 35." So

Interviewer:

It was an American voice.

William Haneke:

This was an—there were two different American voices we heard. So I mean we're naturally assuming this is an American convoy, and it's legit. So something didn't ring true—I just had a very uncomfortable feeling about that. And there was enough available light, if you got down close to the ground you could look up at the sky. There was just enough available light where you could make out some forms moving around out there. So I had one of my Sergeants get down with me, and we started counting heads, and by the time we got to 100-plus, I said, "This isn't legit. It's not legit at all." So I told them, I said, "I want you all to come up close to the gate, and we'll open it up here in just a second." And when they came up, then we opened up on them, and you know, I asked them again, "Are you an American unit, or are you Vietnamese, or who

are you? And I'd asked them what American unit they were with, well, they didn't give me a number or outfit, so I figured, you know, they certainly didn't have good intentions. And so we pretty well annihilated the entire group. When I opened the gate and we went out, you know, after there was no more activity out there. We verified that it was primarily Vietcong, and they were all heavily armed, AK-47s, and, you know, a lot of, plenty of ammunition, B40 rockets and all kinds of stuff. And the next morning, you know, we went back out and verified, I found two dead Americans, or one was still alive, one was dead outright. And we tried to keep the one that was wounded, heavily wounded, he had a lot of abdominal injuries, alive long enough so we could get him to medical treatment and intelligence, get him, you know, to give some information. He passed away shortly before the Americans came in, and the first people that come down were the intelligence kinds, you know. It's one of the things that always irritated me about the intelligence, they never would identify what outfit they were with or what unit they were representing, so you never knew whether it was MACV, you never knew whether it was CIA, you never knew whether it was somebody from the State Department or some other American military unit. And I was always very reluctant to give these guys access to the camp and allow, you know, free questioning. But we later determined that the two Americans were deserters. One was black, and I think the other one was, I don't remember whether he was Hispanic or, you know, he was just dark-complected American. But they had both been AWOL, had both deserted from units, you know, one just recently, and the other one, you know, probably over a year before.

Interviewer:

Not really deserted, but defected.

William Haneke:

Absolutely. And they were the ones that were aiding and abetting this unit to get into our camp, cause and that's when, you know, it just reinforced what the CIA agent had taught us. The Vietcong do not want you in this area. They don't want you operating here, and they're going to do everything within their power to try to eliminate you, and they play for keeps. You know, it'll be they're going to come in there and kill or torture or do whatever they can to eliminate you. So my fellow advisors and I kind of took a little oath among ourselves that if everything, if we ever got overrun totally and we were in danger of being captured, you know, that we would take each other out, and that that way, we would not. Cause we saw what they did to, with, to American advisors that'd been captured and brought on the other side of the mountains from another district west of us, had been brought in there and tortured and left. And after we saw what had been done to them, there's no way we wanted to be subjected to that kind of treatment. But I mean they thoroughly dismembered these people.

Interviewer:

Yeah, you make that pretty clear in your book.

William Haneke:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Did you ever hear of any other case of Americans defecting to the Vietcong like that, or was that the only?

William Haneke:

I've heard of one other. Nothing, you know, it was never confirmed, but I heard from a good friend of mine who was an advisor up in the Central Highlands that they had a situation where some Americans, I guess up close to Da Nang, had defected, a couple of them, and the Vietcong put them to good use, you know. It was a rare, well, let me, let me digress. When I was wounded and in the 24th Evac Hospital, on the same unit I was on, I was on the neurosurgical unit, there was a patient on the same ward with me, and I'd forgotten about him, who was been shot in the head with a 45 caliber gun by the military police. And he was an American, and finally I asked the head

nurse, I said, "What's the story with this guy back there?" I said, "He's surrounded by military police. Are they there to keep him from escaping?" They said, "No. They're there to keep the hospital staff from coming in and finishing him off," and I said, "What's his story?" Well, he had defected and was serving with a Vietcong unit that overran or tried to overrun a military police outpost on the outside of Saigon, and he had already killed two American soldiers, and finally one of the MPs had put a, you know, 45 caliber slug in his head from his pistol. And they said, "He'll never be right again," but I mean the guy looked at you with total—it looked like he had total awareness with what was going on in there. But when they'd walk by his bed, his eyes would just follow them back and forth, and you know, it just—it spooked the entire staff there. And of course, you've got to understand the hospital staff was involved in treating wounded Americans, combat-wounded Americans, primarily. And when they found out that this guy had defected and was actually leading a charge against ours, and had killed a couple people, that was it, you know. And the poor head nurse, she said, "I've been trying for days to get this guy transferred." "Cause it was a double hospital—it was an American hospital in the front, and the back section of the hospital was for POWs, or prisoners of war, you know, whether they be Vietnamese or Americans or whatever. So she kept trying to get him transferred to the other end of the compound there.

Interviewer:

Also in your book, I guess—how long had you been there when the compound at Hoa Da—Hoa Da, Hoa Da?

William Haneke:

Hoa Da.

Interviewer:

I'll get it sooner or later. How long had you been there when the compound at Hoa Da was overrun?

William Haneke:

I'd been there a couple months. The incident took place on September 15, 1968. I will never forget that day as long as I live. I had been up in Cam Ranh Bay, and Sergeant Amos, Wesley Amos, and I had gone up there to get our supplies, and after we'd been turned down, we went to the alternate source of bargaining for supplies. And it just—the nice thing about it was that we ran into a gentleman who was running one of the warehouses up there, who I had just served with in Germany, who was a Hawaiian. And he called it the "Samoan," you know, organization, that apparently all of the guys who were controlling a series of ten warehouses were all Hawaiian-born. Or they called it the "Pineapple Brigade," that's what they called it. But anyhow, he was a good friend, and I explained to him that, you know, how we had not been able to get supplies. He says, "Not to worry, sir, we'll take good care of you." And I said, "Well, I'll do what I can to get you some war souvenirs or, you know, get you some—" usually you go over and you get a quart or a gallon of good drinking alcohol at the Class IV supply point there at Cam Ranh Bay, and that was supposedly a good negotiating element. He said, "Sir, I don't want that. I don't need it. I know you. I know the bad situation you're in out there, and we'll do whatever we can to help you." So he provided me with two cases of the poncho liners, which were, you know, a popular commodity. I mean these things were silk-lined, and, you know, just everybody and their brother wanted a poncho liner to take home.

Interviewer:

It sounds like an alternative currency.

William Haneke:

Oh, it was. More reliable than the MPCs or the American pay certificates that they had for us. So he recommended, he said, "Here's how you do it—here's how you play the trade game here at Cam Ranh." He said, "You go down there and you negotiate, first of all, with a heavy truck battalion. And you offer him—" and he said,

“Don’t offer him any more” he gave me an amount to offer. “Don’t offer him any more than that, but that’s for unlimited utilization of the trucks when you come to Cam Ranh to pick up supplies.” And that was not a real problem, because I went down there and met the Major that was in charge, and he was, you know, very happy to accommodate me on that need. He said, “The next thing you do is that you go down to the airstrip, and you talk to somebody in the air detachment down there, and that way you’ve got you’re covered on exiting Cam Ranh Bay with your supplies, so you got your transportation from the supply point, got your transportation out, and you’re covered.” So we did that as well. And then after that, it was just a matter of going to the individual warehouses and finding what we needed, and negotiating for that. You know, sometimes it was a matter of taking these guys to dinner, or providing them with alcoholic beverages, you know. A fifth of Chevas Regal usually went pretty far. Or, you know, Black Jack Daniels, or one of the other, you know, preferred sipping beverages. But we also came armed with some war souvenirs, also, that and you know, it’s like having an antique with a provenance. You had to have a suitable story to go along with this souvenir, or it was no longer, you know, considered a serious offer.

Interviewer:

And in your book you explained that many of those souvenirs were made by

William Haneke:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Made to order, as it were.

William Haneke:

Made to order. Or the other thing we had, right off the coast there we had Navy swift boat that operated out there in the South China Sea, and we had a very good relationship with the Navy, I mean ‘cause we needed their support. They had an 81 millimeter mortar in the back that was gyroscopically mounted, so regardless of how the aiming system was so regardless of how rough the seas were, they could put a mortar shell in your back pocket if that’s where you ordered it to go. And they were a lot more reliable than the Vietnamese artillery that we had. Song Mao had a regular ARVN or Army of Vietnam regiment that was stationed there that was our primary artillery support, and they had 155 Howitzers. They couldn’t hit the broad side of a barn, you know, if it were standing right next to where the Howitzer was. And generally they were several grid squares or several thousand kilometers off of where you wanted them to fire. So anyway, it was more dangerous to utilize them than to just ignore them. So anyhow, the swift boats were great to us, and they would take we could get some local tailor to make up some Vietcong flags, and he probably was making the real flags for the Vietcong units as well. But anyhow, we’d take the things out there and they’d drag them in the surf and get them sufficiently weathered-looking, and then we’d buy chicken from the local farmers and take a shotgun and shoot the chicken with several of the flags behind it. You know, and then that developed our prominent story that, oh, yeah, this got the blood of this guy that was leading the attack through the camp, and I mean so we played with the truth a little bit. But the ultimate goal was to get the supplies that we were authorized. We never traded for anything we didn’t, you know, weren’t supposed to have just trying to basically get what we needed to survive and do our jobs.

Interviewer:

So while you were up in Cam Ranh Bay, on the 16th of September of 1968”

William Haneke:

The 15th.

Interviewer:

15th.

William Haneke:

Yeah.

Interview

The compound, though, was hit by the

William Haneke:

The compound was hit that night, and we had good intelligence. I mean we'd worked up our intelligence network, and I mean most of the sources we had were—you rate them from one to five. One is the least reliable and five is the most reliable, and over a period of a couple months, we had, you know, been able to develop that intelligence network a lot better. We started getting, a couple days in advance, a indication that this attack was getting ready to take place, you know, from these five-rated sources. And they said that they were going to try and overrun the camp, and, you know, eliminate you all. And I kept trying to, you know, call my boss down in Phan Thiet in the province headquarters, and some other people up in our end of the province, and couldn't get anybody that was going to send us any kind of supplies or, you know, extra units to help us protect ourselves against this. Coughs Excuse me. So as the attack started, the unit infiltrated part of the camp, and we had popular forces platoons guarding each of the walls, so these were the, you know, little minuteman-type units, you know, that we had there that were assigned to guard the walls at night. So the Vietcong units had infiltrated the camp. They had—two of the four units that were defending these walls had defected and gone to the Vietcong and let them in, so they were actually in the camp before we knew they were there. And—but I wasn't at the camp that night. I was up in Cam Ranh, you know, bringing back the last of the supplies. I managed to acquire two fifty caliber machine guns, two M60 machine guns, and a couple of recoilless rifles, and all kinds of ammunition, and what do you call it—the mines—oh—

Interviewer:

Claymores.

