

DANIEL FLANAGAN: USN YANKEE ST. "OP. BABYLIFT" AGENT ORANGE

Dan: I'm Dan Flanagan and I had two tours on the Coral Sea, CBA43, home port in San Francisco right after I graduated from the Naval Academy. We did those two tours up in the Tonkin Gulf at what was called Yankee Station, and I do recall on one or two occasions going down south off Saigon to Dixie station. A couple years later, I went to Vietnam proper, where I served on the coastal surveillance force. My job was to coordinate the turnover of the bases up and down the coast, Tanang, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Cam Ranh, Vung Tao, Cantor, and so I traveled a lot. I'd come back and say in Cam Ranh, but my was to go around, see what was going on. There was no Vietnamese Navy so we had to create one.

We drafted people from the army and put up a naval academy at Nha Trang, and then I would fly into Saigon periodically and give my reports to Admiral Zumwalt. My home town of San Francisco, I grew up right over by the Presidio. It's a sea port city and it was a great navy town. As a young man, you'd see those ships going out to sea, et cetera, so there was that romance if you will. When I graduated from high school, St. Ignatius in San Francisco, the Naval Academy was very attractive to me. I was accepted and I went there and ...

Producer: Give me what years these were.

Dan: Sure. I graduated in 1965 from the Naval Academy. That was, of course, the Vietnam war, as it were ... in '60- '62 when I was first at the Naval Academy, the war at that point in time was still a positive. It didn't become a negative, so to speak, until maybe '67, '68, '69. I don't know exactly what that turning point was but American public opinion certainly turned and so when I graduated from the Naval Academy in '65, Roger Staubach was in our class. He served in Vietnam. A lot of stories, a lot of class mates who served in Vietnam. I was the only one to go on an aircraft carrier. I wanted to be home ported in San Francisco which had a lot to do with my selection.

It turned out to be great because there were 4000 officers and enlisted on the Coral Sea. It was like a small city and you really saw a lot. I'll never forget going out, watching air ops, watching them come in, and being out there with the LSO as they were coming in. I made a lot of friends in the air wing, so as they were flying we'd have to turn the ship. Here it was, built many years back, but the Coral Sea, to launch the aircraft we'd have to turn into the wind, get up to 35 knots, and often times there wasn't any wind at all out there. They were not nukes. It was ... I was the officer of the deck. I qualified after about a year and a half as a jg. It's quite an experience to be up there.

On an aircraft carrier, when the planes are coming in, you can go out on the aft part of the carrier and you can watch as they are coming in and being guided in, and do they have the ball, which is the phrase. The other aviation officers that are out there will say cut it, and you go down and the tail part catches the wire. I was a surface. I was not an aviator, but I'd go out there at night and watch that. These guys were coming back from their missions over Hanoi or Haiphong, and it was really tremendously impressive.

Turning into the wind like that for both launch and recovery was really something. I would get the command all engines ahead, and it would take about a half an hour by the time we started this whole assemblage before we were ready to go. I felt very fortunate to have seen that the destroyers, which were what most Naval Academy grads were expected to go on, the tin cans, they were following us in plane guard. Subsequently I went on the John Paul Jones, and I was doing plane guard and I was probably the only one who really understood what the aircraft carrier was doing. In any event, the Yankee Station was a very interesting place.

There were probably three carriers up there at a time, and it would be Coral Sea, Midway, Oriskany, and then we would be rotating them, the Yorktown, and when somebody was coming off the line, as they would say, the chances are you were going over to the Philippines to Subic Bay and you would pull in at QB point, which was a fairly large naval station there across the bay from Subic. It was a huge facility and I'll never forget reporting on the Coral Sea. I was just out of the Naval Academy and these guys had been up on the line in Yankee Station for nine months and boy they came. I was up at the BOQ, Bachelor's Office Quarters. I went over to the officer's club. These guys came in and they tore the place apart.

It was really something, and I made a lot of friends that very day that I still have today. That's how I got to know them when we were out. Within about two weeks we were back out on the line and the whole pace resumed, and I felt like I was part of it because I had met them all ahead of time.

Producer: Was it like twelve hours on, twelve hours off?

