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The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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HANNAH
CHUNG ’16: Today is April 21st, 2015, and I’m in Ticknor Room at Rauner [Special Collections] Library to talk to Mr. David [W.] Kruger about his experience in Vietnam and his life in general.

All right, thank you so much for taking your time today.

KRUGER: My pleasure. Again.

CHUNG: Uh-huh. Right. And, yeah, so like we did the last time, we’ll start again with—from your memories of childhood, and maybe going back all the way to your parents, if you can start with that.

KRUGER: Mm-hm.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: Well, I, actually being an amateur and public genealogist, I could go back a bit further than just my parents, but I will not.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: Both of my parents were born, as I was, in the town of Exeter, New Hampshire. My father was the first generation born in the United States. His father was born in Germany, in the part that is now in Poland, and came from the wheat fields. His father brought the family to Exeter to work in the woolen mill. So my father is of immigrant stock, although his mother was of both Yankee, from the 17th century partly, but also the other half of her heritage was French-Canadian, so it’s a mixed heritage, which is very typical of the United States.

My mother—most of her forebears were in America by the first half of the 17th century. My mother was an Adams, and therefore I am a first cousin seven times removed, but a first cousin of President John Adams. And I have another great-grandmother, a great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother who was hanged as a Salem witch.

CHUNG: Oh!

KRUGER: So the family on my mother's side is a long-time Yankee from New England, predominantly Massachusetts and New Hampshire. My parents, as I said, were born in Exeter. I grew up in Exeter and six years to the north of Hanover, in Littleton, New Hampshire, and then back to Exeter. Two brothers, both younger. By the time schooling came around, after eighth grade, I had the opportunity to attend four years at Phillips Exeter Academy, and at graduation was—in those days, Exeter was a pipeline to Harvard [University] and to Yale [University], where half my class went. My father wanted me to go to Harvard. I wanted to come to Dartmouth, and I ended up here, and happily so, thank you.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: At graduation, did four years at Dartmouth in the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] and the day before graduation was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army.

In my senior year, met the young woman that, within a year of graduation, became my wife, and we just had our fiftieth wedding anniversary.

CHUNG: Wow!

KRUGER: We've had two children and have two grandchildren, and after the military career, which we will get into, I'm sure, a bit more, but which was four years, I spent, then, almost thirty years as a commercial and international banker. It was a great career, but as I rose to high levels in a commercial organization, I finally decided that the stress levels were more than I cared to cope with. I did not have financial worries, and at the age of fifty-three found retirement, and that was now 20 years ago. Very happily retired. If you want any more on what retirement's been, we can get into that in due course as well.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Of course. Yeah, so I guess just trace back a little bit to talk a little bit more about your childhood in Exeter.

KRUGER: Yeah.

CHUNG: So, like, what was your childhood experience like in New England during that time?

KRUGER: Oh, I don't know where to focus.

CHUNG: Like, what did you do when you had, like, free time? I mean, which is mostly the case with children. [Chuckles.]

KRUGER: Well, had plenty of friends in the town. Actually, as it turned out, including one famous author. John Irving was a classmate and friend. It was—school was—of course, you went to school, and in the winter, it was snowy enough that we had sledding and tobogganing and skiing, and in the summer, baseball. But I was more interested in tennis. But it was, I guess, a pretty regular, pretty normal—nothing outstanding, just learning, learning how to get on with life.

CHUNG: Right. Uh-huh.

KRUGER: And speaking of learning, that was probably the real benefit of a Phillips Exeter education because with its Harkness program, very small classes around an oval table, where there's no place to hide, you learned how to learn. And that is a lifelong endeavor, and it's something that I'm not sure I really knew it at the time, but I certainly learned how to learn and have not stopped.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right. That actually makes me wonder—because Phillips Exeter Academy, even till nowadays, is a very selective school, and I guess—kind of what made you decide to apply to a private academy?

KRUGER: In my case, it was a bit different in that it was right in the same town, and although when I was there, there were I think in a student body, then all boys at the time, of 750, I think when I was there, there were 26 day students, 20 of whom were what we called faculty brats, children of the faculty, which meant that there were only six of us that came from the town. I don't recall that it was my decision at all. I think it was something my father said, "It's there, and you can do it, and you're gonna do it." In retrospect, it is a very difficult course of instruction. I did not excel, but I certainly did not fail.

And when I arrived at Dartmouth, the first year and a half, this was easy until all my Dartmouth classmates finally caught up with me as I put it on idle. Basically, you didn't have teenage years when you went to Exeter, it was such a grind. And I enjoyed my high school years my first year at Dartmouth.

CHUNG: So, yeah, I guess I'm a little bit curious about the town of Exeter. Like, what did the neighborhood look like? Like, general atmosphere and environment?

KRUGER: Well, Exeter—a fairly typical New England or New Hampshire town founded in the 1630s, had been there a long time. And the town, in reality, was—there were—I guess I would say there were three different towns within the town, all intermixed. You had the Yankee part of town, or the Yankee population that had been there from way back. Then you had the immigrant population, of which my father was part, although there were very few Germans, and they were more readily assimilated into the Yankee part of time. But the immigrant population—heavily French-Canadian and southern European and Greeks and Italians and a few Polish, but they tended not to be assimilated as rapidly as the Germans.

And then the third segment of the town was the Academy. It is, although a high school, its course of instruction was, by most intents and purposes, at college level. So there was a divide between the Academy and the town. They lived in the same territory, but there was not as much interaction as there could have been. Let's put it that way. And that's an ongoing issue, even today, in Exeter. The town today—the assimilation of the immigrant community is long past. That's happened. But the divide between the academic community and the town as a town is still there.

Most of the reason for the town's immigrant population were the shoe factories and the great cotton and woolen mill, all of which are now gone, and so there is light industry, but most of the town now, other than the Academy, is a service-based economy. When I was growing up, there was still agriculture in the surrounding areas. That has largely disappeared, although we still have, next door, a major apple orchard, but farming for the sake of farming is about gone.

CHUNG: I see. It seems like it was a diverse town for back in the day—like, with lots of immigrants.

KRUGER: Yeah, it was. I know as I've looked at the family histories, I think of the population, as much as a third were immigrant, of whatever variety.

CHUNG: Right. Great.

So I guess to talk a little bit more about your high school years, what are some, like, different activities that you were involved in, and what did you do in down time, I guess?

KRUGER: Well, first of all, there was almost no down time. That did not happen.

CHUNG: Okay.

KRUGER: The Exeter community was one of going to class actually six days a week, five and a half days. We had classes on Saturdays. Every class had tons of homework, and heaven help you if you didn't do it, especially with some of the old-line instructors, because you were—as I said, you were sitting around a table of no more than 12 kids, and there was no place to hide. And the instructors, of course,—their radar was perfect. They knew—they could immediately tell who hadn't done the homework and zeroed right in on them, and that was the last time you didn't do it.

But physical activity was required. You had to, every semester, participate in organized sports, which I don't regret at all. Mine was basketball and tennis.

My friendships there were not as deep as they could have been, being a townie, because I was neither fish nor fowl. To the students, I was a townie; to the townies, I was a student. And, of course, every night I went home, and so of the vast majority of the kids, all but six of us went home to a dormitory, including the 20 faculty brats. They went home because, as I said, their parents lived in the dormitory.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: So some of the friendships among my classmates that were—the bonding that took place during those years was much deeper when you were living with the kid 24/7. I was only there for the 12 hours, and then I was at home, so it was a different experience. I can't say bad, but it was different.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: That said, I still now every week have lunch with two of my Exeter classmates that now are again living in the Exeter area, and class officer and—okay, you know, there's a loyalty to the school. It's done well by us.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: But the activities every day: It was lots of study, which was fine. In retrospect it was good.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Great.

So I guess now to talk about the time when you had to make [the] decision about going to college.

KRUGER: Yup.

CHUNG: You said that your father wanted you to go to Harvard.

KRUGER: Yup.

CHUNG: But you had decided to go to Dartmouth. I would like to hear a little bit more about that.

KRUGER: Well, the selection process in the late 1950s I am sure is totally different than the selection process now fifty-some-odd years later. First of all, everybody from the high school, with a couple of very minor exceptions,—everybody went off to college. Nobody just, you know, went off into the workforce. It was not that kind of a school. In the 1950s, as I said, Exeter was viewed as a pipeline to Harvard. Actually, [Phillips Academy] Andover, our chief rival, was viewed as a pipeline to Yale, although each—no, we sent—I think the final number was 60 of 250 classmates went to Harvard; 30 went to Yale. Thirteen came to Dartmouth, and I think 13 went to Princeton [University].

And if you had looked at the same time at Andover, you might have changed the 60 and 30 between Harvard and Yale, but the same mechanic was at work there. So safety schools were—I don't ever remember talking about a safety school. Didn't happen. Didn't have to happen.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: So for whatever reason—and now I don't remember why I fixated on Dartmouth. It may have been because an older cousin of mine was Class of 1953? Or—no, '53 out of Exeter, '57 out of Dartmouth. It may have been, you know, he spoke highly of Dartmouth. That may have been, but I don't remember that. But I do remember that I said, "Nope, it's not in a big city, and I like the countryside. I think I'd like to stay, you know, far enough from home but near enough that it's not foreign."

My father, who—he and his older sister were the first two in the family to have gone to college. They both went to UNH [University of New Hampshire]. He had aspirations that I would—he said, "You can get into Harvard. I want you to go there." I said, "Well, gee, Dad, I really don't want to go." He says, "You're applying." I said, "Okay." So I applied to Harvard, and I applied to Dartmouth.

I do remember, then, in the spring of 1960, when the acceptance letters started coming in, I got a very thin letter that first came in from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and I said, *Oh, boy, it's a thin letter. They've rejected me, and I don't have to go to Harvard.* Opened it up, read it, said, "Our congratulations. You're accepted." My father, of course, is—he's thrilled. And I'm saying—but no Dartmouth for a week. A week later, a big thick envelope arrived from Hanover, and it said, "Congratulations. You're accepted to come to Dartmouth. And we have reviewed your family's financial not to pay, and here's how you can pay for it." And it was a combination of scholarship and loans and work study.