William Haneke:

Claymores, thank you. Claymore mines, which were, you know, invaluable in setting up a defense. Then I was bringing all this stuff back the next morning, so—but at any rate, back to that night. They were in the camp and had eliminated the defending forces in three of the corners where we had our machine guns placed. We had one L-shaped barracks that was in the center of the camp, in which there were 400—probably 450 of our men that were housed in there, you know, when they were not working.

Interviewer:

Vietnamese, right?

William Haneke:

Vietnamese. And I had preached since my day there, "You have to have multiple exits from this place, so if anything ever happens, you, you know, and the entrance is blocked, that you have ways to go." And they didn't—they never followed that. I never could get them to do it, in spite of the fact that I had talked to, you know, both counterparts, district chiefs, to tell them that they're necessary. So they had all the windows were, you know, armored reinforced so no bullets could come through. There was a exit door on the end of each one of the wings that were heavily armored and had, you know, crossbars in there to keep anybody from being able to break in. And so the next thing they had, they had a sapper team—that, you know, that brings explosives in there—that came in and blew up the barracks. And with incendiary devices, or, you know, to burn—and they set this thing up, and very few of the guys ever made it out. Those that did make it out, I have it on good authority, were all on fire as they came running out of the building. The advisors were housed elsewhere, and by that time we had, you know, cleaned up our little animal pen and had moved our beds in there, and it was sanitized to the point where it was, you know, habitable. We had two ways that we could go from that—those two rooms to get out. Either go right out the back door, or wind our way through the little interior courtyard and go out the front of the building. Those that went out the back were shot dead immediately. That included my interpreter, who was a great guy. He had been trained by the Special Forces and was 100% unquestionably loyal to the Americans. And three other advisors

who went out there with himâ€•Iâ€™m sorry, they werenâ€™tâ€•he was shot dead. They were notâ€•they were badly wounded and unable to move. And then the others went through the front, and most of them made it out, except oneâ€•the Lieutenant who was commanding the MATs team and his top Sergeant were in there at the time that the building was hit with recoilless rifle fire. Now, what happened was in the courtyard out in front, you know, you come into the camp, thereâ€™s a flagpole there, thereâ€™s a circular turnaround, and then youâ€™ve got one, two, three main buildings in the camp that are around this quadrangle type of thing. But at any rate, somebody was standing out in the middle of the quadrangle with a recoilless rifle, and at point-blank range just blasting the daylights out of these buildings, and he, you know, brought them all down. And these guys were in there notâ€•as I said, this was an old French hospital, so it had very heavy timbers that were holding up the roof and whatnot. And these guys, the roof came down on them and they were pinned underneath and couldnâ€™t move, and then were injured with some of the shrapnel that happened as well, but were not dead. In the meantime, the Vietnameseâ€•or Vietcongâ€•were using very crude flashlightsâ€•you know, just very dim and hard to see very far with them. But they could see the feet of these guys sticking out from under these beams, and they saw them twitch, and the one guy was moaning because he was wounded. So they progressively rolled grenades in between their legs, and in each case they were able to kick them away, and got only, you know, just minor shrapnel wounds from that. This went on four or five times, and these guys somehow survived, and finally they played dead so the Vietcong wasâ€•they couldnâ€™t get back in to where they were, but they could see them. And then the rest of the people, as far as they made it, they either were dead or played dead, and we had finished building a brand-new bunker out to the outside of this quadrangle. And the district chief and the guy that eventually came in and became the senior district advisor above meâ€•he was an American Major, came in at a later dateâ€•went there with several of their senior officers, the Vietnamese senior officers, and hid out at the bottom of this bunker while the rest of the attack went on. Well, they pretty well leveled the entire camp. They killed close toâ€•well between 650 and 700 of the Vietnamese, or they defectedâ€•I mean we never did find all the bodies, but we found a substantial number of them. And pretty well laid waste to the entire camp. The lead element of this Vietcong unit was a Womenâ€™s Action Company.

Interviewer:

I was going to ask you about that.

William Haneke:

And anybody that thinks that women are not fierce in combat shouldâ€™ve been there that night. Now, I make the distinction of a Womenâ€™s Action Company. They were not fighting in connection with the menâ€•they fought totally as an independent unit. * {:.time}

1:49:06

Interviewer:

Entirely women combat unit.

William Haneke:

Absolutely. And the menâ€•we, in combat, would fight until weâ€™d neutralize an opponent, and then move on to the next one. You know, as far as we knew, they were no threatâ€•you know, why waste time? The Vietnameseâ€•this Vietcong womenâ€™s group, not only did they neutralize these people by, you know, filling them with bullets, but they came in and they dismembered the body so there would be no chance of these people, you know, resisting in any way, shape, or form. Soâ€•

Interviewer:

Had you heard of this Womenâ€™s Actionâ€•

William Haneke:

We were aware. I knew the number of the unit, but we didnâ€™t know it was a Womenâ€™s Action Company. Nobodyâ€™s ever, you know, given us a breakdown on that. We sure found out that night. And we eventually got our revenge, which Iâ€™ll talk

about a little bit later—but that pretty well, you know—everybody was—we were not able to effectively resist after that. Although my—the Major that came in to command called in an air strike the next morning, but it didn’t—they bombed around the outside or strafed around the outside edge of the camp, and they may have gotten a couple of stragglers, but not many. There was very little loss of life on the Vietcong’s part. * {:.time} 1:50:26

Interviewer:

Any idea how large the force was—the size of the force that attacked you? * {:.time} 1:50:28

William Haneke:

Well, we were told that we were outnumbered thirty-five to one, so do the math.

Interviewer:

35—

William Haneke:

We had about 800 people in the camp that night—thirty-five to one, it was thousands. It was thousands. And talked to the people that were there that night—they said it was just wave after wave after wave of these people came in. They could hear bugles and whistles, and that’s how they signaled their troops in combat. and I mean, you know, every time you hear that with a unit getting ready to come through, your blood runs cold, I mean just —cause you know what’s getting ready to happen. And they just said that, you know, there were so many people running around that camp that night, it just, you know—incredibly large force. So here I am, trying to get in, you know, get back to that area the next morning, and I show up with the supplies I’ve been able to garner, and I get loaded on the Huey—not Huey, but a Chinook double-bladed helicopter. And we left Cam Ranh at about 5:30 that morning, and by the time we got there it was still pretty early morning, and we’re trying to find the camp. And I described, you know, what to look for—you come down the river where it meets with a couple small streams and two bridges, and then you have a road, and we’re the first large compound on over to the right. He says, “I see the bridges, I see the roads, I see the small village. I don’t see the camp.” So we flew around there—we just—we circled around the area maybe three times. I didn’t see the camp, either. So I said, “Well,” I said, “enough of this. You know, I can see Song Mao over there. I know where the airstrip is outside the camp—or outside the village. Take me down there and we’ll unload, and then I’ll get somebody to drive me back over.” And I’m thinking, you know, it’s early in the morning, still a little bit foggy, so maybe we’re just mis-oriented on what we’re seeing. So they drop me off out there, and there’s a truck from the Forty-Fourth ARVN Regiment that’s coming by, you know, about a five-ton dump truck. And I said, “Can you take me back to Song Mao to the advisor camp?” “Oh, yeah, happy to do that.” So we loaded everything on, and I go back there, and as soon as I walk in the gate, you know, people look at me, “You’re alive.” And I said, “What do you mean, I’m alive?” They said, “Your camp got destroyed last night. Everybody, you know, with the exception of just a couple people that—everybody was badly wounded or killed.” And I’m thinking, “Oh, my God.” You know. So I met with Major Elliott, who was the district senior advisor there, and they managed to get me down there as quickly as they could. And we go in there, and it’s just, you know, a shock to see that it’s just bodies everywhere. It’s—the buildings are all gutted, you know, destroyed, and you know, just—you’ve got to understand in the tropics that the decomposition of dead bodies starts immediately. Flies everywhere, you know, beetles, all kind of things that scavenge on dead flesh are showing up by this time. Some of the bodies, in the heat—the temperature that day was about 120, 125. You know, some of these things are starting to get bloated, I mean—sick. Now, if I’m being too graphic, let me know, but I mean once you get an image in your mind on something like that—I mean there was close to—well, over 500 bodies that I can recall, lying around there. And we got word that General Peers, who was the I Field Force Victor Commander, the whole northern half of Vietnam, was getting ready—he’s a four-star General, and he’s getting

ready to pay us a visit, and I knew it wasn't a social call. So I went around and talked to enough of the people that survived to get a clear story of what had happened, 'cause I realized I was the only one in any kind of shape to give any kind of a briefing to the General when he showed up. And it was later that morning he shows up, and he's got 15 helicopters with his supportive staff coming in with him. I mean it's like

Interviewer:

15?

William Haneke:

1. It's like a, you know, flight of eagles coming in. And so they sat down, and I run over to the chopper and salute him, and he takes me over to the side and he says, you know, "Just what in the hell happened here last night, Captain?" And I said, "Well, sir, I just arrived this morning, 'cause I was up in Cam Ranh." I explained, and so I went through the whole process, and he just, you know, setting there shaking his head, and he's got two or three of his assistant Colonels that are sitting there taking copious notes as I'm dictating. And he just I mean he's just in disbelief himself that what happened. It soon became apparent and he picked up on this real quick he said, "You didn't have any compound defense stuff like barbed wires or sandbags?" I said, "No sir." I said, "I've been trying to get those ever since I arrived here, you know, early in July." And he said, "Did you go through the normal chain of command?" "Yes sir." "Did you go up to Cam Ranh, try to get them?" "Yes sir." And you were unable to get any of those?" I said, "No sir." So he immediately assigned someone he said, "Well, you're going to have them." And he assigned whoever's in charge of his logistics to start ordering these supplies and make sure they come up there within the next two days. And it was just, you know, just a monumental screw-up is what it turned out to be, I mean as far as what the situation our camp was left in. * {:.time} 1:55:36

Interviewer:

Did all of the members of the advisory team who were wounded did they all make it?