Dan: Good question. It was something like that. The launch, and they'd be gone for an hour and a half, two hours, and then you'd be waiting for them. You had to have that speed again for recovery. They had to come in like that. Then, you went downwind. You relaxed. Guys caught ... a lot of the flights were at night. Launching at 7:00 or something like that at night, but maybe midnight everything was ... then you went downwind. The different carriers took turns doing this. It was going on all the time. There were a lot of ships out there as support, as defending the carriers, you had a lot of that. You had underway replenishment's.

There's nothing like that when you have an oilier on one side and a supply ship on the other and you're going along and bringing on fuel and what not.

That's the lifeblood of the carrier when you're out there for months and months at a time.

Producer: You mentioned having to get 30 knots into the wind. Didn't they have catapult systems that threw those planes off the end?

Dan: They sure did, and that 35 was just ... they needed that extra catapult juice to really do it. Interesting enough I spent a lot of times a few years back on the new aircraft carrier coming out, the Gerald Ford, will not have the steam catapults. That's World War Two technology. They'll be using electric motors, or mag-lev as it's called, and this will be the first carrier that will have electric motors because they have the nuclear generation and they have excess electricity.

In those days, sure, everything was steam and it was really thrilling to watch them take off. I never, in all those ... I'm sure I saw hundreds and hundreds of launches, if not more, and fortuitously nothing bad ever happened but once in a while it would. Those guys were real heroes taking off like that.

Producer: Because the most dangerous part was the take off and the landing?

Dan: Yeah, absolutely. The take off was like that. The landing, of course, as I said a lot of this was at night, and coming in and catching the meatball, as I recall, was really tricky and it's just so dark out there. The way it worked is coming back from Hanoi - Haiphong it's like an airport and the different planes rotate around and they eventually come down, and one by one they come in, and so the crew is moving those planes around on the deck to make room for the others as they came in. We had about four different kinds of aircraft on the Coral Sea: the F4 Panthers, the F8 Crusaders. We had some really large scale bombers, all kinds of stuff, and moving those planes around was really an art form.

Producer: You were up in the bridge?

Dan: Yes. I had two jobs. I was also the deck assistant navigator, so that was all up there. I was also trained to be an air controller, so every once in a while I would be talking to the planes down in the combat center. Yes, we were up there, as I said, at Yankee Station almost all the time. Yankee Station was north of the 17th parallel for sure.

Producer: They didn't go to really any bombing sites in South Vietnam, because that was all attended by the planes that [crosstalk 00:10:34]

Dan: That's correct. If we were going to do something down south, which was rare, we went down to Dixie Station. As I recall, we went down there maybe twice. By that time, the war had changed. It had been, in terms of the navy, in the beginning there was a lot of supply of weaponry and so forth coming down from the north to the south via the sea lanes out on the ocean. That's what the coastal surveillance force was all about was to stop that. The war matriculated into the rivers or up north and so the role of Dixie Station, which had been a more aggressive in '61 - '63, by the time I got over there there was nothing going on down there. It was really up north.

At the same time, when Admiral Zumwalt arrived in Vietnam, the whole emphasis was to leave or not leave but to really deemphasize the role of the coastal surveillance and get up into those rivers, and that's where that all began, Sea Float and all the rest of it.

Producer: These were six or seven month tours that most of these guys did?

Dan: Well, the Coral Sea, the first one where I came in, they had just finished a nine month out on the line, and then when I got on board, which was September of '65, we did about a five month. I remember going up to Hong Kong for Christmas. We went to Hong Kong and then [You-Kiss-Ka] for Christmas. Then, we headed back to San Francisco, Hunter's Point. We were at home point in Alameda Naval Air Station around I'd say January or February. Then we spent 3-4 months in the shipyard there getting everything, and then back over we went for that second tour, and that second tour was another 7-8 months up on the line. They were long periods.

Normally, the idea was six months overseas, six months back home, but that's not the way it worked out. You were up on the line for a good seven months or so, and then you came home for maybe five.

Producer: Did you happen to be out there when the infamous explosion on the Oriskany happened?

Dan: No, that was before I go there. Yeah. It was I guess lessons learned. They're bringing up the bombs, using the elevators and loading it on those plane's wings and so forth. It was pretty impressive stuff. The guys involved in the weapons, they all wore these red jerseys to identify their role. The guys up on the deck were either in yellow or white depending on who was doing what, and the guys in the red spent a lot of time down below getting the bombs ready to go, taking them up, putting them on the planes and doing all that.