And so I went to Dad and said, "Okay. I mean, here are the choices. I'm into both." And at the time, even Harvard was not *that* expensive. But said, "You know, Dad"—I was on a virtually full scholarship just to go to Exeter because my father was financially not able—he was still recovering from having graduated from college into the teeth of the Great Depression, and even in the 1950s he really was not fully back on his feet earning enough. He just couldn't—there was no way he was going to pay for the full tuition, board and room. So he had to say, "Well, okay, I guess you're going to Dartmouth," so—

And I have no regrets. Actually, one of the two that I continue to go to lunch with every week was among the 60 that went off to Harvard, and I don't usually hold that against him.

CHUNG: [Chuckles.]

KRUGER: Not too much. [Chuckles.] So I have no regrets about avoiding Harvard. As a matter of fact, I'm very pleased to have been able to have avoided it, and certainly no regrets coming to Hanover.

CHUNG: Great. So once you arrived in Hanover to start your first year at Dartmouth, was it pretty much like what you had expected?

KRUGER: I think so. I had observed, at least during the 12 hours of every day, dormitory life at a boarding school, so it was not totally foreign coming here and having 24/7 boarding. My freshman year, I was assigned into, the very first year it opened, Bissell Hall down on Choate Road, a brand-new dormitory, with all of the—I mean, even the landscaping hadn't been done; they were still doing that. And at the same time, the math and psychology buildings were abuilding, and they're now gone. They were built when I was coming in, and they've been torn down and rebuilt just down North Main Street.

CHUNG: Right. Yeah. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: And as I said, the course of instruction was, after the Exeter experience—it frankly was easy.

CHUNG: Mmm. Easy.

KRUGER: I suppose I could or even should have exempted out of a lot of the courses I took and reached to higher, but nah! So went through and did not—I can't honestly say I distinguished myself at Dartmouth, either, but I had a good—I don't know. I don't remember now what it was. Somewhere between a 2 and 3.0—I don't know, somewhere in there, in the middle, the great unwashed C^+, B^- average for the four years. And enjoyed the winters and did a lot of skiing, a lot of road-tripping. And, of course, Dartmouth at that time was—it was all men, as well—so, again, very different than what you see today.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

CHUNG: Took advantage of—I was a Spanish language and literature major. I had, on my own, studied Spanish two years in junior high. Took it for four years at Exeter and then took it four more years at Dartmouth. Took Latin for this entire period as well and enjoyed language and linguistics. Therefore, early on, when Dartmouth was—it was not the first year but it was one of the early years, where Dartmouth had the foreign study program, and so I was in one of the early contingents. There were a dozen of us in it must have been 1962. We went to the University of Salamanca in Spain.

CHUNG: Salamanca, in Spain!

KRUGER: Yup.

CHUNG: Great.

KRUGER: I should also say that when I arrived in Hanover in the fall of 1960, I had not stepped foot out of the four northern New England states, and was very provincial. Had no opportunity to travel. Since then, I've seen all but one state and I don't know how many countries. It's well over a hundred countries since then, so broke out of the—[Chuckles.]

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And started that at Dartmouth. There was virtually no question in my mind that ROTC was something I had to do, because you have to remember that in the ’50s and early ’60s, the draft was strong, in place, and you served. And so—my father was asthmatic and was not able to serve during the Second World War, so he then spent much of the wartime years doing what he could for the war effort and was at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, building submarines for the fleet. But, no, he—an ulterior motive, doing the ROTC, although it was not like the Navy program, which is fully paid. The Army ROTC did pay I think I remember it was something like 20 dollars a month. But in the early 1960s, 20 dollars a month was—it was a meaningful amount of money. That, plus working part time for all sorts of faculty members, doing painting and whatever—I always enjoyed painting and plumbing and electrical and whatever and all of that hands-on stuff. Worked at that, even at Hanover during the four years, to earn enough money to get by.

And then to wrap up on the finances of college education, I came out of Hanover—I now don’t remember how much it was, but I had a student loan in place, and it was—by today’ standards it was minuscule. At the time, when starting salaries for kids coming out of college were well down into four figures—six, seven, eight thousand dollars was looked upon as “Ooh, that’s a very good job.” Per annum. Not month. Per annum. I don’t know, I probably had—I don’t know. As I say, I don’t remember. It was probably five or six thousand dollars in student loans that I said, *Okay, I gotta pay them back.* My year in Vietnam, with combat pay, actually was what I used—at the end of the year in Vietnam, I had satisfied all the student loans. They were gone. Even now, that part of financial or social responsibility—it’s still there. It was beaten into us as kids, and it was just part of our generation.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Yeah.

KRUGER: Where were we? The college years—

CHUNG: Yeah. Yeah, I would actually like to talk a little bit more about your college years—

KRUGER: Yeah.

CHUNG: —and on your experience of studying Spanish language and literature.

KRUGER: Mm-hm.

CHUNG: Any kind of, like, literatures or, like, the discussions or professors you remember?

KRUGER: Actually, it's interesting. I did not bond very deeply with any of the professors at Dartmouth. They were all good. [Professor John A.] Rassias was here when I was, but I never had him. He was never in the Spanish end of things. I can't honestly say that I was excited by any of the professors. I mean, I read everything in Spanish. I still can read a Spanish newspaper. And the experience living with the Spanish family and going to the University of Salamanca was just a wonderful experience. Academically, it was an absolute wasteland because while you lived with a Spanish family, who spoke no English, you had to be immersed in the language and the culture, and it was great.

The course of instruction for that semester in Salamanca was to sit in a 13th century room that with maybe 2,000 seats, benches, hard, filled, and listen to some guy *waaay* down at the front expound on something. And it was, frankly, worthless. Read a lot and got a lot from that, but—and I don't even recall that there was any testing that meant anything. It was—I honestly don't know how any of the student, Spanish or foreign, got anything out of any of those courses. They were lecture courses that were—they were hopeless.

Now, I'm a bit biased, having come from Exeter, where you never saw more than a dozen kids in a room, and usually less, and even at Dartmouth, there were very few lecture courses. The ones I remember, actually, I saw probably in this very spot in the old—before Rauner became Rauner. This was one of two major lecture halls. The other one was 105 Dartmouth [Hall]. And there were a few courses that were—but all the rest were very small and very intimate, and it's the way you learned.

CHUNG: Great. What got you interested in Spanish language and literature?

KRUGER: I have no memories. That was, you know, 60, 70 years ago, who knows. It was different and something that I found that I could do, and not many other kids were doing it, so, *Fine, lemme do it.*

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: There were no—I don't think there were any Spanish-speaking immigrants in Exeter when I was growing up. None. French, a lot; Italian, a bunch; Greek and Polish, but no Spanish. Latino had not come anywhere near Exeter, nor had racial diversity. In my class of—we graduated 250-some-odd—we had one black. We had—no, I'm wracking my brain—I think we had exactly no Asians. None. Today there is almost—not quite, but there's almost an Asian majority at Exeter. There are hundreds of Asian kids at Exeter. Hundreds, out of now an enrollment of 1,000. And much more organized with blacks at Exeter.

That said, at Dartmouth in the 1960s, there were a smattering of blacks, but the only one I knew at all was a fraternity brother, Ephraim [N.] Aniebona [Class of 1964], who was Nigerian. He was an Igbo [pronounced EE-boh] that had escaped the terrible civil war of Nigeria. And there were only a very few Asian students. [Melvin M.] "Mick" Shiramizu—and you can tell from the name, it's got to be Japanese—[Laughs.]—another fraternity brother. But there were very few.

Dartmouth at the time, I got to say, was largely a white male bastion. I don't think we were–we certainly were not right wing and segregationist, but if you remember the history, the great civil rights movement was really taking hold and going—raging by our senior year. And it was something, frankly, we never thought about because in the North, especially in northern New Hampshire, you never saw racial minorities. They just weren't there.

CHUNG: So, like, you never really got to observe the civil rights movement?

KRUGER: No, not at all, not at all, no. By the same token, with Vietnam heating up, there was almost no discussion or thought or even observation of what was going on in Vietnam in Hanover. We were very insular. Not isolated, but insular.

CHUNG: I see.

KRUGER: Very different time.

CHUNG: Right, a very different time. Yeah, before we kind of get more into I guess your kind of post-Dartmouth and ROTC experience, I'm actually more curious to hear a little bit more about your experience in Spain, because I think that was something very unusual at that time.

KRUGER: It was. It was not usual. No, I was able—I was there officially for three months in class. I think there were 12 of us. At the same time, I think there may have been as many as 30 that had gone to universities in France and another dozen that went to a university in Germany. And we were the Foreign Study Program in the early 1960s. We all flew over on a chartered airplane, propeller driven. It took forever to get there. [Chuckles.] But it was better than taking a boat.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: We arrived in and left from, both, Paris, and then from there took trains to wherever we were going to school. I mean, it was clearly way beyond anything else I had ever seen before. I mean, eyes wide open. You had to keep your thumb on your chin to keep your mouth from flopping open to look at Paris, which is a beautiful city. But then a train to Madrid and then on to Salamanca. And then we were introduced to our families and spent three months with the families.

You were encouraged to do something else for the last month you were there, so I bought a kilometrical [sic; kilometric] rail pass, a one-month rail pass that allowed me to go third class anywhere in Spain. And so in a month I think I saw every kilometer of the Spanish rail system. I went everywhere in Spain. And it was great because—I mean, things that you'd never see here. And it was eye opening, and it really cemented my desire to see the world. So since then, certainly have seen the world.

The Spanish family: an *abogado*, a lawyer, and his wife and two young—younger than me—younger sons, teenagers at the time. But it was a different experience. Today if you go Spain—well, it's like going to Saigon today. You almost don't have to change your lifestyle to go to a place like Saigon because all of the creature comforts are available, and there are good restaurants, and there are nice hotels, and, you know, the place looks good, and, you know, the lifestyle to which you have become accustomed is there.

Going to Spain in 1962—they were not there because it was still [Generalissimo Francisco Franco Bahamonde] Franco's Spain. It was economically a wasteland. So, I mean—TV? They were lucky to have a radio. Television didn't happen. Actually, I remember that my Spanish family—while they were relatively well off, he being a lawyer, they did not have a refrigerator. Didn't need one.

CHUNG: How?

KRUGER: Well, very simple. Every day the meat wagon would go by, and every day the vegetable wagon would go by, and every day the milk wagon would go by. The grocery store was on carts or on the backs of mules that went down every street every day. And the wife, the mother, the woman of the family—part of her job was every day to be out there to acquire that day's whatever you want to eat, and that was that.