William Haneke:

They all made it. We lost nobody KIA that were killed in action that night. However, we had, let's see, two or four of them were wounded badly enough that they were medically evacuated and never came back to the camp. And some other, you know, some of the ones that did survive, we had one that became a real emotional problem, and had to be medically evacuated at a later date simply because psychologically he couldn't cope any more.

Interviewer:

And I think that was one of the senior NCOs, I think you said.

William Haneke:

That was my second-top NCO, yeah.

Interviewer:

Who had been in the service for what, 20?

William Haneke:

28 years.

Interviewer:

28 years.

William Haneke:

And I learned you learn early on in combat, you know, you never can judge somebody by the amount of experience or their training or motivation, you know, until you share some combat with them. Because we had guys in there that, I mean they were Airborne, they were Ranger, they were had been with Special Forces. They'd done

all kind of things, but theyâ€™d never had an operational tour in a combat zone. And some of these very people are the first to fold up when the bullets start flying. I had my radio operator was, you know, he just made Spec 4 when he came over there. He hadâ€•he was a war protester before he was drafted. He had the chicken track on his, you know, the outside of his steel pot on his camouflage cover, and I mean just very unconventional, but when the bullets start flying, heâ€™s the guy I wanted guarding my backside, because he wasâ€•he was like a rock. You know, he justâ€•he took that adrenaline, and he focused it into the training and did everything that youâ€™re trained that you need to be able to do. So you just, you know, you never know how things are going to turn out until the bullets really started flying. But anyhow, we totally lost the camp and lost the unit we had thereâ€•that was no more. And through some negotiation with General Peers, I was able to get him to send up a detachment of Cambodians. And one of the nice things about Cambodians is they hated the Vietnamese, and they were mercenaries, so if you kept them paid on time, you know, they were good, reliable soldiers, and you didnâ€™t have to prompt them to kill the Vietcong, â€™cause those were mainly Vietnamese. But I mean thereâ€™d been warfare going on, you know, for thousands of years between the Khmer, or whatever the tribes are in Cambodia, and the Vietnamese side of it.

Interviewer:

I want to take aâ€•weâ€™ve been talking for two hours. I want to take a break in a moment. But before we do, you were there on aâ€•I mean on aâ€•did the fact that the camp had been overrun and that obviously the Vietcong were very strongâ€•

William Haneke:

Yes.

Interviewer:

In your districtâ€•did that make you wonder whether youâ€™d achieved any progress in terms of the pacification side? And obviouslyâ€•

William Haneke:

Oh, absolutely. You start questioning everything about the program, you know. If this is able to happen, and youâ€™re not getting good intelligence out of the local villages around there, you know, whatâ€™s the future of this advisory effort? And I think that was one of the real intents of the Vietcong attack. They wanted to not only annihilate us, if possible, but they wanted to demoralize anybody who was advised with an advisory program, or attempt to put an advisory attempt. Demoralize them to the point where they would never try to reorganize such an effort, and thank God they werenâ€™t successful. But as I relate in the first chapter of the book, you know, this is where the revenge comes for that unit. We caught themâ€•it was afterâ€•early in the eveningâ€•

1:59:30

Interviewer:

The main force Vietcong unit that had overrun your camp.

William Haneke:

This is the main force Vietcong unit that had overrun us. They were getting ready to pull the same thing on a village north of us, stillâ€•

Interviewer:

When was thisâ€•how much after the fact?

William Haneke:

This was about sometime in mid-October, mid to late October of â€™68. Phone rings ignore that. So anyhow, they were getting ready to attack this village, because apparently theyâ€™d done something that made them unhappy and they were going to annihilate everybody within the village. And usually, for us to get any kind of air support from the Air Force or the Vietnamese Air Force, it took, you know, forever, â€™cause you had to go through six or seven levels of command in order to get the authorization for these air assets to beâ€•

Interviewer:

Keep talking, Iâ€™m just going toâ€•

William Haneke:

These air assets to be assigned to us. And it got very frustrating. Well, this particular night was an exception, because I put in a request. I said, you know, "We need" and we had the main supporters were—they call them "spooky." "Spooky" was a AC47, you know—it was an old

Interviewer:

It was a gunship.

William Haneke:

It was a gunship. They were painfully slow. That thing could just, you know, laze in the air, and seemed to be suspended it was going so slow at times. But they had a lot of firepower. They had three 762 millimeter mini-guns that they could fire. These are Gatling gun types. They could fire either singly, or they could give you, you know, a full barrage of all three of them at the same time. And they had these flares that they would kick out on parachutes that burned about a million or a million and a half candlepower. They would light the place up bright as day. And so at any rate, I put in a request. I said, "We need gunship support immediately. Spooky is who I would request. We've got a heavily reinforced Vietcong unit that's out here that's getting ready to overrun this village." And it was—actually, it wasn't a village. It was the biggest town we had there. It was Phan Ri Cua, that had a population of about maybe 45-50,000 people. But at any rate, so they said, "Well, we just happen to have one that's just been released from Phan Thiet, and is fully armed and ready to go. He's about three miles off the coast." I said, "Send him in with guns hot," and you know, "on the first pass." I said, "Give me the frequency he's on," so we switched frequencies and I got him right away. And he came in, first pass he dropped one of the flares, and I heard him say, "Jesus Christ, look at that." And I said, "What's going on? What's going on?" He said, "Well, it's like a big anthill—looks like one of these anthills that somebody stuck a stick in and stirred it up." He said, "There's so many of these people running around in the sand out there with black pajamas on." He said, "There are thousands of them out there." I said, "Well, come in on your second pass, you know, with guns blazing, and let's see what we can do to stem the tide trying to come into the camp." So they made one pass, and were pretty effective in, you know, thinning out some of the earlier—cause it was a multi-human-wave attack, again. They thinned out some of that, and they said, "Well, some of them are getting right up to the village, and we can't stop them." I said, "How close can you get to the edge of the village and fire?" And they said, "Well, if we fire over the houses from inside the village out, you know, we can get within five feet of the closest houses. If we do the other way, then we have to have a stand-off distance so there's no ricochets that go in the house." I said, "Come in five feet." He said, "Well, aren't we going to scare the people?" I said, "They're scared enough of this attack coming in. Don't worry about how they're feeling, you know, about you firing over there to keep these bad guys out." So they did that, and, you know, continued to make passes, and they were making three-gun passes, so they ran out of ammo pretty quick, and put in a call for another, you know, AC47 to come and relieve them. That went on, the attack went on from about 10:00 that night until close to—just before sunlight the next morning.

Interviewer:

Gosh.

William Haneke:

And I mean it was just constant. It was just—I mean we had several periods where we ran out of air support for a period of a half hour or so until they could get somebody else on target. But I mean it was just one constant barrage after another. And the next morning—and the Spookies ran out—cause they had to, you know, reequip and clean the ships up or whatever from all the combat they'd been in that night. And we got two F100s that were released to us, so one of the jet jockeys flies over. He said, "Who put

the road in overnight?â€ He said, â€œWe spend time up here on vacation. Thereâ€™s a new road in there thatâ€™s running from this Phan Ri Cua all the way up to the base of the mountains.â€ I said, â€œWhat are you talking about? Thereâ€™s no road up there.â€ He saidâ€•and I was in the town at that time. Weâ€™d gone over there so I could supervise the Vietâ€•or the advisory forces that we had in there, or the Vietnamese forces we had in the village that night. So I go and pull the jeep up on the top of a hill, and Iâ€™m looking down there, and sure enough, thereâ€™s this road. Itâ€™s about 100 yards wide, and itâ€™s purple in color, and itâ€™s running all the way, you know, threading its way through the sand dunes all the way up to the mountains. And the mountains were about 22 kilometers away. And I looked at it, and I went over and picked up a handfulâ€•it was dirtâ€•I mean it was sandâ€•picked up a handful of sand, and the purple coloring was blood. That was from all of the casualties that unit we had that night. 2:05:00 And as the F100s went up to the base of the mountains, and they saw what was left of them, you know, struggling to carry the dead casualties up there, and theyâ€™d also kidnapped probably about 400 people out of the town to help them carry the dead and wounded off. And they bombed, used their available bombs on them, and that regimentâ€•it was a reinforced main force Vietcong regimentâ€•ceased to be that night. And that included that Womenâ€™s Action Company, so if you believe in revenge, I guess we got itâ€•which Iâ€™ve never been revenge-oriented, but, you know, it cut down on the enemy activity we had for a few days.

Interviewer:

Well, I think thatâ€™s a good spot for us to pause for a bit.

William Haneke:

Okay. End part 1, begin part 2

Interviewer:

Okay, weâ€™re back with Captain Bill Haneke after taking a little break. It is still September 23, 2011. And weâ€™re continuing with yourâ€•the story of your time with the MACV Advisor Group, Advisory Team 37â€•

William Haneke:

Correct.

Interviewer:

In Vietnam, back in the first half of 1968. You were obviously doing something right from the Armyâ€™s perspective, because the Vietcong put a price on your head. Now could youâ€•how did that come about?

William Haneke:

Well, following the incident where we eliminated this regiment, reinforced regiment that I was just talking about, we started to get bits of intelligence, and also some documents that appearedâ€•coughs excuse meâ€•that first started off with offering the Vietnamese equivalent of \$2.50 for me, dead or alive, you know, right out of the Old West. But then over a very short period of time, they started getting very serious about it, because I was successful, also, in setting up some of the Vietnamese forces that were tracking the Vietcong in our area, and eliminating them or discouraging them from operating further. I mean we were being, over a period of time, getting a lot more effective. And as I said, I had Cambodians. As long as I kept them paid, they were very good soldiers. So anyhow, the price went up until finally it reached a total of \$20,000.00.

Interviewer:

And how did you know thisâ€•through intelligence?

William Haneke:

Well, they left these placards or, you know, types ofâ€•not a placard, but a single sheet of paper.

Interviewer:

Handbill.

William Haneke:

Handbillâ€•thatâ€™s what Iâ€™m trying to think of. They left a handbill there, and the

sobering thing was that they had a picture of me, recent picture, that I hadn't posed for—or not willingly posed for. And under it, had the Vietnamese equivalent of “wanted, dead or alive,” you know, “\$20,000.00.” So I figured by offering that much that they were very serious about wanting me, and my security wasn't that great around the camp anyhow, other than what we could provide for our, you know, our immediate place within the camp. So I figured it was only a matter of time, and then this was in early November, by the time these things started showing up. And then on the 13th of November was a day that will long remain in my mind.