Yeah, in terms of being someone out there, an Ensign, JG, what not, I sort of felt like we were winning. The morale was good in terms of feeling like you were

doing something positive. We really never gave up. The people in the service. Back home, it wasn't necessarily the case but on the ships and so forth, morale was pretty high. I don't remember anyone being negative. I really don't. You were doing your job. When I subsequently went over and was on the coastal surveillance force out of Cam Ranh, that was '69 and early '70 and I'd say at that point the idea of Vietnamizing the war had become the issue and so it was. We were leaving, that was for sure, and how to execute that strategy. That was a different type of morale issue, if you will, but no longer was it implicit that we were still trying to win this war. I think the president had decided we were leaving, so how do we execute.

I remember one time we had to go over to Da Nang for something and I just hitched a ride because I really wanted to be on the soil of Vietnam. A buddy of mine and another lieutenant, we went over and we just walked around Da Nang for half an hour and then got back on the helicopter and returned to the ship. I didn't know at the time that I'd be going back to Vietnam for a year so I wanted to make sure I'd actually seen something of the country. No, the ships, you're never ... Cam Ranh, later on I was to discover is a huge port with deep water, a lot of big ships in there, but the aircraft carriers, we never went near it. We strictly went back to Subic bay, back and forth, back and forth, or to Hong Kong or up to Ukiska. Ukiska had the bigger shipyard if you had something serious, which happened. Those things were running all the time, but Cam Ranh had a lot of supply ships coming into it but no navy warships to my knowledge, other than the swift boats.

The width between the island of Hanan and that's where Yankee Station was, and my guess is 200 miles or so because when we took off at 35 knots, we were going for at least two hours or so and launched. You had to be aware of where you were. There weren't any ... it was deep water. You didn't have to worry about islands or anything like that. You had to worry about fishing and so forth, trawlers, when you're really going fast and you would see on the radar little things and you just hoped that nothing happened. You just wanted ... you had to keep going.

Producer: There's really no threat?

Dan: No. They were junk. You could see them out there.

Producer: I guess the aspect of ... we knew that the North Vietnamese had a few migs but it would be, I guess, foolhardy for them to even go after these American ships because it would raise the stakes of this war to a whole new level.

Dan: Yeah, it was not an air war like World War Two or even Korea. The pilots there, none of them shot down a mig or whatever. Virtually all of it was bombing of

North Vietnam. I was trained as an air controller because an air controller's job is to in fact work with a pilot when he is in combat, and we just never had any of that sort of thing. I hardly ever did that, even though I was trying to do it.

Producer: The second tour, you're over there with the south Vietnamese navy and you're really just transferring the assets, the US ports and bases and ships to them. How receptive were they to this situation and how confident were you that they were going to pick up the ball and maintain this defensive or offensive posture that we had created?

Dan: I remember we wanted it to work. The south Vietnamese. You could always tell a north Vietnamese person who had emigrated to the south. They were just more industrious. They were hard working. The South Vietnamese, the incumbent South Vietnamese were more agriculture, more laid back if you will, and when we were building these bases and so forth for them, a lot of it was building housing so that they would be willing to leave Saigon and come out to Qui Nahn or Nha Trang. Nha Trang was a beautiful city. It was the Paris of Vietnam, beautiful beaches and so forth, but still to get people to leave Saigon that had been in the army or whatever, and come up there with their families. We were trying to make it have a domestic life and so forth. That was a challenge because we wanted them to take over the swift boats. That was the whole goal was to leave everything to them.

Vietnamization. That part of it was frustrating because they weren't always that engaged and I guess for many of us seeing that kind of figured that once we were gone the North Vietnamese would prevail because you could just see the difference in attitudes.

Producer: Very interesting. Where were you after that?

Dan: I came back to San Francisco. I was discharged over at Treasure Island. I had decided not to make a career in the navy even though I was a Naval Academy grad. I went off to New York, Wall Street type of thing for a while. I came back to San Francisco doing that sort of thing, working with pension funds as a consultant. My hobby, if you will, was political campaigns and I became known as a pretty good campaign advance man for different presidential candidates, et cetera. That led to ultimately an Orphans Airlift et cetera. We spent ... we were living in San Francisco from ... well, New York and then back to San Francisco. We went to New York again for a period but mostly it was in San Francisco.