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: We didn't starve. We ate well, but relatively simply. No, I remember—I mean, some very different things that I'm not sure you can get today. Well, you can get *calamare [sic; calamares] en su tinta*, *calamare* in their own ink. Very black. I mean, you can get that today, but that was something that [unintelligible!; 40:42] then, and actually liked it.

We also—I think twice during the three months we had calves brains on the half skull, where the meat wagon had come through, and they had calves skulls that they'd sliced right down the middle, and the mother of the house bought enough for—everybody got one, but them in the oven and baked them and came out in their own little skull, and you had your meat for the meal. I'm not sure you'd see that today.

Also one of the enduring memories is the fight that took place between my two Spanish brothers as to who was going to—because the first thing they did when these things appeared on the plate—got out a spoon and went after the eye.

CHUNG: Ohh!

KRUGER: And they liked the eye, and spit out the cornea. I said, *No, I cannot do that.* So the fight was between the two of them as to who was going to get my eye. [Both chuckle.]

So today, in the information age in which we live, many of these things you now see because you see them virtually online, and so all of these things are no longer really strange. I can tell you, in the 1960s these things were very strange, because you never heard of these things. Some of the little things, certainly, and even many of the big things. You were much more insular and—well, I was going to say protected. Not protected. Just didn't know.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right. And were you able to meet any kind of Spanish friends while you were there?

KRUGER: Yeah, I have today—I've even lost contact with the Spanish family. I have none remaining. I've been back in recent years a couple of times to Spain and again tried to find the Spanish family but was unable to, so I guess we just weren't there long enough.

CHUNG: Okay.

KRUGER: No, actually the only people that I share that experience with are—still there are couple of the dozen of us, of my classmates from Dartmouth—we periodi- —I saw a couple of them last spring at reunion, and we talk about the—you know, "Didn't we have a great time?" "Yeah. Yeah, we did." So anyhow, so traveling all over Spain and seeing a little bit of France was the first experience outside of actually—you know, for all practical purposes, outside New England.

CHUNG: Right. And also it's really interesting that you were in Spain during the Franco's regime. Were you able to kind of observe any of—I guess particularly any of that regime?

KRUGER: Oh, sure, because when I was in my last month, when I was traveling around, I probably—I think it was something—it was 30 days, and probably at least a half a dozen of those days, arranged it so I didn't have to spend any money. I just took an overnight train. Slept on the train.

But I have quite a memory of one night where I was staying in a pension, inexpensive but usually clean, rooming house in Barcelona, and at about two o'clock in the morning, rousted out of bed and thrown into the back of a military truck, along with everybody else, and taken down to the local police station and put in a cell, along with everybody else. And this was Franco's fame. So I said, "[Makes sounds.]" And nobody seemed to know what was going on, but, I don't know, there were hundreds of us that were rounded up and taken to the local slammer.

A couple of hours later, I waved a passport at them, and I was immediately let go. But apparently what had happened was that Franco's Spain, the Guardia Civil, the local state police, if you will, got word that there was a communist cell meeting going on somewhere within a two-square-block area, and to root it out, they simply cordoned off that two-block area and went in and policed up everybody that was in it and started sorting them out to find [raps table three times]—

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: So, yeah, it was a right-wing dictatorship, no question. But that was part of the—you know, part of the experience.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. So other than that—like, you didn't really see it on [a] daily basis.

KRUGER: Well, you couldn't because everybody was toeing the line, and you certainly did not talk about it.

CHUNG: Oh, okay.

KRUGER: You know, it was—was it really a repressive society? [Sighs.] Probably not. I mean, there were—I mean, you didn't have to worry about where you went, but you didn't have the financial wherewithal to go anywhere, so everybody—you know, as long as they had enough food to eat and a warm place to stay, there was not a lot of—I certainly saw no resistance to the Franco regime. I'm sure there was some, but I certainly never saw it.

CHUNG: Mmm. Okay.

KRUGER: I don't ever recall speaking at all about the politics of Spain with the Spanish family. You just didn't do it.

CHUNG: So—

KRUGER: Again, before the information age.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right. I guess that does make a difference.

KRUGER: No Internet, no e-mail, no social media, no Twitters and Facebooks and whatevers, which makes it a whole new world.

CHUNG: Yeah, I guess that does make a very big difference from—

KRUGER: It's huge, yeah.

CHUNG: Yeah, it definitely is huge. So was it during your second year or third year at Dartmouth that you were in Spain?

KRUGER: Foreign Study Program was fall semester of junior year.

CHUNG: Junior year. Okay. So once you got back from Spain, now back to Hanover. Like, do you think your experience in Spain kind of made you see things differently now you're—

KRUGER: Nyah. Ech! I don't know. It was not a revolution; it was an evolution, and, you know, looking back on it now, I could not tell you that at that point in time, oh boy, there was a sea change. There wasn't. There was not.

CHUNG: Okay.

So I guess another big thing that you were involved with on campus was ROTC.

KRUGER: Yup.

CHUNG: And I would like to learn more about what it was to be a part of ROTC in [the] ‘60s.

KRUGER: You had to have—there was actual, formal courses, classes in military—military classes. You had weekly—I think it was, if I remember correctly, Wednesday afternoons. You had marching and parading and drilling. And I also chose to join a subset of ROTC, which was the Mountain and Winter Warfare detachment that in the spring and fall you’d go over to Norwich [University] and rappel off some of the cliffs over there. And during the winter you’d strap on snowshoes, the big old-fashioned ones, the heavy ones, and go out and—after every snowfall, we’d go out and we’d tramp the cross-country ski trails for the ski team. We’d be the first ones out to snowshoe the trails. It was, you know,—I must say I enjoyed it. The physical activity was certainly there, and, frankly, it was paying some of the bills.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right. And it sounds like a lot of people were—like, a great percentage of the student body was involved back then.

KRUGER: Yeah. You’d have to look at it, and we have—our class has looked at it a little bit, but we had a class of, say, 650. Between Army, Air Force and Navy, I don’t think there were even as many as 200, so the majority of the class was not in ROTC. There’s no question of that. We were not looked down on. It was, okay, you know, it was a choice and you did it or it was a choice and you didn’t do it, and so be it.

CHUNG: Great. It sounds like it’s a lot of—like, it’s a big deal of time commitment that there were, like, courses on Wednesdays,—

KRUGER: Well, you know, the only extra time commitment that you had were the drills, because you got college credit for military science. The courses you had to take were part of the curriculum. They were integrated into the whole process, so these were not extra courses you had to take; these were all part of the standard package. I can't remember. I don't think—[Sighs.] Yeah, I think it may have been one course a year during one of the semesters. It was not every semester.

You did have a requirement one summer for a month. We went to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, for summer camp, ROTC summer, which is, you know, the basic boot camp, which was much more intensive and, of course, it was a month. But that was during the summer. One summer. And that was part of the program.

When my brother, next younger brother came along, to pay for his college education, he decided and received ROTC appointment to Cornell [University], but Navy, and they paid full tuition, board and room.

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: Now, he had then a commitment. He was into the—a Regular officer into the Navy with a four-year commitment. I had a two-year commitment, and I was a Reserve officer, not a Regular officer. And it made a difference.

CHUNG: I see.

KRUGER: And, again, I don't think that even at Dartmouth at the time with a Navy program with fully-paid students—there were probably 30 or 40 of my classmates who were in that program. The extra work required to do that I don't think was onerous at all. It was part of the—it was all integrated by the college into whatever the package was.

CHUNG: Right. Yeah, it's really interesting—so does that mean that even the students who were not in ROTC took, like, some kind of military [cross-talk; science?; 53:46]?

KRUGER: No, no, no, no. As a matter of fact, I don't know this, but I would be surprised if anyone who was not in the ROTC program wanted to take it. I don't think they could.

CHUNG: Okay. Oh, you were not allowed to.

KRUGER: I would be surprised if they had been allowed to, although I don't know that for sure, so—

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Okay. I see.

So I guess a little bit more about the subgroup that you joined, which was the—

KRUGER: The Mountain and Winter Warfare—

CHUNG: Yeah.

KRUGER: I think I, you know, basically told you all there was. We—a few times, they'd put us into a van and we'd go over to Norwich and get up on the top of this vertical cliff, and you'd get all strapped in and rappel down the cliff. I probably did that three or four times, and that was it. And during the winters, I was out doing the snowshoeing. And those are the only things that set you apart from the regular program.

CHUNG: Okay. And did you stay overnight in the wilderness?

KRUGER: No, no.

CHUNG: No. It was just the daytime.

KRUGER: Well, actually, I may be wrong on that. We may have done a weekend or two with the Mountain and Winter Warfare. We may have gone out and done—yeah, maybe we did. But, again, it was not memorable. It was just something you did.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. So I'm assuming there were, like, different types of subgroups other than Mountain and—

KRUGER: I don't think so.

CHUNG: No? That was the only one?

KRUGER: That was the only—everybody else did the same thing for the rest—I mean, you either learned how to take a rifle apart and put it back together again and shoot it, so—

CHUNG: Right. Uh-huh. What got you to, like, decide to join the subgroup?

KRUGER: I don’t remember, other than it looked like a cool thing to do when it was—you know, it was probably predicated more on the snowshoeing than it was the falling off of a rock front, but I don’t remember now. It was just something that we did.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Yeah. So I guess we can wrap up a little bit with your Dartmouth experience, then talk about the time that now you have to decide what you’re going to do after you graduate, so—

KRUGER: Yeah, yeah. Well, I started by—I applied to I think it was [University of] Michigan for a graduate program in Spanish language and literature, and was accepted but then said, *Well, gee, how am I gonna pay for it?* And I’m getting very serious about this young lady I’d met. You know, *I’ve got a military commitment, and I got some bills to pay.* I said, *Well,*—so finally—a lot of my fellow graduates that were in the Army ROTC upon graduation immediately went on to active duty to start their two-year program.

By the time I finally decided that, well, no,—I mean, those of us that were going to graduate school had almost an automatic deferment until graduate school was over, although you still had to do your two-year commitment. I do remember saying, *No, I think I need to get on with the military commitment*, so I did not go onto active duty until the end of December, after graduation, so there was six months where I went home and worked in a gas station and kicked around and did whatever there was to do.