Interviewer:

Before we get to that, I just have a question. What were the metrics that you used, yourself, to measure your success in terms of pacification—in terms of the advisory group?

William Haneke:

There are several. I mean one of the things that you measure is the interaction with the people in the villages—how open, how accepting are they? When we first got there, you know, they wouldn't even talk to you. They wouldn't acknowledge you were there, and it was a pretty bad situation to get yourself into. By this time, we had had set up—or after I'd been there for several months, we set up civic programs in which we were able to build for them. And just an aside—one of the things that we found very effective, instead of going in and just openly building something and assuming that they'd use it, we said, “No, no, no—that's not the way to do it.” That we went around and we interviewed the villages, village chiefs from each village, and found out what their needs were. Then we organized work parties within the village, provided them with the materials—it was bags of cement, or wood, or, you know, sheet metal, or whatever it is that they wanted to use. Provided them with the talent and the materials, and then divided them up into work parties and they did the actual work on the things that they needed, themselves. And we found that by doing that, they took personal pride in the fact that they were involved in this project. And that way, they were less likely to let the Vietcong come in there and blow it up or do something to hurt that, because that was something that they'd spent their own personal time and effort. And as such, I don't think we ever had anything destroyed by the Vietcong after we adopted that way of doing things.

Interviewer:

Yeah, had their sweat equity in it.

William Haneke:

Had their sweat equity, big-time. And so that was one thing, and then we had these MEDCAP programs, or these medical assistance programs, that we'd go around to the villages and not charge anybody anything. I mean it started out that the villagers were very reluctant to come and see us about anything, and oh boy, when they found out what it was all about, every time we drove into the village with the medic and his jeep, you know, we had everybody in the village would line up and have to come through the line. I mean they may not have anything serious, but they all want to participate. I mean the common ailments were diarrhea—everybody had diarrhea, and everybody had a runny nose. Nutrition, proper nutrition was a real problem in the area. You know, some we could help with, but others we could not, and basically we handed out free bars of soap. Now, they didn't have access, or know how to buy soap, but they sure knew how to use it. And we had—as an example, you have a family that may have 12 people in the family. They could make a bar of soap last almost three months by bathing everybody in the family every day, down at the river. They'd wash their pots and pans and cooking instruments with it. They'd wash their clothing with it. They'd use it for, you know, clean-up arrangements around the house. But they could make that one bar of soap last—and usually we had them Dial that had the hexachlorophene in it. And most of these kids had scabs, you know, all kinds of skin lesions on them, and after they were washed for, you know, about a week in the stuff, that all disappeared. So this was just good basic hygiene that we were teaching them, and

Interviewer:

And these people had nothing.

William Haneke:

They had nothing. And they had very little income or very little money to, you know, ready cash—it mostly was a barter economy. But, you know, from things like that, they knew that they were getting along better because of our being there. We weren't asking anything of them. We weren't trying to control them, and that put us miles ahead of the French and the Vietcong. So slowly but surely, we were gaining a respect and the trust and the acceptance of the Vietnamese people. I look upon that as being a much higher success as, you know, as opposed to taking the military and training them how to be more efficient, you know, killers, or more efficient troops, because if you don't have a problem with the citizens out there, you have no need for the military. So that's how I rate my success.

Interviewer:

So anyway—so jumping back to your story, November 13th.

William Haneke:

Okay.

Interviewer:

Was that the date in 1968?

William Haneke:

That was the date, yeah. November 13th, I got up in the morning and had a tremendous sense of doom, of foreboding. I mean and a lot of time in combat, you go with your senses. I mean you—if you survive long enough, you develop a sixth sense of where not to go, or what not to do, or, you know, just something that tells you, you know, if I do that, it's going to end badly. That morning I woke up, and something told me that being around that camp was going to be bad, so I volunteered for every patrol that was going out, and tried, and my commanding officer said, "No, I want you around the camp today."

Interviewer:

This is back at—

William Haneke:

In Hoa Da.

Interviewer:

Hoa Da.

William Haneke:

Yeah. "I want you around the camp today. We got some things to catch up on." So the patrols went, you know, and I was not with them. And then he—

Interviewer:

How many Americans were in the camp at this point—you were down to— * {:.time}
2:13:41

William Haneke:

1.

Interviewer:

To 13, okay.

William Haneke:

Well, we got some replacements for the guys who'd been wounded, so we were back up to 13 at this point. But at any rate, he said, "Well, you know, we have some drums that have been—aviation fuel drums that have been rolled out." Now, what we did, we had some tainted drums of aviation fuel that we had acquired. And to that we would add some powdered fuel thickener to it, and you mix that up, and it's the consistency of tapioca pudding, and when that is set off, it's like liquid napalm—it sticks to everything and burns. So we set that up as compound defense, and you put it in various places around the perimeter of the camp, and you'd bury it in the ground at about a 45 degree angle, and you had two pounds of plastic explosive, you know, C4, on the bottom of it. And then you would take the detonating cord from that, wrap it around the top, which would blow the top off, and then you have a thermite grenade or white phosphorus grenade

that you attach to it as well. So in a sense, what would happen is the detonation cord would blow the top off, the two pounds of plastic explosive would blow the stuff out, and that thermite grenade or the white phosphorus grenade would ignite it as it came out, so youâ€™d have a wall of fire coming out at these people. And it justâ€•it was as much of a psychological deterrent as it was a physicalâ€•

Interviewer:

Was this sort of like closeâ€•obviously they were close-in defense, or what, last-ditchâ€•

William Haneke:

Close-in defenseâ€•last-ditch close-in defense.

Interviewer:

Last-ditch, mm-hmm.

William Haneke:

We called the stuff â€œfoo gas.â€ But at any rate, itâ€•we had used it once or twice up to that point. It was pretty effective. So weâ€™d had someâ€•we had a small prisoner of war detachment within our compound, and we didnâ€™t have any hard-core, you know, enemy types. We had some people that were just questionable about what they had been doing, and we kept them there to interrogate. But at any rate, the small group of POWs had wheeled, rolled these things out there, and there were two of them out in this area. And he said, â€œI want you to go out and roll this thing back.â€ And I said, â€œWell, you know, itâ€™s in sand. I canâ€™t do it by myself, â€•cause a 55 gallon drum full of aviation fuel is pretty darn heavy.â€ So I said, â€œWhy donâ€™t we get the same POWs that put it out there to roll it back?â€ No, he wasnâ€™t having any of that. So he justâ€• * {:.time} 2:15:59

Interviewer:

Whoâ€™s â€œhe?â€ This was yourâ€•

William Haneke:

My commanding officer. I wonâ€™t mention his name.

Interviewer:

Was this the same commanding officer that youâ€™d had a few months earlierâ€•

William Haneke:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Out of theâ€•

William Haneke:

Yep. So at any rate, heâ€•weâ€•he said, â€œWeâ€™re going out there right now.â€ He said, â€œIâ€™ll go with you.â€ And I said, â€œSir, you do not want to be in the same area with me if something happened. I just have a terrible sense that something major bad is going to happen, and if we both get wounded at the same time, then the camp will be without a commanding officer.â€ And, you know, thatâ€™s not good. So he said that, â€œNow,â€ he says, â€œenough of your delays.â€ He said, â€œI see what youâ€™re doingâ€•youâ€™re just trying to delay this whole process, so I wonâ€™t accept it and weâ€™re both going out together.â€ I said, â€œOkay.â€ So we went out there and started rolling this drum, and if I recall, Iâ€™m the main one doing the rolling, and heâ€™s pushing on my back, so heâ€™s not real enthusiastic in his support. So I wheeled this thing up to, oh, about eye level going over this little sandy hill, and at that point in timeâ€•and I didnâ€™t step on a mine, but there was one set up, and the enemy that was sitting out behind us staying a cactus set it off. And it blew me 80 feet through the air, and I ended up lying onâ€•landing on a barbed wire fence.

Interviewer:

So it was basically an IED.

William Haneke:

Well, you could call it an IED. We call it a command-detonated mineâ€•same thing. You know, it does the same degree of traumatic injury. And it blew him the other way, so clears throat excuse me. So basically, Iâ€™m hanging on the barbed wire fence, and I come to

shortly thereafter, and I know I have been hurt very badly. You know, I thought I was dying, I mean. And while I'm hanging on the barbed wire fence, I thought maybe somebody was coming out to try to find out where we were, 'cause we were outside of our camp, regular camp. And every few seconds, or every second or so, I kept feeling something tapping me on the left shoulder here. and I think, 'This is annoying. I need help. I need somebody to help me get off this fence, and I need to stand up so I can show my men which direction the attack is coming from.' I mean I didn't know if we were actually undergoing an attack or what had happened, 'cause I'd blacked out for a few seconds after the explosion. And as it turned out, that was the blood. The artery had been severed, as you can see on both sides. There was about a two-inch gap in the artery that was missing, and every time my heart beat, that was the blood, arterial blood coming out and bouncing off my shoulder. And now I'm going to get very spiritual on you, because a voice told me at that point in time, 'Turn your head to the left, and have faith, for I'll see you through this.' So I turned my head to the left, not realizing at the time that this was a multifaceted type of thing. It constricted the hole in the artery so at least the blood could continue, you know, the complete flow through the brain. It allowed because my jaw had been badly shattered, it allowed a lot of the debris, you know, bone particles, flesh, teeth, you know, everything that was blood that was in the mouth it allowed that to shift over to one side and drain out. So at least I was partially able to get air through there my frontal sinuses had been blown out, so I had I couldn't breathe through my nose, and but that allowed me, as much as my struggling was, to breathe. And I didn't realize, also, that my right leg had been blown off above the knee and was hanging by a tendon at that point in time. My left foot, half of that was gone it was, you know, literally three toes were gone, so I had well, no, two toes, and so I had the big toe and then the other two, and then it was split right down all the way to the ankle. And then I had shrapnel wounds over about 90% of my body. I had my left eye was blown out. I had a major skull defect where the skull had been shattered and the shrapnel had gone up there. And then my jaw, as I say, had been shattered. What else I was blind. Had a lot of shrapnel injuries in my chest and abdomen. Large chunks of flesh had been blown off the back of my leg and up in my buttocks area here and this hand had almost been blown off. And within a few minutes, the men, you know, the remaining men in the compound from my team came out and found us out there. And we had no stretchers in the camp because we had a MEDCAP program that had been out there, and they took all the stretchers out. So they took a door down took two doors down, one for me and one for my commanding officer. He was badly wounded, but everything he got had already passed through me, so he got all the shrapnel that went through me and, you know, did some damage to him, but he wasn't as badly hurt. So they carried us back in the camp, you know, struggling in the sand, and apparently dropped me on two occasions on the way over some of these little sand dunes, and got us back into camp. Because of the nature of the area where we were desert any time a little breeze came up, you had, you know, sand and grit, and I was struggling to breathe, you know, bad enough to begin with. And so they took a wet towel and put it over my face well I thought that was going to finish me off, 'cause I'm struggling enough for the you know, each breath.