Producer: Let's talk about that. Tell me about calling. Were you surprised?

Dan: Yeah. The Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese, what was going on, the North Vietnamese were invading the South. It didn't look good but it wasn't quite there

yet. People clearly were evacuating Vietnam and I got a call on a Saturday morning when we lived over in Marin County from Walter Shorenstein. Walter was a very prominent democratic political leader but a very successful real estate person, and could I come over to his office, which I did at 11:00.

Ed Daly, who was the owner and chairman of World Airways, which was then headquartered over in Oakland at the airport there, his daughter was there with her husband, Charlotte Bering. She had been very active in adoption work and had invited her dad, if you will, to ... she was aware through her friends and contacts that there were a number of orphanages in the Saigon area, and the idea was these orphans, it was going to be difficult for them if they were not evacuated, for a variety of reasons.

There were a number of adoption agencies she mentioned that she knew very well. I knew very little about adoption at the time but what was going on is hundreds of babies were expected to arrive in the United States. Ed Day's World Airways flights being the first of the many. About that same time, President Ford had signed what was called Operation Baby Lift. He had been an orphan himself, to authorize the US government funding to provide for these aircraft to bring these infants to the United States. Right then and there was the beginning of it.

Charlotte said that these flights were expected the following week.

Producer: Why did they call you? Are you an expert in orphans?

Dan: No, but I was really good at organizing events. The political campaign stuff was a natural, I guess. They were looking for somebody who could go out there and organize. In fact, in Walter's memoir, oral history, they asked him that very question. He said, "Flanagan was a Naval Academy grad and he knew how to organize things and I called him and so forth," so I went up. They had already been in touch with the Presidio base commander and the state department. This and that. Ed Daly, World Airways, their people. Somebody was needed to go out to the and meet the base commander, which I did, Colonel King. I was there for three weeks.

I get over there around 7:30 in the morning and I wouldn't get home until like 8 or 9:00 at night. Harmon Hall is where we were. The colonel explained to me that the army was prepared to do a lot of things. The doctors at Letterman, a lot of the doctors at University of California San Francisco et cetera. That had been organized. Dr. Alex Stalcop who was from UCSF was just a great guy, and I got to know a lot of the doctors. At the time, the Army knew they needed laps. When these planes arrived, you needed people who could hold that baby and bring them down, et cetera. That next day, we started having these morning and evening television press conferences where we would indicate that the flights

were arriving tomorrow at Travis, what have you, and there would be 100-300 infants on these planes.

We would need volunteers to get on these buses and go up to Travis and bring the babies back. You'd be amazed the outpouring. San Francisco became ... The war was tough for San Francisco in a lot of ways, and this was a chance for San Franciscans and people in the Bay Area to say, "I'm going to do something positive." They would be lined up, primarily women. They would be lined up on Christie Boulevard all the way out to the Marina Boulevard. It was unbelievable.

We'd have these caravans of the olive drab buses standing by and they'd board them. You're talking about a bus of 40 or so and you'd need three or four of those buses. I remember when we went down o San Francisco's airport to meet President Ford. That flight was a Pan Am flight, as I recall, and there were 300 and something infants there, so we had about ten buses that went down and it was a long parade of these buses. Those babies would be brought into Harmon Hall and we had these mattresses all over. The doctors would be up on the stage giving instructions in terms of feeding and all of that, and this all occurred April 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th, and I had an office there with a blackboard and I was keeping tally of how many and what not as we went along, and then out of the blue I got a call from the stewardesses down in Dallas from Braniff Airlines and with that wonderful Texas accent saying to me, "Mr. Flanagan we understand from the press that you are the contact person. We want to be helpful. What can we do?"

I said, "If you can get up her and help us deliver these babies, it would be great." And so dozens and dozens and dozens of stewardesses got involved and three or four of them showed up at the beginning. They were all staying in motels down by the airport, and they manned this ... we had this desk and they manned this desk with the old telephones and the adoption agencies would feed them in the information from what they knew of these babies. That was an area I never got totally involved in because it was so chaotic, but these stewardesses would call the adopting parents, wherever they were in the United States, and they'd make arrangements of flights and coordinate all that. A stewardess, we'd put her in a jeep or a van, drive her down to the airport, and she would deliver this baby somewhere in the United States. I don't think a lot of these adopted children ever knew how they got from San Francisco to where they got to, but I do know that a congressmen from Cape Cod, he's retired now, I went up to see him one time because he was featured in the newspapers at the 30th anniversary having adopted.