But then I said, *Now I think it’s time to go onto active duty, since I’m gonna have to do it anyhow.* So I did. And so I shipped off at the end of December of 1964 to Fort Benning, Georgia, which is—I was—my commission was in the military intelligence branch of the army, but all the MI officers begin their training, indoctrination into the Army as infantry, so was sent off for three months to the [U.S. Army] Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

It was three months of, you know, full-blown training to, you know, be an infantry officer. That’s all. It was lots of shooting of guns and firing of artillery and running around out in the puckerbush and looking at tactics. You know, it was a full course of military instruction, as you would expect.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: So upon graduation, was—at that point, then, *Okay, now what do you do?* And so those of us—there were a lot of us in that one course, going through IOBC—still remember it—Infantry Officers [sic; Officer] Basic Course, IOBC—going through the IOBC course. Many, maybe most, maybe all of us were military intelligence officers that were in that particular flight going through. No, we weren't all—no, now I remember. I can remember some memorable fellow officers coming in, really the first time that I really had the opportunity, then, and today I continue to call it an opportunity, to get up close and personal with some fellows in the Army of same rank that were not of the same color. There was a contingent of brand-new second lieutenants, as I was, that had come out of a small black South Carolina college and had all been commissioned into the Army, and there were a bunch of them that were there in the same IOBC group. And totally different from—you know, part of the education—said, "Gee, there's a whole different world out there."

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And they were looking at us, and we were looking at them—and actually got on with them just fine.

CHUNG: Interesting.

KRUGER: Especially out in the puckerbush. But anyway, so—but the infantry training was something that, okay, you got to do it, and we did okay and passed with reasonably flying colors—you know, all the requirements of—okay, now I'm qualified to be a platoon leader.

But being in military intelligence, now, you're looking for an assignment, and so all of us that were in military intelligence—you know, there were—I think they asked us, you know, "Anything you'd like to do?" And so I said, "Okay, yeah, I'd like to be assigned"—and for whatever reason; I don't now remember why—but I said, "I want to go to Monterey [Presidio of Monterey], the language school in California, and I specifically want to learn Serbo-Croatian," okay?

CHUNG: Mmm.

KRUGER: And so I put in that as—that was my request, and it came back and said, "Aha! You're accepted in the language school, but we don't have any need right now for Serbo-Croatian, so how about Vietnamese?" I said, "Well,"—by then, you know, the Vietnam [sic] was beginning to heat up, and, you know, I'd been in the Mountain and Winter Warfare with my—you know, I like the winters, and I said, "You know, winters don't happen in Vietnam."

CHUNG: [Chuckles.]

KRUGER: And so I said, "Okay, thanks but no thanks." Okay. So my name went back into the pot. Then the next—they came at me the next time and said, "Okay, we'd like to have you stay at Fort Benning for another six months." "Okay. Well, that's—you know, it's kind of warm here, too, but okay. And what will I do?" They said, "Well, we want you to go through Ranger School and Airborne [School] for jump training." And said, "We see your Spanish language abilities, and we will then assign you to the 101st Military Intelligence Battalion." I said, "Okay, well, let me think about this."

So I look at the 101, and it was Spanish speaking, military intelligence, Ranger, Airborne. I said, *I'm not sure I want to do that.* And so I said, "No, no thanks." And glad I did because within six months that unit was the first one—they parachuted into [the] Dominican Republic in one of the incursions we had. And so, you know, I mean, it was fairly obvious that these were—they were not technically Green Berets, but that was the force. I said, *No, that's not me.* So I said no, and they said, "Well, okay."

Then, name, back in the pool again, and then they came with the next one and said, "Okay, smarty, here's—we would like to assign you to a unit that we can only tell you its name. We cannot tell you what it is, what it does or what you will do, but it's military intelligence. It's the U.S. Army's Special Security

Group." "Okay." "USASSG." "Okay, well, tell me more." "Nope, that's it. That's all we can tell you. Do you want it or don't you?" So I said, "Well, okay."

By then, you know, I'd seen people getting assigned over here, over there, and I said, "I'm not sure I want that," so I said, "Okay, fine. I'll take it." And one of the reasons—they said, "We think you can pass muster from a security standpoint, which is one of the reasons we want to invite you to join" this funny little unit. And, indeed, within a few weeks, I was hearing from family and friends, the FBI [Federal Bureau of investigation] and everybody had been around, talking to them about, you know, "Who is this guy, and is he a good citizen?" Doing a background check, in detail.

As it turned out, I was very smart to have accepted that position because at the end of the day, it was the Army's presidential briefing unit.

CHUNG: Oh!

KRUGER: It was the unit based in Washington, D.C., that, although I was never—I spent four years with that unit, with that organization in various postings, but I was never senior enough to brief the president. The colonels always did that. But on occasion I did have the opportunity to give the daily briefings to the secretary of defense, so it was—

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER —it was a funny little, very specialized, very secret organization that was in charge of basically two things: one, protecting very sensitive intelligence materials in categories beyond top secret; and two, synthesizing that information and delivering it to people that had the appropriate security clearances to listen to it. Obviously, it was intelligence gathering and synthesizing, and at the time, for almost 50 years, you know, basically said nothing about what it was. And even today, when I see some of the things that we were protecting in the 1960s, I see some of the stuff now that is—I watch it on TV. I say, *Oh, my God! Oh, they let the cat out of the bag.* Well, at the time, it would have been a cat coming out of the bag. Today, okay, everybody understands that satellites happened, and all of this high-tech intercept—it happens, and we—I mean, we were—that's basically—that's what we were doing.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: And it was protecting it—and very successfully, I might add—protecting it and disseminating, as appropriate, the analysis that you did from it.

CHUNG: All right!

KRUGER: And did that for the four years, including the year in Vietnam.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Okay.

So when you're D.C., working there, in the Special Security Group, what did your daily routine look like? So, like, you would go to—

KRUGER: Oh, it was all over the map, depending on—the first two years was in Washington, D.C., with the Army Materiel Command, right at what was then National Airport, now [Ronald] Reagan Airport, in an old, temporary building—temporary from the First World War, that is finally gone. But it was every day—well, a combination of—you know, we had an office that was a vault. I mean, it literally—the whole office was a vault. And one of us had to be sitting outside, guarding the door, and generals coming in, saying, "I want to come in," and saying, "General, you don't have the appropriate security clearances. You can't go in." "I'm a general, and you're a lieutenant, and I'm goin' in." I said, "Sir, you're not goin' in." [Both chuckle.] And making it stick. In that job, it was much less synthesizing the intelligence; it was much more guarding it in those two years, was basi- —and making the—we had a group of military and civilian contractors that had the appropriate clearances, that we would then provide—that we'd have in the vault the information. They'd come in, sit down, and we'd give them the documents, and they'd work on the documents to do whatever had to be done. And we were basically the safeguards.

CHUNG: Okay.

KRUGER: And actually the fourth year, at Fort Belvoir, when I came back from Vietnam, was similar, much more making sure that we were appropriately vetting the people for clearance and then protecting the information. In Vietnam, it was much less that; it was much more taking the information real time, putting it together and then saying, "Okay, General [raps table several times], this is where the guys are. Let's go get 'em."

That year in Vietnam, using the same stuff, but at the other end, and we were actually delivering to the general and his chief of staff very specialized intelligence that, you know, we did not want the other guys to know how we were getting it. But we were reasonably successful in finding the locations of the VC [Viet Cong] and the North Vietnamese Army and providing that—and we, you know, part of the network and actually did some collecting of that information as well from aircraft for the year in Vietnam.

And in Vietnam also, when we were analyzing—you know, seeing where the other guys were periodically with what—actually, with some frequency—put on a helicopter and shipped off to—or a fixed-wing aircraft—and go from the 1st Cav [1st Cavalry Division] over to the 4th Division [4th Infantry Division] or the 1st Division [1st Infantry Division] or down to Saigon to coordinate the information.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: So it was delivering the intelligence in the year in Vietnam.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Okay. Yeah, so definitely we're getting there. We now—we'll talk about your decision—because it says that—from your memoir I read—that you volunteered to go to Vietnam.

KRUGER: Yeah, I did, because I'd been two years in the Washington, D.C., area. By then, I guess I'd been promoted to first lieutenant, and I think it was maybe 18 months into the promotion to first lieutenant. And the lifestyle as a lieutenant in Washington actually was very good, because there was almost none of us at first lieutenant. I mean, lieutenants didn't happen in Washington. We were always out in the puckerbush, but—so I was an unusual persona in

Washington, and every time a general would throw a party, he'd love to have a lieutenant there as a token, so my wife and I were always invited to the [general's? generals'?] parties, and the colonels', of which they were a dime a dozen. There were thousands of colonels, always, "[Makes grumbling sounds.] How did you get invited to that party? I wanted to go to that party!" They're trying, you know, to get their careers, you know, ahead. And I said, "Colonel, what can I tell you?" [Chuckles.] "I didn't ask for it, but I got the invite, and I can't give it to you." "[Makes grumbling sounds again.]" [Laughs.]

So the life was good, and my wife was teaching school at the time and enjoying it very much. And so we were—I mean, it was a good life. And I'm saying, *Well, you know,*—so at that point, with some encouragement from the lieutenant colonel who was the head of the little group that—I was working directly for him. He was encouraging me to—you know, he said, "You know, gee, Lieutenant, we need you to stay in the Army. We like what you're doing." I said, *I can do an awful lot worse than staying in the Army*, so I was considering it as a career.

So with that in mind, I said, "Okay." I had a two-year commitment, so we're coming up to the two years. At that point, I, you know, could say, "Goodbye. I'm outta here" or go [to] what was called "voluntary indefinite," where I would simply re-up and say, "Okay, I'll let you know if I want to ever get out, but I'd like to stay in if you will have me." And they—"Oh, yeah. We'd love that."

But the caveat to that was that at that point, Vietnam was really heated up. This was the end of 1966, and Vietnam was—I mean, it was ablaze. But they said, "You know, Dave, you're gonna have to take an unaccompanied tour. You're gonna have to go someplace without your wife, but we have funny little units here, there and everywhere, and so here are your orders to go to"—of all places—"Korea," where we had a branch, with the U.S. forces in Korea, to safeguard and deliver the intelligence to them as needed on the Korean Peninsula.

And so I took one look at that and said, "Well, you know, if I'm considering this as a career, Korea would be interesting, but that's not where the action is, and that's Vietnam right now. If it's all the same to you, I would accept a change in orders to send me to Vietnam." "Oh, wonderful!" They had to—I mean, there was a requirement from—they had requirements all over the place for people—so I got assigned to—within the same SSG, the same Special Security Group, to the unit in Vietnam, which had subunits. It had a headquarters in Saigon, and then it had subunits with each of the Army divisions.