Interviewer:

Were you conscious, or semi-conscious?

William Haneke:

In and out of it, you know, and which is surprising, because after the severe head injury I had, you know, everybody thought I would be totally unconscious, but, you know, I was conscious and alert enough to know what was going on around me. And within I mean it seemed like hours, but they say within 15 or 20 minutes of the time that the explosion actually took place and I was back in the camp, a helicopter arrived to pick me up and pick my boss up as well. And we were loaded onto the helicopter quickly. I was struggling so bad to breathe at that point in time that the medic and the medic had the most calming voice of anybody I just about have ever heard in my life. And he told me what he was going

to do. He said, "I'm going to cut a trachea." He said, "I have a pen knife that's about the best I can do." He said, "I'm going to cut a hole in your trachea so that you can breathe better." I don't recall I was conscious for that. I don't recall the pain of him inserting the knife, but boy, do I remember the relief when I was able to get air a lot more smoothly after that. * {:.time} 2:22:28

Interviewer:

This was your standard medic. This was your unit's medic.

William Haneke:

He was not my standard medic. My medic was down in Saigon that day taking care of pay problems, so he was the medic that was assigned to the helicopter. Well, some years later, my dad went to try and find all the people who had been involved in my care, and to thank them for all the good treatment they had given me. And he did—he located everybody, with the exception of the helicopter and this medic. There are only two places that chopper could've come from. And that day, all of their available choppers were dispatched somewhere way to the north and the west of my camp, because they—the regular American military units that were in heavy contact, and they, of course, were the first priority. Again, those of us who were advisors were rock-bottom priority, which, you know, you try to ignore when you go out there, but it's the reality. But at any rate, they flew me back. The first field hospital we stopped at was in our province headquarters in Phan Thiet, and to show how bad off is a guy who had been in the same company with me at West Point, good friend, saw me. Didn't recognize me, you know, and all my uniform had been blown off with the exception of my collar that showed I was a Captain in the infantry. The shirt was totally blown off, so no name. Dog tags had been blown away, so they weren't sure what my blood type was. So they bandaged my neck to try to stem the blood flow somewhat, and put two IVs in the back of this left leg, which was the only place they could find an intact artery to stick it in, you know. And gave me, you know, plasma. Called the Catholic medic, who didn't know what my religion was—he came out and gave me the last rites for the first time that day. And then they shipped me off to another hospital. But the helicopter stayed with me—that's the rare part about that, because helicopters usually didn't accompany you. They'd try to take you to the first aid station, dump you off, and then they're off doing whatever they're going to do. So we went to the next aid station, and by this time I'm totally unconscious—I don't know what's going on. And again, the same thing—they come out, bad head injury, can't help him, two more bottles of replacement blood plasma, and Catholic chaplain comes out and gives me the last rites once more—back on the chopper, off again. So this went on—you know, I think we went to four or five different field hospitals. And by the time we reached the third, they're giving me whole blood instead of blood plasma at this point in time. And by the time I reached the 24th—I mean and my boss apparently was filtered off to another hospital at that point in time, because his wounds were not as severe. So I ended up in the major surgical hospital. It was the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh in Vietnam that handled all the severe head wounds and, you know, severe injuries. But by the time I got in there, the triage nurse said there was no—I was not—there was no respiration and no blood pressure and no signs that I was alive. So they wheeled me behind a screen, and covered me over with a blanket—you know, covered my face over with a blanket. And again, the voice said, you know, "Give them a sign that you're alive." You know, "Let them know, and I'll see you through this." And

Interviewer:

And what did that voice sound like—can you describe that voice?

William Haneke:

The voice was the most calming, gentle voice I've ever heard—just incredible. And I know that there's nobody, you know, of this world with me at that point in time. So what I did was start—I didn't realize that when they cut the trach in me, well, that bypasses

the vocal chords, so any time you're getting, you know, trying to make sound, nothing. So I'm panicking, and I start thrashing around, and in so doing now, the IV tubes were still hooked in the back of my leg. And in this day and time, you know, unlike today where they've got the soft, flexible, vinyl bags, well, this is glass bottles. It was on a stainless steel IV pole, and as I'm thrashing around, I pull the whole thing down on the floor with a giant, you know, loud crash, and the nurse comes back in there accompanied by the surgeon. And he said, "Hey, this guy's got more life in him than we thought. Let's operate on him now." So they wheeled me over to the operating room, and I don't know you know, I was unconscious shortly after that. But there were a team of approximately 12 surgeons that were working on me for 15 hours. I was given 100 well over 150 pints of blood within 36 hours. Which is rare.

Interviewer:

150 pints of blood?

William Haneke:

Over that. Well, you got to understand, that's not the neck was not the only place I'm leaking blood. I got, you know, abdominal injuries and all kinds of stuff that, you know, it's like a sponge, where you're, you know, leaking stuff out everywhere you can think of. That was rare, because usually if there'd been a high casualty arrival, you take the most wounded and you put him off to the side, and if you've got time, you work on him. But you go after the guys that you have the greatest probability of being able to patch up and help them survive and get back into combat. Again, that's the reality of the military and a reality of life. So I consider myself to be very fortunate that I hit in a down time in their hospital. Secondly, the leg that I had was still hanging on it was connected by a tendon. And a thoracic surgeon well, the two thoracic surgeons that worked on me went in there and harvested the largest intact blood vessel. Whether it was an artery or a large vein, I don't know. But then they took it and they grafted it in my neck here, to, you know, take care of the two-inch section that was blown away. And of course, they knew if they didn't do something, I was going to die, and there were no guarantees that I would live based on the experimental techniques that they had tried. They'd only done one other of these before me, and of course, that was the bulk of the surgery they were doing that day was to try to be sure that they could stop the bleeding and, you know, reconnect that artery, and I'm because they did five more cases like mine after that, and after they rotated back to the States, after their tour, they published their work. And interestingly enough, it became the accepted practice for all the open heart procedures that go on, so everybody who's getting heart transplants, everybody who's getting, you know, bypass surgery, all these aneurysms you have an abdominal aneurysm or someplace in your leg that the blood vessel ruptures and they have to do a artery by-placed it's the same technique. I'm happy to say here I am, 42-1/2 years later. It's still a successful experiment and it's still working, so I feel very blessed, and, you know, thankful that they were willing to try these types of things. But I spent, you know, a lot of time being constantly debrided they'd have to come in and change the bandages frequently, and cut the dead flesh that they found, and debriding is a very uncomfortable thing.

Interviewer:

Where did you actually when did you actually wake up and sort of realize what had happened to you?

William Haneke:

Within about a day and a half, I think. I mean it's things were a little fuzzy at that point in time because they had me on a lot of medications to calm me to keep me they didn't want me moving at all. And what had happened was the first neurosurgeon I've had five or six neurosurgical procedures. The first one they did when they went in to clean out a lot of the stuff, the brain started to swell, so they had to close it up right away. So the next day, they went back to try and hopefully, you know, things had calmed down enough that they could do it, and it did. They went in and they

started cleaning out as much as they could get out of there. But I mean they had pieces of shrapnel. They had sand. They had—we had some grass or stuff that grew in the sand that, you know, was wedged in there. They had found a couple of beetles that ended up in there. I mean you name it, it ended up in my body in some way, shape, or form. And they did a much better job of cleaning out at that point in time. And then over the years—

Interviewer:

How long did you stay at the 24th Evac?

William Haneke:

I was there until three days before Thanksgiving, and then I was sent from there to—it may have been five days. And I was sent from there to the 249th General Hospital in Japan, in Camp Drake. And that’s a story in and of itself. But anyhow, just to get back, the surgical team or the nurses and everybody that worked were top-notch. You know, we got the best possible care, and they were not going to accept any kind of compromise. They wanted to make darn sure that whoever was presented to them ended up, you know, alive, and would be given a halfway decent chance to be rehabilitated and returned to productive life. And I mean I have since met all of the nurses and the doctors—and the strange thing about that is, I mean it’s like such a conveyor belt in one of these surgical hospitals, or one of these evac hospitals, that they don’t get to know the patients. You’d think that they would, but they don’t, because they’re not there that long, and so they stabilize—or treat, stabilize, and ship, treat, stabilize, and ship. And you know you are a bad case when they don’t remember your name, but boy, they sure remember your case. And you know, everybody that we talked to remembered the case very well, and I have had the privilege of talking to some of the finest neurosurgeons, some of the finest thoracic surgeons, you know, some of the best orthopedists, you know, that we could have in our time. Now, they’re not all top-known or top-names people within the medical field, but they have done, you know, tremendous, tremendous good for the people they’ve treated. So I am, you know, eternally thankful to them. But at any rate, from there I went to Japan, and—

Interviewer:

How long were you in Japan for?