I went up to see him and asked him what it was like. He said, "I got this call. My wife and I went up to Logan Airport and sure enough this gal came off the planes with this baby." I said, "God, I'm so glad to hear that story. That makes my day."

At one point, we had about 400 infants at one time. We had to get them out. We had to keep it moving because the facilities were just not ... we were right down the street from Letterman Hospital, and so a lot of the Letterman Nurses and so forth were over there, but my job was to get the volunteers in, get them organized, get them on the buses, keep that going, help the stewardesses, work with the doctors. We had every obstetric ward in the Bay Area filled with these.

Unbelievably, when you read the medical reports and so forth, not one baby died. There was the crash at Tan Son Nhut and about 40 were killed, as I recall, but not one baby died once they arrived at the Presidio.

We got them all delivered and at the end of the day there were a little over 1500 that we delivered. Most of that was done in about 10 days.

Producer: That's impressive.

Dan: Yeah. It was really people were ready to do something positive. You just knew it and I'm going to be out there for the 40th anniversary of all of this and that's again this idea of being positive about something. It had been a very long war, and there weren't many opportunities to really reach out. San Francisco had been really the port of embarkation. All the air bases and so forth were in the Bay area at the time. They're all gone now, all of them, except for Travis. That's still there but all the others have been closed down and of course most of the navy is down in San Diego.

There was one flight from Saigon that went to Long Beach. About three went up to the Seattle area, but the rest of them, we had about 16-17 flights that came into Travis or SFO.

Producer: Have you ever met any of the orphans grown up now?

Dan: Yes. For the 30th anniversary, World Airways decided to commemorate that with a flight leaving Oakland on a World Airways jet to go over to Saigon and they invited ... there were roughly 40-50 adoptees that we all met down at the Fisherman's Wharf at the Holiday Inn there for a reception and they stayed over night and then the next day we were all at the tarmac at the Oakland Airport, and they boarded and went on to Saigon. That was really commemorating Operation Baby Lift, that Saigon to the United States part of it. I did see a lot of them there. It's interesting.

Like anybody else, they grew up and they went about their lives. They went to college or whatever. Today, they're 40 years old. Then they were 30. I don't think they ... it is sort of interesting because there were large Vietnamese communities in Anaheim, down in the Los Angeles area, et cetera. Just by

coincidence there's a lot of people that came to the United States and certain areas, including Anaheim had such populations but by the very nature of what we were doing, which was air lifting them all over the country, they grew up in a different ... they did not, to my knowledge, grow up in any sort of Vietnamese type community in the United States. I have talked to some of them on the phone.

I talked to one recently only because a neighbor said, "You were involved in that?" I said yes and so she said, "Please call." I talked to this gal up in Philadelphia in the suburbs on it. It was interesting. I said, "Tell me when you arrived in Philadelphia, and this and that," and I was able to tell her that she came through San Francisco, through Presidio.

Dan: Braniff went into bankruptcy, I'm going to say in the early 80's. It had overextended but at the time, in fact, I have tried very hard to locate those Braniff stewardesses. I talked to several on the phone down in Texas, and in fact I worked with Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson quite a bit here in Washington DC. Kay has adopted children herself and I asked her if she would help me, which she did, but we just could not find those four or five that were the keys that came up. That's what I was looking for. They have a Braniff alumni website and I had a bulletin on there to please call me and all that kind of stuff. People were really being helpful, but I was never able to find them. It's a major disappointment to me because I think they deserve a lot of credit for a great job.

Producer: Yeah, it's a wonderful story. It's one of the few wonderful stories.

Dan: It was in the newspapers, the news every night and what not. People's emotions were really something. I remember getting a call from the guy that ran KP, the CBS affiliate down in Palm Springs, and he said, "Mr. Flanagan, I understand from my TV guys that you are the one up there running the show. My wife and I are childless and we would be delighted to adopt one of those babies if you have one that is available?" I got all his information and so forth, and I went out to those stewardesses and I said, "This guy sounds like a great guy. If we have a baby that's on call for, go ahead and send it." I believe it happened.