By simply luck of the draw—I didn't request it, but by luck of the draw, I arrived at Cam Ranh Bay. Went right to Saigon for a day or two and then was sent up to the 1st Cav [1st Cavalry Division], to be the liaison officer to the commanding general of the 1st Cav.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. So, yeah. I guess, as you said, by this point, the end of 1966, like, the Vietnam War has been building up for quite a bit of time, and there has been—you know, I'm pretty sure there's been a lot of discussion, like, you know, outside of [the] military, just, like, within, like, United States society, and, like, there are some things that you are, like, learning and hearing from, like, I guess, the Special Security Group—

KRUGER: But it was not until January of 1968 that it really hit the fan and that the antiwar movement became galvanized. Before then, it was—yeah, it was there. It was always there.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Yeah, I was going to say—

KRUGER: But it was not potent at all until [the] Tet [Offensive], which was January of 1968. At the end of 1966, when I was looking at it, especially in Washington, especially being a little bit isolated within the military, we all thought we were doing the right thing for the right reasons, and the few people that you saw dissenting—you know, "They don't know what they're talkin' about."

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Okay.

KRUGER: The antiwar movement was not big time, certainly that we saw at all at the end of 1966. I arrived in Vietnam, I don't know, something like the 10th of January, 1967.

CHUNG: Okay. So I guess there was, like, not much of, like, a social atmosphere—

KRUGER: No.

CHUNG: —to kind of influence—

KRUGER: No.

CHUNG: —your ideas.

KRUGER: No, no, no, not at all. That did not enter into it at all.

CHUNG: Mmm. Okay.

KRUGER: A little bit of—you know, my parents saying, "Oh, my God, you're goin' to war." I said, "Yeah," but with more than just resignation saying, "Well, it's the right thing to do." So certainly family support. Wife didn't like it but said, "I understand." So she stayed that year and moved in with three single schoolteachers. The four of them had an apartment in Alexandria or Arlington, Virginia—and all teaching school for the year. And had a ball.

And because I—and therefore I didn't have to send her any money during that year. Was able to take all the money, such as it was, and pay off the college loans.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: So.

CHUNG: Yeah.

KRUGER: So, no, the antiwar movement, I can't remember even focusing on it one minute before I went.

CHUNG: I guess, then, what was kind of the atmosphere or the attitude towards, like, [the] Vietnam War within, like, the Special Security Group? Were there any discussions—like,—

KRUGER: No.

CHUNG: —formal or informal?

KRUGER: Oh, no, no, absolutely not. It was being ordered from on high as the right thing to do; we gotta do it. No, no, there was—I never remember—actually, within—from my entire career in the military, where I was in these specialty units, I never, never had any discussions about should we be doing this or not? It was not questioned. Many may have had thoughts about it, but they were never articulated, certainly not in my presence.

CHUNG: Right. Uh-huh.

KRUGER: No, these—no, I can honestly say we all looked at it. We had a job to do, and we were going to do it the best we could.

CHUNG: And did you have access to, like, I guess, then, what's going on in Vietnam? Like, those information while you were in Special Security Group?

KRUGER: Oh, yes. Probably more than the press had because we were on the inside looking out. We were, in retrospect, although we did not look at it this way, I clearly remember we did not look at body count as being the way we were counting success. I certainly do remember the emphasis on "How many did we shoot today?" But I don't think it really occurred to us that it was looking at the wrong thing. In retrospect, it *was* the wrong thing to look at, but at the time, it was—you know, it was just, okay, that's one way of counting how we're succeeding, because the year I was there, we really thought we were succeeding.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

KRUGER: It was not until—well, it was two weeks after I left is when Tet blew up. And when it blew up, the unit I was with got shipped up to ICOR [Infantry Combat Regiment] to go relieve the Marines at Khe Sanh. So I missed that. I missed that thing by two weeks.

CHUNG: Mmm! Right.

KRUGER: I'd rather be lucky than good anytime. [Chuckles.]

CHUNG: Right. So I guess by the time you have made [the] decision to go to Vietnam, like, you had a very clear, like, more understanding of what's going on there than any [cross-talk; other office?; 1:22:42].

KRUGER: Oh, I don't know. It was—you know, generically you knew there was a shooting war going on, and it was what we needed to do, so let's go do it. The specifics of it, I don't think that many of us, if any, really looked at that closely.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Okay.

KRUGER: In part because the minutia, the detail that you have today in the information age even in the military wasn't available. We knew generically what was happening, but the playing out of the war in the living room in the United States was something new to the United States. It was really at the forefront or the beginning of the true information age. It was—[Sighs.] I don't know how—even today, I don't know how I think about it. But in World War II, the press was deeply controlled, and today, with the embedded reporters in all the military units, I'm not sure that's the thing to do, because it has led to—well, in part—and even in the year I spent there, we had the deep sense that the civilian political realities were not allowing the military to do what it needed to do to win the war, even at the time.

That, we understood, I think, quite well when we were there because we were certainly constrained by the domestic political realities, even in 1967. The rules of war, which were not being observed by the other side, were not allowing us to—probably to do some things that would not have been the best things to do, but we would have done them. But in retrospect, now that I see some of the reporting, the programs that are being put on and are available now in our information age that opine on this whole thing, it is clear that the military was hobbled by what it could and could not do.

It's a hard thing to say because if you hadn't hobbled them, lots more people would have died. However, it's arguable that it might have shortened and forestalled what happened later. I don't [know]. Who knows?

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: It's a road not taken. You'll never know.

CHUNG: Yeah. Yeah. Actually, we'll take a brief break, and then we'll, after the break, go into details about your experience in Vietnam.

KRUGER: Okay.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Great.

[Recording interruption.]

CHUNG: Okay. So, now, going to Vietnam in January 1967, correct?

KRUGER: Right.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. So, yeah, if you could describe, like, kind of the location that you landed [in] and, like, your first impression of the place?

KRUGER: Well, at the front end, it was a whirlwind. As I said, I was a couple of days in Saigon and then on a military aircraft up to—first went up to An Khê, which is up in the Central Highlands, which was the headquarters of the 1st Cav. That was where they—although the division, itself, was down in the Bồng Sơn plain, down on the coast—you know, I don't know, maybe 50, 60 kilometers away.

I remember arriving in An Khê and marveling how the engineers had built all these barracks for everybody. Said, *Boy, it doesn't look like anything gets cold around here*, because everything was screened. As it turned out, January was not the warmest month, or the coldest—I think February was probably the coldest—it was—you could feel the humidity already, and it was just a different—just a different climate and a different place.

There wasn't an awful lot of activity around An Khê because neither the Viet Cong nor the U.S. Army were interested strategically in that area, so nothing was happening. It just happened to be where they had the logistics headquarters for the division, the division itself.

And so within a week, I was out—I think we first went to a small landing zone, but it was quite soon that the division headquarters, the field headquarters of the division moved to Landing Zone LZ Two Bits, which was in Bồng Sơn, about 50 kilometers north of Quy Nhơn. And spent most of the year in and out of LZ Two Bits and had my own little tent I lived in.

One of the first things you did was dig a hole in the tent and get to culvert halves to put over the—you know, basically seven feet by three feet hole in the ground, down three feet, and put the culvert halves over it and then completely cover it with sandbags, and it was in that hole where you slept because with some frequently, especially at night, a rocket would come flying in, and you did not want to be hit by the rocket.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: And I don't remember that we had very many casualties from the intermittent rocketing, the rocketing attacks, in large part because we all—we took precautions against it. You know, you knew that it was inevitable that they were going to sling rockets at you, so you—certainly for sleeping, you dug a hole, and you slept in it.

I remember in the summer, when it was just awful hot—and, boy, it was not comfortable trying to sleep in the hole, but during the course of the year, built furniture for myself from ammunition crates. There was plenty of wood available, so I managed to build a desk and a chair and a little bureau, and so I had a furnished tent. I think a lot of us did that. Pretty rustic but effective. It worked.

We had generator power, so you had a light bulb in the tent. You ran a wire to it. The bathrooms were latrines, of course. The showers were—you know, you basically constructed—well, I guess it was a tripod? No, I think it was a four-posted thing, and on the top you had a big canvas bag, and at the bottom of the canvas bag, open at the top—well, at the bottom of the bag was a shower head. You know, you had to—on a ladder. You had to climb up and pour water into the bucket, into that canvas bag and then wait for the sun to warm it up, and you had a hot shower. Well, sort of. You had a warm shower. So that was—you know, for some semblance of cleanliness.

Meals were largely C Rations, not A Rations—you know, mass cooked. C Rations were small boxes that had a can of something as your main course, with a variety—probably ten different main courses in a can, and then another can with some sort of a roll in it, and another can with a cookie or a piece of cake, and then some sort of a chocolate bar and usually a four-pack of cigarettes. That was the C Ration for one meal.

And what you do is take your main course can and take it to a central—they had a 55-gallon drum with a fire under it, and you'd boil up the water, and everybody would chuck their can into the hot water to heat it up, and then you'd come back after it was heated up, and then you'd get *a* can, because mixing them all up, you never knew which can you were going to get. So at least you had hot food, such as it was. It was certainly nutritious. I've had a lot better food than this, but—especially with—I mean, the one variety of those ten varieties that everybody hated was ham and limas, ham and lima beans. Awful, awful stuff! But some of the others—you know, they were edible, anyway.

And certainly at the front end, many of these were—you look at the date on them, and they were all from the Korean War. They had all been shipped to Korea, weren't used and got reshipped ten years later to Vietnam. So the ten-year-old cigarettes were a thing of beauty. [Laughs.]

CHUNG: Right. Whoof!

KRUGER: Yeah. And I had a two-and-a-half-ton truck from my funny little unit, with a big trailer on it. But it was the only deuce-and-a-half truck that I saw that had an automatic transmission. It was—and what a—oh!—underpowered, terrible piece of equipment, but the only thing we did with it was run it once a month with the landing zone's ration tickets.