William Haneke:

Less than a week, thank God, and I’ll tell you why. In Japan, because they didn’t have a special neurosurgical unit, they put me on a psychiatric unit. Now, I had not exhibited any signs of psychiatric problems. I was so bad off that I couldn’t really present myself, my competency, or whatever, which is something psychiatrists like to put you through. But because this is the closest thing they had to head treatment, then that’s where they put me. And we had a lot of people on that ward that were rather psychotic, and posed a threat to me and anybody else that, you know, if they would get out of their restraints from their beds, so it was an interesting time. The orthopedic surgeons came to see me, and I will just state this: that the doctors, the cutters, the surgeons, if you will, in this unit were not board-certified. They were all fresh out of medical school, and they didn’t have anybody on the staff there that was board-certified to supervise them, so they were getting all this experience in cutting on all these fresh meat coming in off the battlefield. And, you know, the more of these amputations that they could do, and the more of these, you know, exotic orthopedic procedures, the more experience that they could get under their belt, and the more acceptable they’d be to a surgical practice once they got out of the Army. And in my case, I was so bad off—I mean I had so many bad things going, over and above the limb and half a foot that I’d lost, that they scheduled me for surgery on the day after Thanksgiving. And they were going to take this arm, my right arm, off at the shoulder, and they were going to take my left leg off at the hip. And I mean I guess I could think of myself as being a single or, you know, slightly more than one limb gone, but take three of my limbs off, uh-uh. I just couldn’t—I couldn’t feature it. And fortunately, at this point in time, my sister was in the Army as well, and stationed in Japan. And I had a

good friend who I was—he was a groomsman in my wedding, and he was class of ’67 from West Point—who was over there being treated for wounds he had just received. But he was on the regular orthopedic ward and seemed to be doing fairly well. And I told him, I said, “Look, get in touch with my dad—he my dad was retired from the military, but lived in Washington at that point in time—and get him to get in touch with somebody.” One of his classmates was the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army at that point in time. And I said, “And get me out of here, because they’re getting ready to carve me up to a point where I probably won’t survive.” So they did. They called my dad, and he did some inquiring to find out what was on the slate for me, and then went to talk to his classmate, General Bruce Palmer. And so the doctors came in, surgical team came in the day after Thanksgiving with the expectation that they were going to do all this exotic surgery on me, and the next thing I know, this guy is cussing a blue streak. I’m blind, so I can’t see who it is, but one of the surgeons, and they’re picking up my bed at the bottom and slamming it down on the floor. And he said, “You think you’re so smart, and you’ve fooled us—well, you’re not going to get away with it. We’ll get even with you.” And I had no idea what they’re talking about. Well, apparently there was a cablegram that was sent by General Palmer’s office, telling them not to do any surgery on me unless it was an absolute lifesaving emergency. And to get me on the next available plane back to Walter Reed, and to assign a competent surgeon to accompany me on the entire flight, so on that basis, later on that day or the next morning they shipped me out from Japan to Walter Reed, and by way of Alaska. And the sad thing was that when we reached Alaska—and of course, for me that was a long trip at that point in time—I started having some problems because I had a lot of shrapnel in me. And the windpipe was blocked, and the—

Interviewer:

And you’re still trached, right?

William Haneke:

I’m still trached, oh yeah, and I mean I’m so bad off I can’t even wear pajamas. I mean I got so many sutures—I had probably the better part of 3 to 500 wire sutures in my head and neck, and I had, you know, a lot of these wire sutures elsewhere. They did that, you know—it sounds pretty grotesque, but they did that because the wire sutures don’t leave the scarring, you know, the railroad tracks you see with the gut sutures that a lot of people get. And they figured that that would, you know, give me a better chance of healing and not being as disfigured by this whole process. But at any rate, so the flight nurse came over, and she said, “Where’s that doctor that’s supposed to be assigned to you?” Well, I had no idea. He’d gone in the terminal to make a call to his girlfriend back in Washington. He was arranging a liaison back there when he got back. So at any rate, they couldn’t find him, so the nurse orders one of her girls—cause I’m turning purple at this point in time. I’m not getting any air through there. They bring a suture removal tray up there that’s got these long, you know, forceps on there, and she’s probing around down there, and finally is able to get the thing around the shrapnel and pull it up, and it’s about the size of a quarter. And it was just lodged, you know, in there with a couple of sharp points that wouldn’t let it get through. She forced it through and brought it out. And so I was able to start breathing once again, and I guess she went back down and found another one that was close by, and she said, “I sure wish this guy had been up here to do this.” She said, “I’ve done some of this before, but I’m really not sanctioned for it,” you know. But I’m forever indebted to her. So anyhow, when they brought the people back on the plane, she gave him a lecture, and she said, “You will sit right next to him and you will not move from his side until you get him back to, you know, Andrews Air Force Base and Walter Reed Army Hospital.” So he stayed there the whole time, and thank God I didn’t need his services. But then when we got back to Walter Reed, or to Andrews, they’re offloading everybody here that either they’re going to Bethesda or they’re going to Walter Reed. And they’re getting ready to close the rear ramp, and I haven’t been moved,

so thereâ€™s two patients, one above me and one below me, and I called outâ€•â€™cause I remembered the guyâ€™s name up above, so I, you know, stuck my finger in my trach and said, you know, â€œSergeant,â€ whatever his name was, â€œcan you tell the flight nurse that Iâ€™m supposed to get off here?â€ So he called her, you know, real loud, and then she came up and said, â€œWhatâ€™s the problem?â€ He said, â€œWell, Captain whatever his name is is supposed to be offloaded here.â€ She said, â€œI thought that the doctor was supposed to be doing that.â€ And he said, â€œWell, heâ€™s not around.â€ So come to find out, heâ€™d taken off to go meet his girlfriend, so they unloaded me, and there wasâ€•fortunately, there was one ambulance that was there that was, you know, earmarked for me. So they put me in the ambulance and sent me over to Walter Reed, and as soon as I got back there, my dad said, â€œWhereâ€™s the surgeon thatâ€™s supposed to be with you?â€ I said, â€œI donâ€™t know. He left. I didnâ€™t see him after the flight landed.â€ So apparently he got in touch with General Palmer, and General Palmer dispatched the military police all over the district of Washington till they found this guy, literally dragging him out of bed with his girlfriend. And he is, you know, dragged in front of the Vice Chief of Staff of the Armyâ€™s desk to do some powerful â€œâ€™plain inâ€™â€™, you know. And he didnâ€™t have any good excuse for it, so General Palmer said, he said, â€œIâ€™m going to do you a favor.â€ He said, â€œI can press charges and I can take your medical license from you.â€ He said, â€œBut Iâ€™m going to take it easy on you. Iâ€™m going to send you to the northernmost field hospital in Vietnam.â€ Now keep in mind this guyâ€™d been in Japan, not in Vietnam yet. And he said, â€œAnd youâ€™re going to have a year tour.â€ He said, â€œIf I feel lenient, weâ€™ll let you back after a year. If not, we may extend that tour.â€ He said, â€œYou screw up in the slightest,â€ he said, â€œyou will not only lose your medical license, but youâ€™ll be in the stockade.â€ And he said, â€œNow, are there any questions, or do you have a defense that you want to put forth?â€ â€œNo sir. No sir.â€ So they apparently took him out, and the MPs escorted him all the way to Vietnam and to his assignment, so that he wouldnâ€™t, you know, have other places to go, so at any rate.

Interviewer:

I wonder if he ran into, who is it, the District Captain Mann while heâ€™

William Haneke:

Yeah, exactly. I mean itâ€™the good Lord works in strange ways, and I think, you know, this is one incident of that. But when I got back to Walter Reed, they put me on the orthopedic ward there, which was great. And I had a lot of surgery at that point, and I mean I had multiple skin grafts, andâ€™

Interviewer:

Well, you told me that you were in the hospital for four years.

William Haneke:

Off and onâ€™more on than off. Theâ€™it took that long in order to get all these medical problems taken care of, and the rehabilitation completed. Now, you got to understand, when I first came back from Vietnam with my wounds, I was being seen on 15 different medical services at the time, you know. And I mean just all the specialty services that the human body can go through. And I would, you know, kind of check these off, one by one, as we completed the treatment in one area and get on to bigger and better things. But you know, I had several hundred surgical procedures, and more than Iâ€™d care to remember. As I said, Iâ€™ve had actually six neurosurgical procedures over the timeâ€™they had to go in and clean out some more stuff on the third. The fourth, they went in there with the idea of putting a cranioplasty or cranioplastic plate up there. Discovered that with all these others that there was a hole in the frontal sinuses that shouldâ€™ve been plugged with a muscle plug to keep, you know, the bacteria from the nasal passage from goingâ€™â€™cause I had no sinuses to block that from going straight to the brain. So they took a plug of muscle up in here and wedged it in the back of the sinuses, and along the way I got a very bad hospital-based infection after that fourth one, and my head got swollen up to probably twice its

normal size. And it bought me three months in a neurosurgical intensive care unit at Walter Reed, but.

Interviewer:

And where was your wife through all of this, â€™cause you were married at the time. You got married when you went overseas.

William Haneke:

I was married to her. She was with me. She was very supportive, and you know, particularly for the better part of the first two years, I was unable to really interact underâ€™I was blind, you know, for threeâ€™well, almost four years, so I was unable to see what was going on, and unable to adequately speak on my defense or answer the hard questions that the doctors and the nurses needed to ask. So she pretty much was my proxy, and was at my bedside all the time. And the nice thing about that is that she was well-informed and had a good rapport with the medical staff there in the hospital, so they kept her informed. Which early on, she developed a technique which I find to be very effective. You know, you put your list of questions together, you know, and then when the doctor comes inâ€™because itâ€™s hard to pin him down on when heâ€™s going to be there or how long heâ€™s going to stayâ€™then you block his way. You stand in the doorway and you ask the questions and make sure you get good, understandable answers before you let him out of the room, and that proved pretty effective.

Interviewer:

Thereâ€™s a picture in your book of I guess it was your retirement ceremony. Your mom is there, your dad is there, your wife is there, youâ€™re dressed up, youâ€™re on crutches. I guess youâ€™d had some reconstructive surgery at that point.

William Haneke:

I had, but I hadnâ€™t gotten my cranioplasty in yet â€™cause you can see the indentation. And also I had what they call a conformer, which is a clear plastic thing in here in place of the eye, and they put that in there simply to keep the eye cavity from growing together. So they keep it there until I can be fitted with a genuine artificial eye.

Interviewer:

When was that ceremony?

William Haneke:

That was in May of 1969â€™May of â€™69.

Interviewer:

So actually only about seven or eight monthsâ€™

William Haneke:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

After your wound.

William Haneke:

Thatâ€™s correct. I was still an active patient over at McGuire at the time, so I mean I had been able to get out on a one-weekend pass, and, you know. I guess that I was on my second weekend pass when they scheduled the ceremony for this, so that I could get home and put a uniform on. And as I say, I was blind at that point in time, so it was, you knowâ€™I needed a lot of help to get over the doorway and, you know. Of course, I enjoyed the fact of being home for the first time that I could eat my motherâ€™s cooking instead of that dreadful hospital food.