My wife and I, we were tempted but I said we could not do that. That would be a conflict if you will, but people really were caught up in it and the adoption agencies, Friends of the Children, whatever, there's quite a few of them, and it was interesting to see how they interacted. Of course, they're competitors in a way. Catholic Relief Services, and so forth. We worked with them but we had this challenge of wanting to be volunteers and wanting to feel like we were doing something wholesome like that. Somehow or another, we wanted to keep that whole thing arm's length and just help the babies, is what it came down to.

Producer: There was quite a bit of press coverage of it, obviously, becoming positive. When I knew you were coming in, I did some research and of course my favorite photo is the babies in that plane occupying the whole plane.

Dan: When President Ford landed on Air Force One, I was in one of those buses out there and that was really something that they pull up to the other plane and he got off, and went in, and saw what you are describing. What happened, Tan Son Nhut was a fairly major airport. I flew in and out of there many times when I was in Vietnam but the North Vietnamese were coming down. It was getting close, and so there was a lot of turmoil and I read a lot about how difficult it was to get to Tan Son Nhut et cetera. Of course, Saigon fell on the 30th of April and we're talking about April 8th -12th, in there. There was a little bit of wiggle room, but those planes, a lot of them left Tan Son Nhut and went over to Clark Air Force Base, got reorganized, and then the larger flights then took off for the United States. Typically, when they landed at Travis they had 100-150. These buses, as I said, we didn't do the cardboard boxes. We had laps. We had these wonderful women going up, bringing them down, taking them into Harmon Hall, sitting with them on the mattresses cradling them and so forth, feeding them, the whole deal, the doctors giving instructions and then rotating them out as quickly as we could.

Producer: Was the general fear that the NVA, when and if they took over Saigon, because so many of these babies were the products of American soldiers and Vietnamese women, that they would kill them?

Dan: Right. I never saw any evidence of that. Of course, I wasn't there, but I have talked to some of the people that were at Saigon at the adoption agencies, and I think there was a concern plus ... you know, these children were in the adoption pipeline. They had been spoken for, for the most part, and so the idea was to just live up to the commitment that they were available for adoption and people were prepared to adopt them. Today, it's very difficult to adopt. Adoption rates are way down.

Countries are starting to become very nationalistic about it and so I think from an adoption agency point of view, they really wanted to get these babies that they had been taken care of in their different orphanages on their way to their adopting parents. I think that's the real story and I've known people who have wanted to adopt in China or Russia in subsequent years and how desperate they were. They were childless. They'd go over. This was filling a need for these babies. There were parents that wanted to adopt them and that was a wonderful thing.

Producer: Wow, what a story. Let's shift.

Dan:

When I was in Vietnam I went down into the Delta region many times. I could see how it had been deforested. This was tough stuff, and we had a fairly major Navy installation there called Sea Float down in the Ca Mau Peninsula, and I'd be on helicopters because I was trying to get up to a base off the Cambodian border. You could just see how effective Agent Orange was. You never saw that stuff up where I was in Cam Ranh or on the coast. It was always inland. Yeah, and at the time, though, everybody felt whatever it takes you got to win the war. Later on, if you want me to, I'd be glad to tell you the story of Admiral Zumwalt and how that all continued.

It was interesting. In Cam Ranh there were 7 or 8 swift boat detachments up and down the coast. It happened that Admiral Zumwalt's son, Elmo the Third, was stationed there as well on a swift boat. I knew those guys well. I knew Elmo and his father was then the commander of naval forces in Vietnam and one of the youngest Admirals ever. A four star. A couple of times the admiral came up to Cam Ranh and we had a BBQ or whatever. Little did I know, later on that when I got out of the navy, Admiral Zumwalt and I became the closest of friends. When he ran for the senate in Virginia, I stayed in their home. I ran around the country with him raising money. I was on the board of the Navy Memorial at the very beginning, and built it and so forth.

I was very close to him. I knew for a fact that young Elmo, we had all gone in as a family and bought a place down in Pinehurst. It was Elmo's idea. He was a lawyer in Fayetteville, and of course Elmo died in 1988 and I know that it tortured Bud all during the 80's because when Elmo became ill around '86 or '87, fighting this leukemia or whatever, they flew all over the country. They tried every treatment. They went to every prominent cancer facility, Seattle, Houston, whatever. I know Bud felt really sadly, and of course that book came out about the two of them. That was written primarily down at the house in Pinehurst. Afterwards, when Elmo died, Bud made it a point to get the appropriate funding, the Veterans Administration, and so forth, to start treating Agent Orange as truly a very dangerous pesticide that had in fact been a material harm to many, many veterans.