Every month, you'd get a ration for beer, and so it was known that I had the only vehicle available to go get the beer once a month, because we never used it. We never had any use for this except when we needed to pack up and move to the next place. But we weren't moving, so here's my truck parked there. So once a month, magically, the entire camp's ration cards would appear in my tent, and I'd have everybody's ration cards for beer, including the generals'. And it was known that, oh, yeah, the captain—he and his sergeant are going—you know, tomorrow he's going down to Quy Nhơn, down to the docks to get the monthly supply of beer. And so the sergeant and I once a month would run down to Quy Nhơn, 50 kilometers down Route 1, go out to the docks, turn in all the ration cards, and we would absolutely pack that deuce-and-a-half truck and the trailer to the gills with beer, case after case after case after case of beer and then run the 50 kilometers back up the road to LZ Two Bits.

Most of the beer we had was Lone Star, out of Texas. None of it had an alcohol content more than 3.2 percent, and it was I believe impossible to get drunk on it, which was, of course, why they did what they did, which made all the sense in the world, but as a morale boost, I mean, having even lukewarm beer was better than no beer. So we had,—as I say, once a month we had—we'd go get the beer and bring it back to the camp, and everybody would be happy for about a week and a half, and then we'd run out. [Laughs.]

And, of course, cooling it was not an option because, I mean, it's just—

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: Refrigeration was something that—you know, that's not in the arsenal of things to do.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Yeah.

KRUGER: But I spent—you know, based at that LZ, but during the year, I don't know how many hundreds of hours that I flew around in helicopters, in carrying out whatever it was I was having to carry out and was therefore awarded two Army Air Medals for I don’t know how many hours it was, at least a hundred each, I think.

Was shot down once in a helicopter and crash landed three more times with mechanical failures. All four times, we landed in rice paddies, which was probably fortuitous because water gives a little bit more than ground, so when we hit, although we hit hard, everybody would—there were no serious casualties in any of the crashes, including the pilots. And every one of the four—and the first helicopter in to make sure that we were all right and/or to protect—the first helicopter in, every time, was the commanding general. I don’t think he was watching after me, but we were always near enough to where he was that when we went down, he was always coming in. And he had a reputation for doing that. You know, the unit—you know, we looked after ourselves.

So, you know, I have memories of—as a passenger, in all the helicopter runs—the crew of a Huey helicopter [Bell UH-1 Iroquois] were the pilot, copilot and the sergeant who was the crew chief, and he would man one of the two M60 machine guns, one mounted on each side. And usually the first—the first passenger coming in would then sit in the—would man the other machine gun. So on occasion, you know, you get strapped in, and on occasion—

I especially remember one memorable time. We’re flying, I don’t know from where to where, but as we’re flying along, you see these red things coming up, and they’re tracer rounds, of course, coming up from the jungle below. You’re getting shot at. Warrant officer pilot comes onto the intercom. Says, “Hey, Captain, you see that?” I said, “Yeah, you mean those tracer rounds?” He said, “Yeah, do you see where they’re comin’ from?” I said, “Well, not exactly.” He says, “Well, wait a minute.” And so he banked the helicopter, came back around to go back over where he thought the rounds were coming from and tipped the helicopter right on its side so I’m—although I’m strapped in, I’m hanging straight down from the side of the helicopter on the machine gun. And he says, “You see where it’s comin’ from, Captain?” I said, “Well, not exactly, but I’m gonna find out!” You press the old trigger and rat-tat-tat-tat-tat, and I chewed up an awful lot of palm fronds. I’m sure I didn’t hit anything, but—he then decided that, you know, he'd given back as much as we'd taken in, and off we went to—but that happened all the time. So, you know.

CHUNG: Mmm. Yeah.

KRUGER: I don't ever remember ever actually shooting anybody. I did kill a rat in my tent, but that doesn't count.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: I do remember—and speaking about the period rocket attacks coming in, yeah, you saw those, but I do remember the worst of the incoming fire at the landing zone was probably a long round overshot from our own 105 [mm] Howitzer. At noon, everybody was sitting out on top of their bunkers and reading the mail, because noon lunch was usually mail call, and all of a sudden, probably about a hundred yards from where I was sitting out, reading the mail, was where the round hit, on another guy's bunker, and there was a minute—just before, there was a guy sitting there, and after the explosion, I mean nothing was found of him. He was gone. And it was, you know, friendly fire. And that happened all too much. Everybody—when that starts happening, boy, you duck for cover, but fortunately that was the only round that came in. And as near as we could tell later, it was just, you know, the artillery guy down the line that mischarged the round and fired probably too long. He was shooting for somewhere in the middle, and it kept going. But friendly fire was always an issue.

But as I was saying, I traveled widely in the country. Never made it to Khe Sanh, but certainly was in and out of Da Nang all the time and then Pleiku and Buôn Ma Thuột and Da Lat and Nha Trang, where all the other units, were to and confer with them, and I was always on the move.

Crash landed once in a fixed-wing aircraft. That was fun. The pilot and copilot had to be carried out because they both broke both legs when they hit the other side, but the rest of us in the back of the plane, while bruised, walked away from it. No, it happened every day.

CHUNG: Right. So you said that you were, like, in air, like, on helicopters for a lot of times—

KRUGER: Yep.

CHUNG: —like, I think the most time.

KRUGER: Yep.

CHUNG: And so I guess now I'm a little bit curious about, like, more details about the unit that you were attached to and, like, your role and organization of that unit.

KRUGER: Well, I mean, the 1st Cavalry Division was air mobile. We would provide information—we and all the intelligence sources would provide information as to where we thought the bad guys were, and it was up to the generals—the general and his staff to decide when and how and where to dispatch platoons or companies or battalions to helicopter in and around where we thought they were, to go find them. And that was—that cat-and-mouse was every day, all day. And so that was—

We'd show them where we thought they were, and they'd decide, "Okay, that's a big enough target. Let's go do it," and they'd issue the orders to load up a bunch of the people onto helicopters and send them in.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right. So what were the things that, like, kind of you were looking after or the signs that you were looking for when you were on helicopters, like?

KRUGER: Well, most of the time I was on helicopters, I was not—it was not intelligence gathering; that was getting from here to there.

CHUNG: Okay.

KRUGER: Most of it was. And I was—no, I guess I never did go with one of the attack units, but on occasion would go in after—in the after action. But, no, my role was to help find them and report it, not to go in and take care of them.

CHUNG: Right. Okay. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: And, you know, I was—I guess I did a good enough job. Got two Bronze Stars out of the experience, both for service, not for valor.

CHUNG: Right. So you collected information about, like, certain site and send those information to—

KRUGER: Yeah, you'd give them to the staff, and it was an ongoing exercise. You know, we were tracking all of the units, all the Viet Cong and NVA [North Vietnamese Army] units that we could, and—"Okay, we think they're going here, and if they're heading there, they're probably going to end up over here" when you look at the terrain and whatever.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm. Yeah, and also you mentioned one time that your helicopter was almost shot down.

KRUGER: No, it *was* shot down. I mean, we took gunfire and it stopped the engine.

CHUNG: Oh. Okay. Do you remember when that was, by any chance?

KRUGER: I don't know, sometime during the summer of 1967. Who knows when? I mean, that happened a lot. A lot of helicopters went down. Thousands. Of crashes. Most of them, the helicopters were irreparable. You'd drag them out—you know, go and pick them up and take them out and repair them and back in the air.

CHUNG: Right. And you said that there were quite a number of crash landing as well.

KRUGER: Well, yeah. I mean in a harsh environment and over-using the equipment, you had a lot of mechanical failures where you didn't get shot but the engine still stopped. You were all right as long as your main rotor blade kept going around, even without power, provided that the tail rotor also kept going. The worst event was to have your tail rotor stop while your main rotor was going around, because then the entire helicopter will go around with the main rotor, and it's fatal.

CHUNG: Mmm. I see.

KRUGER: But if you lose the power, you can tilt the blades, and these warrant officers flying these things knew how to do it, because it was [chuckles] self-preservation, understanding how lift works. With the power—when you power up, the main rotors go around, you're pushing air through the blades to give you lift. If you lose power and you start falling, if you tilt the blades a little bit differently, the air—as you're coming down, the air is in effect rushing up through, and it gives you some lift, and it's what's known as auto rotating. And in all four cases where we went down, where *I* went down, the warrant officers were able to auto rotate. You hit hard, but you didn't land in a fatal pile.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

KRUGER: But auto rotation was—I mean, that's what you—that saved most of the crashes, which makes the helicopter a valuable tool. You don't have quite the opportunity with a fixed-wing because when it's time to come down, you know, you come down.

CHUNG: Right. Yeah, so I just looked up some, like, things that 1st Cav was up to during all your time there in 1967, and I found out that 1st Cav was assisting in marine operation [legion?; 1:50:40] to Đức Phổ (Duc Pho). So did you guys ever kind of—

KRUGER: I don't remember the specifics. It all blurred into one great big—every single day, there was something else going on, and going someplace else, but it was all in the area around—in II [pronounced like the number two] Corps, up from Quy Nhơn and well below Da Nang. I mean, Đức Phổ (Duc Pho)—yeah, I mean—yeah, it's there, but I'm not sure—there's nothing that really stood out to me. It was just another of the engagements.

CHUNG: Mmm. I see.

KRUGER: Some big, some small, but there was always something going on.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. I see. And what was your interaction with your other—like, other fellow—I guess generals and colonels and infantrymen?

KRUGER: Well, I'd see the general every day, probably two or three times every day and usually with his intelligence officer and chief of staff. You know, we weren't bothered by any of the other—we were not part of the 1st Cav; we were assigned as support to them. But it was known that we were providing a service that was not to be sneered at, so we were well treated. The actual collection of the intelligence was largely in the hands of the 371st RRC [Radio Research Company], which we affectionately called thee Refrigerator Repair Company. But RRC is radio reconnaissance, and it was, you know, basically direction finding. And that was done with ground stations but, most importantly, with fixed-wing aircraft that would fly around with RDF [radio direction finding] equipment.

And so I did a fair amount of my flying in some of those small aircraft in the collection activity but not on the ground. I never did go out on the ground with them. They were not part of us; we were not part of them. They did the collecting; we did the analysis and delivery.

CHUNG: Okay. I see. And did you grow close, like, to your colleagues? Like, did you become, like, kind of good friends with them? Because that's kind of the narrative you hear, usually.