Interviewer:

What was going through your mind when that picture is taken, â€™cause actuallyâ€™this is a strange thing to say, but you look happy in that pictureâ€™is that a strange thing to say?

William Haneke:

Well, let me explain a little something about the conditions under which I was wounded.

You like to think if youâ€™ve got to go through the suffering of being wounded, at least it was by enemy action and not your own negligence or stupidity, or something that couldâ€™ve been avoided that your own men wouldâ€™ve done. And having been out in

that minefield where we were, trying to roll that drum—now, we had cleared the times away before—I mean the active mines that had been there. You know, who knows if there might be one that you didn't get? And I was always worried that this massive explosion that just, you know, blew me all to kingdom come, might've been friendly forces, so that—

Interviewer:

Friendly fire.

William Haneke:

Friendly fire, so that I'd have nothing to show for, you know, all of the problems that I'd gone through. Well, by this time—by the day of my retirement, they had been able to verify that this was all enemy, because what the enemy had done is policed up several naval five inch artillery shells. You know, the destroyers that were supporting us off the coast fired inland, and they had, you know, faulty detonators, so they didn't blow up. So the resourceful, you know, Vietcong would police this up, change the detonators, and add some bells and whistles to it, and set them up as mines or that they would set off, you know, from behind a little hiding spot. This particular weapon, yes, it was a Naval five inch artillery shell, but what they had done is they had taped some beer cans or Coke cans that they'd been able to get that were filled with rusty nails, broken glass, you know, anything that would mutilate the human body. And then the final detail that they did was they put human feces all over it. And of course, as I said, the Vietnamese were ill with something all the time, so it was very contaminated human excrement that they smeared all over this weapon. And that's literally what created a problem—it literally took them three and a half years to get the infection in my body under control, and I was being given massive doses of penicillin and two other antibiotics every day. So that's kind of the joys of this type of thing, so I guess that day what I was thinking is that it was a relief that it was, you know, looked upon as being a combat injury from the enemy, not my own men, and not through some negligence of our camp. And plus the fact that I was—my family was there with me. I think that helped make me feel better. But, you know, again, it was within a couple days I was going back in for another operation, so, you know, it was kind of a treadmill. Plus I had a day away from the hospital food and, you know, all the rigors of the schedule I had to go through.

Interviewer:

Did you—you've been through a lot, putting it mildly. Did you ever feel the urge, you know, I can't go, you know—did you ever think you weren't going to make it?

William Haneke:

Oh, yeah. For the better part of a year and a half, I knew that I had the choice. It was the choice was all mine—that I could choose to live or die, and that's how critical I was. So I knew I was hurt bad, and that the injuries—it would be no problem at all to just give up and die. But that's not my motivation. I mean I felt all along that the enemy got my body, but I wasn't going to let them get my mind, and I wasn't going to let them get my free will or, you know. And I felt I would've been cheating not only myself—I'd be cheating my family, and I'd be cheating, well, all the training I had through the military and at West Point—that I would not be, you know, able to completely fulfill my destiny as far as that's concerned. So it wasn't part of my make-up to just give up and die. The pain that I suffered, the difficulties that I went through, I know that there were a number of times when I went into surgery for them to stop the bleeding somewhere, or for then to resolve breathing problems, or, you know, a whole host of things, so. But I just—and I know I was declared dead at least five times within the first forty-eight hours, so it just wasn't in the cards, thank God.

Interviewer:

Were you particularly religious before this—

William Haneke:

I had a basic level of, you know, spiritual life. I mean I was one of the ones that didn't

regret going to chapel every Sunday. I was raised in a home where we went to, you know, Sunday School every Sunday. I had a lot of respect for, you know, what the power of religion could do. It helped me get through some very trying times as a cadet. And particularly when I was academically deficient and having to, you know, go through all of the extra exams and, you know attention to the academic departments, some of which I will not mention politely. But, you know, overall, I came through it in good shape, and when you get into combat, I tell you what, there are no—and I say this in all earnestness and all truth. There are no atheists on the battlefield. You know, there are a lot of guys that speak big, and, you know, they do all kinds of sinful things, or all kinds of antisocial types of things when they're, you know, far away from the battlefield. But boy, I tell you what, when you get out there and life is not looking too stable or too guaranteed, and you got bullets flying and people dying around you, there are a lot of prayers that are said very quickly. And that's one of the things that I felt helped me get through some tough times out in combat.

Interviewer:

And where do you think that voice that came—where do you think that voice came from that spoke to you those two times?

William Haneke:

Oh, I have every confidence it was the Lord Jesus. I have every confidence, because it was not—it didn't appear to me to be an errand-runner, like an angel might be. I mean I don't have a full understanding of all aspects of, you know, the hereafter, but it was a type of thing that was said with authority—gentleness and authority. And somebody who'd have the ability to carry out what it was being said, and it related—I mean I related to it very quickly, because I mean behind the scenes, right after I was wounded, hanging on the fence, bleeding to death rapidly, can't see, you know. Knowing that life is slipping through, you know, very, very quickly, I said one prayer. I will say this. I said one, and very brief, prayer, but it couldn't have been any more sincere, and it was, "Oh God, help me." And it was right after that that the voice came and talked to me, and I have every confidence that, you know, prayers are heard and are answered. And, you know, you may not get everything you want when you want it, but, you know, there are some times when it helps. It really does.

Interviewer:

So you'd four years of hospitalization, but you also got your sight back through all this. You were not supposed to get your sight back, I take it.

William Haneke:

No, I wasn't. They predicted I would never—cause my left eye was blown out at the time I was wounded. And I took, they think, at least six pieces of shrapnel through the other eye. Well, as it turned out—and I had very little to no light perception for the better part of that time. And during the healing process, there was a traumatic cataract that had built up behind the lens on my remaining eye, so they decided they were going to do some surgery just simply to remove that cataract, or that calcium deposit was behind. They couldn't remove the cataract, cause they didn't know where all the points of adhesion were. And the problem with a cataract is if you don't get all the points of adhesion and you take it off, you can rip the retina off the back. Because these little points are like strings, they call them—they go all the way back to the retina. And if you do that, you know, once a retina's gone, you're irreversibly blind for the rest of your life. But this time, they knew there were—they figured there were four points of adhesion, and they could only locate three of them, so it was at that point in time that they went in to simply get the calcium deposit off the back of the lens, and the cataract peeled back, revealing all the points of adhesion. So they clipped them and took them off, and that day, because of my frail medical situation, it was not an outpatient procedure. They gave me a general anesthesia and bandaged me up and sandbagged my head for two days, you know, so I wouldn't move and jeopardize that. And the doctor came in the morning of the second day, I guess it was, and he un-bandaged it, and he says—he sat me up on the edge of the

bed. He said, "Tell me what you see." And I said, "Well, everything's very fuzzy." Well, which it would be with a lens gone, "but I'm getting light perception. I see a blurry."

Interviewer:

You had no light perception before.

William Haneke:

No.

Interviewer:

Okay.

William Haneke:

I says, "There's a blurry white glob or mass standing in front of me, and then over to the side and to the top there's a dark green color, and then over to the right, there's a dark green color and there's something that was light blue in color just standing over there." So all of a sudden he got very quiet and then very excited. He said, "Stay where you are. Don't move. I'll be right back." So he ran out and he got one of these, you know, apparatus that has lenses that you can adjust in there and put it on me, and he said, "Now what do you see?" I said, "It's getting a little clearer, but it's not" so he made two or three adjustments, and then all of a sudden I could see very clearly. And he said, "Now tell me what you see." And I said, "Well, I can see you're dressed. You have gray hair. You're dressed in a white coat. Your name is Dr. Gearets." It was printed in red. And I said, "The green that I saw is the walls in the background, and the light blue I see standing over here is my wife." I hadn't seen her in a couple years, and it was just, you know, a real blessing that that happened. And it's the eyesight's been there ever since, so.

Interviewer:

What did you do after leaving the Army and eventually getting, you know, your health back?

William Haneke:

Well, I struggled with that, because I fought. I went to temporary disability retirement for two years, "cause you know, I had always wanted a career in the Army. And I felt well, if I can't serve as a, you know, an active officer in the combat arms, then there are always a lot of other jobs that I can take on as a in a support field, or as a civilian employee. And was told in all cases when I applied, "No, you're too badly you're too far gone. We can't help you, can't allow you to continue on." And finally one guy was very honest with me. He said, "You'd be a bad advertisement for the cadets or for the soldiers wanting to come in the service." That hurt that comment hurt, but at least I mean I can accept it. So I decided well, I spend enough time around the medical field with being put back together again, and I've learned a fair amount about that. Why don't I get a degree in hospital administration? So I went to the Virginia Commonwealth University/Medical College of Virginia, and was admitted and got my degree in health care administration, my master's, in 1975. Started that process off, you know, going to classes originally being blind, and, you know, there was some question by the VA, "Are you capable of doing graduate-level work? You know, you had such a bad academic record at West Point." And then fortunately I had people that came to my rescue and said, "Look, you've got to understand that an education at West Point is far above what your average university, you know, degree. I mean with all of the academic requirements, with the military requirements, and with the harassment you get from, you know, the officers and the cadets, people go through a lot in order to get through here. I'm not saying it's better than anyplace else, but at least you've got to take that into consideration. So I got my degree in health care administration, did very well, and then spent the next 28 to 30 years working in the health care field in a variety of different positions.

Interviewer:

In the D.C. area, or?

William Haneke:

In southern Virginia. My first job was after I got my degree, I was the Assistant Director of the Medical College of Virginia Hospital, which is 1,058-bed hospital. It's a large medical teaching institution which is aligned with the McGuire Veterans Hospital down there as well, where I spent all this time being put back together again. And I had probably almost 2,000 employees that were working for me at that point in time, and I had 15 major medical departments that were reporting to me, or that I was the administrator in charge of, and it was a great learning experience. I spent eight years there, and one of the things they gave me was the emergency rooms, which was a very complex mess when I took it over. We had eight different emergency rooms in eight different buildings, so we brought everything together in one area and set up a common triage center, so the patients had only one place to go. And then radiating out from that were the, you know, specialty treatment areas. So I learned a lot from my, you know, personal medical experience, and was able to translate that into a career in health care administration.

Interviewer:

And you also have, what, four kids, too, right?