At the end of the war, Agent Orange was not considered to be such, and it was through his efforts that ultimately it happened. I can't tell you how many ... we created the Agent Orange committee. There were members of it from all over. We would have meetings every couple of months. They would all come into Washington and we would orchestrate this campaign if you will. I ran a government affairs firm in Washington and that was my professional day to day thing, but this was my pro bono, if you will. I can't tell you. Out of that came, I would draft letters for the admiral and they would go off to the administrator of the Veterans Administration, Togo West at the time. We really had a lot going on back and forth, and we started winning that argument medically. There was a lot

of funding involved for medical research, including with the Vietnamese government because they had Agent Orange victims as well, and so this was to allow funding to treat what had happened there as well.

It was in the late '90s, around 1996-97 that we I think could declare a victory in terms of funding, '98, right in there. I don't know how many we helped but certainly it was ... we did a lot and I'm really glad we did it. Out of that came the Bone Marrow Foundation, which was another Admiral Zumwalt idea, that he had noticed taking Elmo around the country, a Vietnam veteran, how difficult it was to find research that was applicable to this, and so the Bone Marrow Foundation became an idea of his and that was in the '90s as well. Again, many meetings. He hired Dr. McGovern, and that was I think a notable accomplishment also. I don't know of another war where you could say there was a specific ... World War One had gas and what not, that was outlawed. Here's Agent Orange and everyone thinks it's okay, and then we find out it isn't and Admiral Zumwalt really felt badly about it.

That was a tricky statement because what I think he meant is it was more like, "Had I known what the future would be, I would not have but I didn't. No one knew." He was comfortable with having used it at the time as an agent of war, but of course it would never be used again. They never used it in subsequent wars, but I think that's what he meant because I was with him a lot and he never said anything like he would do it again, et cetera. It was more about when I did I felt it was right at the time.

Producer: Right. It did probably save a lot of lives keeping the VC away from those banks, away from those bases.

Dan: I don't know about that.

Producer: That was the feeling. I bet that was the logic behind that statement.

Dan: Yeah, the Vietcong was down there south of Saigon and there was a lot of ... it was a dangerous area and so forth, but at the end of the day it was the North Vietnamese I think that really won the war. What was happening up more in the northern part of South Vietnam, I think that became more consequential. One thing I think is remarkable about it is when we went after it, after Elmo died, in the early '90s, a real lesson came out of that. No one will ever do that again. That was unfortunate but it will never happen again.

I think the army and the navy, et cetera, they have developed a lot more research so that things like that aren't done. You don't see any weaponry like that anymore and I think that was one of the good things that came out of all that, the Agent Orange Committee. I remember when Tony Principi, who I knew

pretty well and who had gone to the Naval Academy, he was from San Francisco. Tony became administrator of the VA and Bud died in 2000. Finally, it was around 2002 that Agent Orange became a related benefit under the VA protocols and so forth. I went over to see Tony and said, "We ought to call this the Zumwalt program," and he was all for it.

In 1997, our family, my wife and I and our children, we moved back to Washington, DC to run the government affairs for a California company and I was really troubled by the inadequacy of the benefit structure for the Vietnam veteran. I was thinking primarily of education, the GI Joe type benefits. It happened that Senator Alan Cranston from California was chairman of the senate veteran affairs committee. I knew Alan very well and I went over to see him and I said, "Alan, I don't like what's going on here. They're not getting a fair deal," and he told me to call these fellows, a guy named Stewart Feldman and Robbie Mueller, which I did.

I got together with them and Robbie was a paraplegic Marine Corps captain and they had this idea like I did of righting the wrong. We created what's called the Council of Vietnam Veterans, and there were about 15-20 of us, and we were primarily Washington DC types, lawyers and what not, and we weren't into creating something permanent. We just wanted to right the wrong. We started lobbying, if you will, and we were very effective. It's interesting how you find out who your friends are, but in the house congressman Dave Bonior, Morris Udall, and others were very supportive.