KRUGER: It is, but you hear that in the accounts that are now given, especially in the media, but they are focused almost exclusively on the combat units and in the support units, which were 90 percent of the people there. Only 10 percent were actually combat. The 90 percent—the camaraderie, while okay, was never close. And I have—is that true? Yeah, I guess I have no contacts now from the year in Vietnam. None. And, frankly, not overly interested in finding any of them.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Great. So—and I read from your memoir that you had a midyear break in Hawaii?

KRUGER: Yup.

CHUNG: And five days in Bangkok as well?

KRUGER: Yup, yup.

CHUNG: Yeah, so could you—

KRUGER: The R&R [Rest and Recuperation] was for morale purposes. It was part of the deal that everybody, including the combat troops, all got an R&R somewhere. And among the available places was to Hawaii to meet—usually to meet wife, which I what I did. And so Jean flew in from Washington, and, you know, we had a nice week in Hawaii, and then back to it.

At the end of my tour—I think it must have been in December; I was getting close to being done—I think I remember there was something of a lull, not much going on, and they had an extra place. They said, "Gee, Captain, we got an extra berth if you want to go to Bangkok," so I went five days to Bangkok. So I actually wangled two during the year I was there, and saw Bangkok for the first time and said, *Oh, boy, look at this place!*

CHUNG: So the trip to Bangkok was almost on the end of your—

KRUGER: Yeah, it was at the very end, yeah, yeah.

CHUNG: And when did you go to Hawaii for mid-break?

KRUGER: I don't know. It must have been mid-year. It was probably June or July. I don't remember. I'm sure I could go back and find stuff that would tell me, but it was in the summer. It was just about halfway through, about six months through.

CHUNG: Okay. And was that your first time in Hawaii as well as, like, [your] first time in Bangkok?

KRUGER: Certainly, the first time on the ground in Hawaii. I don't remember now when we first flew to Vietnam in January of '67—I don't—it was a commercially chartered [Boeing] 707. We must have stopped somewhere, although I don't think we ever got off the plane. No, we would not have gone to Hawaii. I'm sure we would have gone from—went from California to Tokyo and then Tokyo to Cam Ranh.

But first time to Hawaii and been back many times since. First time to Bangkok; been back many times since. And so, you know, took the opportunity again to see something different.

CHUNG: Right. Was Bangkok to you, like, very different from the scenery in Vietnam that you were in?

KRUGER: Still is.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. It always is.

KRUGER: Yup, yup. And if I thought Vietnam was warm, Bangkok, of course, is tropical. You've been there, I trust?

CHUNG: No, I haven't.

KRUGER: Oh, you haven't been!

CHUNG: Yeah. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: But it's very different. The Thai people are very different from the Vietnamese. Of course, the Vietnamese are very different from the Chinese, and the Chinese are very different from the Koreans, which are very different from the Japanese. I mean, everybody—there are all sorts of different cultures.

It was a nice reprieve in Bangkok because you weren't getting shot at and didn't have to worry about that, but the city of Bangkok—I mean, it's a very eastern city. Especially then. With the [Bangkok] National [Museum] and the Grand Palace and the Temple of Dawn and, well, the—no, that's in Beijing. But all the temples up and down the river are just very different. And took the opportunity to go see a bunch of them.

And came back at the end of the year, and I remember saying to Jean, "Too bad this is happening to Vietnam because I find it physically to be a beautiful country, and, you know, I like the people." But that's another story that you'll get to, I'm sure.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: In the aftermath.

CHUNG: Yeah. Mm-hm. Yeah. And I—also kind of going off on that, I'm curious if you were able to get in kind of contact or was able to ever encounter any, like, Vietnamese, like, local people or—

KRUGER: Did, but only—they were—usually they were wanting something from us, and, yeah, you'd go out into the villages near the camp, and you could get a cold beer there. They did have—somebody—I think they did manage to figure out how to get some manufactured ice, so you could go out and you could get a cold beer. And so you'd interact with them, but—I mean, they were, you know, trying to survive the war, themselves, and trying to—you know, they're doing whatever business they could do.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

KRUGER: And as long as we were protecting them from the Viet Cong, the ones especially right near the camp, actually, their life wasn't all that bad until we left, and then, of course, it's back to terrible.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm, mm-hm. I see.

KRUGER: But, no, made no, *no* lasting contacts at all.

CHUNG: Oh, okay.

KRUGER: And in large measure, given the sensitivity of the intelligence work that I was doing, was encouraged *not* to make contacts with foreigners.

CHUNG: Okay. Uh-huh.

KRUGER: Makes sense.

CHUNG: Right. So you were not really in contact with I guess other, like, units, like, from other countries.

KRUGER: I did on occasion sanitize the information we had, and I on occasion would go right next door to the White Horse Division [9th Infantry Division of the Republic of Korea], the Korean division that was in the operating area next to ours.

Three or four times went and sat down with their intelligence people to talk about, "Okay, where are they? Where do we think they're going? What are they doing?" And I never operated or cooperated at all, ever, with the Vietnamese forces. That was left to other people.

CHUNG: Okay. I see.

KRUGER: As I said, I did deal on occasion with the Koreans.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Okay.

KRUGER: And never with the [U.S.] Marines—

CHUNG: Mmm. Never with the Marines. I see.

KRUGER: —to the north, largely because what we were looking at was not in their area of operation anyhow, so—

CHUNG: Mmm. Okay. I see. Interesting.

KRUGER: Mm-hm.

CHUNG: Right! So is there anything else about your time in Vietnam that you would like to add?

KRUGER: Oh, geez. It was—actually, from a health standpoint, did just fine. I don't remember—well, I might have had a cold or some form of stomach discomfort with some of the crap that we were fed, but I don't remember ever having any down time. If I had a headache or a stomach problem, you know, if I'm just—you know, stuck through it and never took any time off for health reasons.

When I came back from Vietnam, I weighed 100 pounds less than I weigh today.

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: And was not in bad shape. But skinny as a rail, about 130 pounds. The climate was that kind of debilitating, which was one of the reasons that we were actually encouraged to drink the beer, for liquid. But, yeah, I was not in bad shape at all, just skinny.

CHUNG: I see. So how did you—were there ways for you to kind of remain in contact and kind of get yourself updated with what's happening in the States while you were there?

KRUGER: Only through the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, which is biased, and, of course, whatever you read in the mail coming in from family and friends. Had lots and lots of letters. But I don't ever remember any letters referring at all to the controversial aspects of why we were there. I don't ever remember, ever, any of that. Just family and friends were not focused on that, and it was more a report on what *they* were doing, and I was reporting what *I* doing back to them, but not in any real military detail.

CHUNG: Mmm. Okay.

KRUGER: Of course, social media didn't happen. We did—and my wife always tells the story that, you know, when the press would say that this place or that place or whatever place that she knew was somewhere near where I was bombed, she'd get on the phone and talk to the lieutenant colonel that I had worked for in Washington and say, "Oh, Col. Bussey, oh! Oh, what's goin' on?" And our funny little organization had a communications network that was just for us, and so periodically I'd get a message from the colonel saying, "Okay, give me the assurances I can send to Jean that you're okay." [Chuckles.] But that was—it happened probably three or four times, where she'd read something in the press which—when I found out about it and got to the bottom of it, I mean, it had zero to do with me or anybody close to me, but it's what the press makes of it.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: I mean, it's like the press today. You watch the local news programs, and all you hear are the murders and the robberies and the whatevers, and you don't hear anything about normal life.

CHUNG: That's true.

KRUGER: And so all of the bad stuff gets blown *waay* out of proportion, even in a war. But it was good to have that private communication channel, but it was not used to pass rumor. It was business and more business and business on top of that. It was professional in the best sense of the word. It was a good unit. Still is a good unit. It is still in operation. I can just imagine what they're dealing with today in this whole new world. But an elite unit that I expect is still doing its job well.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: Okay, what's next?

CHUNG: Right. So you returned to the States, and that was two weeks before the Tet Offensive.

KRUGER: Yup, two weeks before Tet.

CHUNG: So what a timing.

KRUGER: I'd rather be lucky than good any time. [Chuckles.]

CHUNG: Right. Uh-huh. And you said that on your memoir that you were reassigned to Washington and spent another very interesting year in the Army.

KRUGER: Yep, yup.

CHUNG: I would like to hear a little bit about—

KRUGER: It was not unlike the two years before going to Vietnam. This time, at Fort Belvoir, the headquarters of the Army Corps of Engineers. Again, providing the commanding general and his senior staff with intelligence in materials, very highly-classified materials for the engineers to plan and to reequip and to do what they do. But it was—again, it was protection of the materials and the vetting of the individuals that were allowed to see it and preventing those that weren't authorized from seeing it. And so it was, again, a productive year. You know, again, at Fort Belvoir, lived in another vault [chuckles], where—and the communication system we had was highly encrypted. Well, even the channels that my wife got messages passed on was all highly encrypted. And to my knowledge, we were never hacked, not when I was there.

CHUNG: And I guess—I guess along with the,—like, your, more like your courier, like on a military side of your life, but it must have been quite of a bit of a transition, like, from, like, living in Vietnam for a year and then coming back to the States.

KRUGER: Yeah, but it was hardly a difficulty. I was expecting to go back to the way it was, and it was. And, again, by then I was captain, but there weren't many captains around, either, although I was no longer invited to all the general's parties because there were a few more lieutenants around, but that was just fine. But it was only for that last year.

And then probably against regulation—maybe illegal; I don't know—a friend of mine, a major that I was dealing with before I went to Vietnam called me one day. Had been back ten months. And said, "Well, I just saw your name on a list." And I said, "Oh, yeah?" Because he was by then assigned and working in personnel. I said, "Oh, yeah? What list is that?" And he says, "Well, in two weeks' time, you will be alerted for orders to go back to Vietnam." And he says, "The reason I'm telling you that"—as I say, probably illegally—"is that if it goes to two weeks and you get that alert, you cannot get out of the Army. You *will* go back to Vietnam." Which is—you know, those are the regulations. "Therefore you have within two weeks. If you decide that's something you didn't want to do, you can put in your papers to get out of the Army and you won't go."

So he says—you know, basically he says, "As a friend, I'm giving you warning, so at least you have a choice." So I had the choice to volunteer to go back again. And so I immediately sat down with wife, and the next morning the paperwork—I didn't wait the two weeks. It was, *Okay, no, I'm not—I went there once. I'm happy that I did. I have no regrets, but I'm not goin' back again.*

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And so put in the paperwork. And had lined up a job, actually, doing—because of the position I was in and because of the contacts that you have with the civilian contractors—you know, they were looking at me and saying, "Well, gee, we'd like to have *you* come work for *us* on the civilian side of things, to protect all this information, because you've got the security clearances and we know you can do it."