William Haneke:

I have four kids, yes.

Interviewer:

All born after Vietnam?

William Haneke:

All born after Vietnam, yep.

Interviewer:

And you're also involved with the Families of the Wounded Fund. What is that?

William Haneke:

That is an effort. I've always felt that, you know, the good Lord spared me for some main purpose. And, you know, you struggle over the years, saying, "What was I meant to do?" You know, yeah, I'm enjoying health care administration and doing this and doing that, and there was a number of major projects that I was involved in that was able to make a great difference from. But I never felt satisfied that that was really what I was being saved to do. Well, 911 came, and the War on Terrorism began, and we started seeing casualties coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq, and them being transferred to McGuire Veterans Hospital in Richmond. And one of the things that we noted was that there was no organized unit that they reported to, and nobody doing anything for the families. Well, I have vivid recollections of the fact, with all the time I spent at Walter Reed for some of my serious surgeries, and all the time that my family had to go up and down Shirley Highway, you know, to get to Walter Reed and spend time with me, that they spent a lot of money in transportation and food and staying overnight, you know, in where a motel, wherever they could find a room. And of course, in addition to that they still had their, you know, requirements or their expenditures for where they lived full-time. So we decided that then there was a group of several veterans, and we used to get together every now and then that discovered that these patients were now suddenly showing up at McGuire. And their families were coming in from all over the United States to spend time with them as caregivers or whatever. And I mean I also learned that by having your family with you when you've been severely wounded is a major, major positive factor, because it helps you emotionally and it helps you, you know, in your resolve to try to get treated and recover and rehabilitated. So at any rate, we believe firmly in the fact that, you know, the families were a real asset. So we started talking to some of the doctors and the people over there, and about that time, they formed something called the Polytrauma Unit, and Polytrauma Unit was an organized a permanent staff of doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers, pastoral counselors, you know, the full medical team, that were all together specializing in treating only these patients. And so we got permission to come over there and start talking to these patients, and, you know, we realized we'd better go out there and earn some

money to put our money where our mouth was. Cause we originally started out, you know, each of us taking about \$25.00 out of our own pocket and giving it to the family, and maybe our wife would bake a pizza or a batch of cookies and we'd take it over there. So we got very serious about it, and started speaking to everybody within the central Virginia area that would listen to us. I mean we went to churches, we went to schools, we went to civic organizations. And just about anybody that would listen to us, we talked to. And over a period of time we started getting some halfway-decent donations, and we became registered with the state of Virginia as a charitable organization, and within six months we got our 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS. And since that time we have treated or helped out with over 350 families, and you know, helped their families out a great deal. The patients we get typically had severe head injuries, but many of them had, you know, more sensitive injuries like, you know, amputees. We've had some that are triple amputees, you know, and a couple of sad cases that were missing not only one leg above the knee, but the other one was gone up at the hip. So I'm kind of the poster child. I go now and I call on every one of these patients and families and basically thank the service member for their service, and you know, just talk to them a little bit and help them to relax and realize that there are people out there that support them and want to help them. And then realizing that the family members are coming from all over we've had them from every state in the United States, plus the territories. And they, for the most part, have to give up employment back home, so half the family income is gone before they get here, and typically, also, that they have spent weeks or months up at Walter Reed or Bethesda now it's all one, because they closed Walter Reed down with them while they're going through the, you know, immediate severe surgery that they have to have. And so by the time they reach Richmond, they're in pretty bad financial form. So we now give a \$6,000.00 check per family, and of all those people that we have helped, I have never seen anybody misspend them. They are all, you know, incredibly grateful for our assistance. Unlike the Semper Fi fund, which helps only Marines, we help anybody from any of the services that are involved in combat, or either, you know, combat-wounded or injured in support of combat. And you know, I told that this is what I meant to do, and this is what the good Lord intends for me to continue on with, so.

Interviewer:

A few last questions, just to wrap up. We talked a little bit about this earlier, but what advice would you give for the rest of us. I mean we talked about this earlier, that sometimes people get uncomfortable around people who've been severely wounded, like yourself either don't know what to say, don't know you know. What advice?

William Haneke:

The advice is very simple. The advice is

Interviewer:

People tend to sometimes look away or try to ignore

William Haneke:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

What's happened to people.

William Haneke:

You can't ignore that type of thing. You know, you don't want to take them on in a militant fashion. What you have to do is you have to overpower them with reason and with perhaps some compassion. You know, I don't play the sympathy card. I never have, never will. But what you have to make them realize is that I'm the same person inside as I was before I was wounded, you know. Bill Haneke then is the same Bill Haneke that's in here right now, and I still have dreams, I still have plans, I still have things. You know, I have to plan around my disabilities. I mean it takes me a little longer to get places, or to get around, you know, things like a lot of stairs or, you know, different things, just

simply because I'm not able to handle all that any more. But that doesn't mean that I can't be a contributing member of society. I mean I was rehabilitated fully, you know, as well as they could do. I became independent, you know, able to go out and raise a family, and they have turned out very well. And I have now a grandfather with twelve grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, so which I love very dearly. But the other thing is that you convince them that, also, that you intellectually are there as well, and don't let them sell you short on things, because I tell you, I can give you rhyme and verse on a lot of problems I had in trying to apply for aid to the Veterans Administration just for the normal benefits I'm supposed to have. You know, where they try to route you into something that they're comfortable with, but it may not be a field that you would necessarily want to be in. And a lot of times they question your ability to do graduate-level work, or, you know, advanced work in whether it's vocational training or academic training or whatever it happens to be. And you have to prove them that they're wrong, you know, and show them that you're capable of doing it, and you're motivated to do that, and you will make, you know, a very good person in that profession. So I think it's a matter of, you know, trying to get people so they're not feeling uncomfortable around you. Yeah, I know when I first came back from Vietnam, there weren't a lot of people that clustered around, but my parents would take me to church every Sunday, or my wife would take me to church every Sunday, and slowly but surely we'd start building a rapport with people. They were a little more comfortable talking to me, and

Interviewer:

I guess some people only see the injuries. I guess that's the problem.

William Haneke:

That's well, that's their problem. And I think a lot of that may be due to the World War II generation and before, where they were trained by their parents, you know, if somebody has got a severe problem, you know, it's don't look at them. Don't look at them. You don't want to bring attention to them. But I mean it's a simple thing, like if you see somebody approaching a door, if they're an amputee, they're in a wheelchair, they're struggling with crutches, something like that, offer to help them through the door. And if they say, "No thanks, I can do it on my own," let them do it on their own. You know, give them credit, and don't try to force the door open on them and force them through the door. You know, there are those people out there that will do that type of stuff, too, so you have to, you know, just kind of be willing to work with them. If they say they need help, they need help, you know, and perhaps you could help them that way, and but I mean exchange pleasantries with them. "Have a great day," or "Good morning," or "It's good to see you," or, you know, because they're the same people that all able-bodied people are out there as well.

Interviewer:

How do you think Vietnam changed you inside?

William Haneke:

Well, the severe wounds I experienced certainly got my attention, you know. It's and learning patience, that's one thing, you know. When you're in a long-term treatment and rehabilitation process, you know, if you're a Type A person, you aren't going to survive unless you learn an infinite amount of patience. I remember when they told me "How long is it going to be before I recover and can get back to a normal life?" Cause I mean prior to that, I'd suffered a couple knee injuries, and you know, and had some minor injuries, and within a couple weeks or a couple months I was back, you know, fit as a fiddle and ready to go again. But they started off telling me, well, you know, a year's going to be at least a year. And, you know, after a while, you can't change that, so you have to go back and say, "Well, okay, I'll just take it one day at a time, and I'll make the most of every day that I possibly can." So it's made me a better-rounded person as a result of that. I establish goals more easily now than I did before, and I try to work through a plan to get to those goals. And if I can't go this way, then I'll figure out a way to back off and maybe head around another way, if

itâ€™s something I feel is right for me or my family. I donâ€™t know if I answered that question or not.

Interviewer:

No, I think you didâ€•I think you did. Were you a Type A person before youâ€•

William Haneke:

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Infantry? Having to deal with a lot of troops, you know, particularly in the draft age, when, you know, youâ€™re in a situation where these guys donâ€™t all want to go in the same direction? Oh, you had to get a little forceful at times to convince them that they all wanted to go in the same direction with you.

Interviewer:

I think your story you told about how youâ€•the Vietnamese militiaman who was shooting at you, how you got his attention, probably qualifies you for Type A.

William Haneke:

I didnâ€™t know that day whether I was going to get court-martialed, or, you know, at least be successful in trying to get that to his attention, getting staff, but boy, it sure got all their attention.

Interviewer:

My last question is about your bookâ€”

William Haneke:

Okay.

Interviewer:

Which I should mention here is available on Amazon.com, right?

William Haneke:

Laughs

Interviewer:

You get a plug.

William Haneke:

Thank you for the shameless plug.

Interviewer:

Okay, a plugâ€•we provide lots of shameless plugs. But you titled your book Trust Not.

What does that title refer to?

William Haneke:

That is a easy explanation. When I first reported in in Vietnamâ€•when I first reported into Kepler Compound, which is where all the advisors were funneled through. One of my classmates and friends, and weâ€™d been in the same companyâ€•John Burgerâ€•had been an advisor for a year in Vietnam, and was just turning in his equipment as he was getting ready to, you know, travel home. And I went over and I got John on the side. I said, â€œJohn, you know, Iâ€™m getting ready to, you know, go into the same situation or the same type of situation youâ€™re just leaving. Do you have any advice that would help me?â€ And he said, â€œTrust not a soul. Donâ€™t trust anybody.â€ I said, â€œAre you talking about the Vietnamese?â€ He said, â€œNo, Iâ€™m talking about Vietnamese, Americans, everybody.â€ He said, â€œIn thatâ€•in the advisory side of the house,â€ he said, â€œyouâ€™ve got a lot of people who are not telling you the whole truth. And when your life and your men, the life of your men depend on it, you need somebody whoâ€™s going to be very candid and very truthful. So donâ€™t take things on face value, and check them out thoroughly.â€ So that was kind of the basis of the â€œtrust notâ€ attitude that I developed over a period of time. But I figure it suited what Iâ€™m trying to say in the book, and the only person I did trust was the good Lord.

Interviewer:

Well, on that note, thank you very much for talking with me today.

William Haneke:

All right. My pleasure. Thank you. End of Audio