Hearings were scheduled and I can remember many times bringing Robbie in in his wheelchair to testify, and the American Legion and the VFW types would be in the room, their lobbying people, and they were opposed. Their testimony and everything was opposed to this and it just blew my mind that they would be like that, but they were. What it was all about it is that they saw us as threatening their benefits. I don't think we ever suggested that at all. We wanted to grow the pie, so to speak, and they saw the pie as more finite and that we were going to take from them, so they opposed everything that we were doing officially.

I was really pleased to see when finally the administration came around and we won. We got together and declared victory, if you will, and I remember Robbie saying, "Dan, it's time now to go national." We knew, through all of this, we had heard many stories and been told many stories where Vietnam vets wanted to join the local lodge of the American Legion or the VFW and were being refused. They were not being allowed to become members. That was just really ... that was part of what we were arguing about; Why can't these benefits be available to the Vietnam vet? Of course this was '77-'78, right in there, '79, and the war had been over since '75.

A lot of these guys had gotten out much earlier than that. Because of the way Vietnam was set up with deferments for education and so forth, your typical Vietnam vet may not have gone to college or whatever. He might have been a high school grad, and so opportunities to fraternize, have friends, and what not, it was kind of tough to be told that the American Legion hall wasn't open to Vietnam veterans, and that's the way it was. I think it's a little different today but that's the way it was then.

We were really pleased with what we had done but like I said Robbie came into my office and said, "Dan, we need to go national." I said, "Jeez, Robbie. We've been criticizing the American Legion and the VFW and we don't want to be hypocrites," but he said, "Dan, I think we need to go national. Are you with me?" I said, "No. I don't agree with that." He went off and created the Vietnam Veterans of America, which became a very large operation very similar to the American Legion and so forth. When I look back on it, I visited with Robbie 10-15 years ago at their office on Pennsylvania Avenue and we were close of friends as ever. He had built quite an operation but it was primarily the benefits. It was coordinating benefits, filling that vacuum that the Legion and the VFW at the time had forfeited.

Over time, culture overcame that and I think the Vietnam veterans, they didn't go out and create lodges or any of that, but it gave them some self respect that there was an organization that was pulling for them. When I look at what is going on today with the Iraqi-Afghanistan veterans, there's so many different veterans organizations. To be honest with you, I get a little nervous about just what is going on here, but that's a different topic.

Producer: Sure. For others who went on and came back and successfully led businesses or organizations or marriages and families, it's a part of it but not the focus of their life. How do you look back on this period?

Dan: That's interesting. As I said, World War II, et cetera, there was a camaraderie of we're all in this together type of thing, and going off to Vietnam was not the same. I happen to be a Naval Academy guy and that was expected but with the draft so many people did the six month deal with the reserves or kept going to college and getting law degrees and MBAs and whatever, so it was kind of tough luck and over you went. For some of them, I think Vietnam did have an impact on them because of their socioeconomic circumstances and they weren't able to deal with it or it did impact them in different ways.

I think it really raises that question. Today we have the all volunteer service that started in '76, right about the time we were talking about the Council of Vietnam Veterans and all the rest of it. I think it is interesting how the war was difficult militarily. The battles that were fought, some of them were vicious. The pilots,

whatever, I know guys that have never recovered from that, going over Haiphong, the missiles up left and right. They went on to do good things in life but they still talk about that. I think the more harrowing the experience maybe the more difficult in the years to come.

Vietnam itself, the government of Vietnam wasn't ... as I was saying earlier, you kind of felt like the North Vietnamese were ultimately going to win because the South Vietnamese government was so inept and so when you're not on a winning team, so to speak, I think that tends to influence how you feel about the whole thing. Was it worth it? What did I accomplish? I think that's for a lot of them why people don't come home and say ... Now, today it's interesting to me that the Vietnam combat ribbon and so forth, you see it on the cars and the trucks and so forth.

It's kind of like there's been a bit of a renaissance, which I'm glad to see. I think it's very good for people to feel good about it, and I think it is appreciated now far more because people discovered how difficult it was and that difficulty was more challenging and so I think people, the general public today, say, "You know, you guys went through a tough time. Good for you. I'm proud of you." That sort of thing.

Producer: Dan, I want to thank you.

Dan: I'm just delighted you're doing this. I'm very pleased to be here today.

Producer: Thank you and thank you for coming.