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And so I immediately landed a job. It wasn't protecting Army material; it was Navy, but same stuff. I said, "Fine." So it was all lined up to come back to Nashua, New Hampshire, and so things were looking great, and go to my exit physical to get out of the Army, and they said, "Well, Captain, you have a medical problem." I said, "Oh, yeah? Tell me more." So we talked about it. They said, "Well, sign here and you can go." I said, "Well, wait a minute. It says here that if I sign this, I'm waiving all of your responsibility for causing me these medical problems." He said, "Yeah, but if you want to get out, that's what you have to do." And I said, "No, I'm not gonna sign that."

So went to Walter Reed Hospital [Walter Reed National Military Medical Center] for a couple of months. I wasn't actually admitted there, but commuted back and forth to Walter Reed for tests, for two months, for them to try to sort out what it was. I mean, they just couldn't get to the bottom of it, and finally they said, "Okay, we gotta let you go." But by doing that, I became a disabled veteran and have been ever since.

And the problem is still there, and it's not life threatening or hasn't been so far. I know it's there, and it's something you watch. And it wasn't there when I entered the Army, it was when I was trying to get out, so the presumption is they gave it to me.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: So I was in two months longer than anticipated. And all the while—I mean, I kept on at Fort Belvoir doing what I was doing. I might as well because I enjoyed it and they liked having me do it, so—but then finally the day came, and I got the exit, and I was out of there. In that two-month period, the company up here in New Hampshire lost its Navy contract, so—oop! No job.

Okay, now what do you do? Well, we packed up what we had and sold the house. We bought a house in suburban Washington. Sold it and didn't lose any money, fortunately. And packed up a U-Haul trailer, put it on the car and drove north.

CHUNG: Great.

KRUGER: And so now here I am. I came—first stayed with my wife's parents in Reading, Mass., and said, "Okay, what are you gonna do now?" I said, "Well, I think I'll start interviewing with insurance companies, because they have training programs, and, okay, I'll see if I can get into a management training program and get my feet into the business world, and then from there I'll find a good company to go work for." My father-in-law said, "I have a very good friend that's—I think he's pretty senior at a bank in Boston. Would you talk to them?" I said, "Sure, I'll talk to anybody."

So he called and made an appointment for me to go in and interview with this friend of his. Well, first of all, the only suit I owned was my captain's uniform, so I went in to interview in uniform and was ushered into his office. Big, fancy office. And found that he was an executive vice president of the bank. He was right on up there. A Dartmouth graduate.

CHUNG: Ah!

KRUGER: And he, of course, had found out that I was as well. And a World War II Navy carrier pilot. And so the—you know, the college tie went down pretty well with him, and the military uniform went down pretty well with him, and he lined me up to interview with six other bank officers, every one of which were Dartmouth graduates. And I think three or four of them were also Navy carrier pilots during World War II. And at the end of the day, said, "Okay, offer you a job." So I said, "Well, okay."

I remember now it was—this was the beginning of 1969, and I looked down and said, "Oh, boy, great deal." Nine thousand dollars a year. That was big time. So to put things into perspective for you.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And that was a reasonable salary at that time. That was not bad.

CHUNG: Yeah. No. I can imagine. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: So things have changed a little bit.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And so went to work in the credit training program, assuming that I'd do that for a year or two or three and make some business contacts and get hired away by a company. And never did. Stayed with that bank for almost 30 years.

CHUNG: Oh, wow.

KRUGER: So it worked out fine.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. And at some point you also went to Hong Kong.

KRUGER: Yeah, during those 30 years—basically, half of it was in commercial lending and there, had great success in sort of funny little—back where—I became a specialist in lending to transportation companies. And with great success for the bank. Made the bank a lot of money. But as I progressed up through the ranks, was then—I'd always had an international desire, if you will. I had actually, with one of my big customers—I sorted out their European financing for them, so I was in London a lot. And having made that step across the Atlantic, you know, took my lending specialty to three or four other companies that were also dealing in Europe and helped them out in European finance, so, you know, understood a little bit about international.

But over the course of those 15 years, was asked two or three times to take an international posting, because it was a big international bank. And I said, "Well, if it's the right place and the right job, I will go." And so the first one they asked me to do was absolutely the right job. It was high up in the hierarchy of the Buenos Aires branch in Argentina, which, with the Spanish background—I mean, it was really great. So certainly the right job. But that must have been in the later

1970s, and I said, *Now, why are they offering me this job?* And it became immediately apparent that they needed somebody to go replace all the other expatriates there because everybody had left because there was—the instability in the country was leading to kidnapping of expatriates for ransom. And I said, "I don't think I wanna—it's certainly—yeah, thanks, but Argentina is not the right place right now." And it wasn't. I mean, it was not quite as bad as Chile because Chile was having serious problems at that time, but so I turned that one down.

And then was offered absolutely the right place, London, but it was a menial job. We called it the college of cardinals that we sent officers to, but I said, "No, I'm not going to be number five in the pecking order. No, that doesn't make sense."

But then the senior credit officer for the Asia Pacific Division came up, and this would have been 1982, and I said, "Well, I'll have to talk with the wife," but it seemed like not only the right job—it was number two in the region—and the right place. I'd love to get back to Asia. Went home, talked with Jean about it and it was instant: "Let's go." And sat down at the dinner table that evening with the two children, then 14 and 12, and said, "Great news! We're moving to Hong Kong." And in unison they said, "Fine. Have a nice time. We're staying here."

CHUNG: Ahh!

KRUGER: [Chuckles.] Trying to move teenage children from everything they had known, all their friends and all the schools and whatevers was not what they wanted to hear. Needless to say, we went and enjoyed the sullen silence from our children for a few months upon arrival, but once they figured out what had happened to them, they are now changed people and, they will both admit, best thing that ever happened to them.

Went to the [Hong Kong] International School for the first two years, and then daughter said, "I'm not gonna live internationally for my entire life. If it's possible, I'd like to go back and go to boarding school in the States for my last three years of high school." So she interviewed, with my wife, at, I don't know, a dozen different schools in the Northeast, including Exeter and Andover and, you know, the whole bunch, and she decided that for her the best place to be would be Northfield Mount Hermon [School], and it was.

And so she had a glorious first year there. Her brother saw it and said, "Okay, me too." So his last three years of high school were also at Northfield Mount Hermon. They were together two years. And, again, it was among the best things that happened to them.

The 1980s,—we were in Hong Kong six years. The 1980s were probably the heyday of the expatriate life. I mean, financially it was absolutely rewarding, and we had all the perks and the niceties. Oh, boy, I mean, it was really great. [Chuckles.]

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

KRUGER: And the children, after their initial negative reaction, that decided that having two round-the-world business class plane tickets every year was not all that bad. Because everywhere in the world is on the way home.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: So every summer, we'd meet somewhere. In the summer and at Christmas we'd always go somewhere for ten days or two weeks. So, you know, the Nile River and Sweden and Scandinavia and Australian beaches, Nepal, went to Korea for ten days at one point. I mean, all over. So both of our children today are very international in their outlook as well which is great.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right. Great. So you stayed in Hong Kong for six years.

KRUGER: Six years, yup.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. And then?

KRUGER: Then back to Boston for a very senior role. I actually took over the entire commercial lending function of the bank. And after five years of that, they needed to go fix Asia again and asked me to go back to Asia for the year. In 1993 went back, to Singapore. And exactly one year: 1st of January to the 31st of December.

And then, again, another crisis at the bank, and I was called back to sit on the management committee of the bank at the beginning of 1994. And, “Oh, by the way, since you know—you’re the only one that knows Asia—and they’re not open during the day when you’re doing this job, you can handle them by phone at night.” So I had responsibility for Asia for another year—yeah, a year plus. And said, *No. This—I mean, it’s too much—the stress levels. It’s something I don’t want to do anymore.*

Because I think one of the fundamental reasons that was happening from the 1960s to the 1990s—what I call the loyalty quotient had broken down. In the 1960s, the employee and the company had a loyalty to one another which was really good, and that, over the course of the next 30 years, broke down, and it’s “What can you do for me today? And what have you done?” And the loyalty of the employee to the company and the company to the employee is gone, which is unfortunate, but it is a reality today.

And you see that in the résumés that your generation—if you don’t have ten different companies who you’ve worked for on your résumé, the question is, “What, you can’t get a job?”

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: When I was looking, you know, 30, 40 years ago, now almost 50 years ago, if you had more than three names on your résumé, “What’s wrong with you? You can’t hold a job?”

CHUNG: Mmm.

KRUGER: It’s quite a reversal. You know, it’s not good or bad; it’s just the way it is.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: So anyhow, now 20 years ago this month, was asked to yet again go back to Asia to fix it and said that “I’m not goin’ back.” “Well, what do you want to do?” I said, “I want you to shoot me. Take me out back and make me a proposal I can't turn down. I want out." And so was given a package to retire at age fifty-three. And best decision I ever made.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

KRUGER: It was working—although it was very senior, working was no longer fun. Dog eat dog. I don't need this. So I've been perfectly happy 20 years.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm. So before you retired, you went at one point into Hồ Chí Minh City.

KRUGER: Yeah, I did. In 1988, near the end of our living in Hong Kong, we had the opportunity, through the—I think it was the Hong Kong University Art Association or one of the cultural organizations in Hong Kong—had the opportunity to put together a trip to Vietnam and to Angkor Wat. And so we saw that and said, "Hey, that looks like something to do." So we did. We joined a group of 22 in 1988, and we were among the very first western groups allowed back into Vietnam as tourists. We were—I think it was something like ten days. Hồ Chí Minh City, and then Phnom Penh and Angkor Wat.

CHUNG: Interesting. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: A very different experience than what you see today. It was in many respects worse than the year spent in Vietnam, from a—I mean, Saigon, Hồ Chí Minh City was a dump.

CHUNG: Yeah. So the memory is full. I have no idea why. Let's see. Yeah. Which means—well, it's good that we have a backup recorder here, so I think we'll just have to go with that. I have no idea why that's the case, because it usually allows us to record, like, five hours at max when there's, like,—

KRUGER: More memory in there?

CHUNG: Let's see. No, they only have the US drive [sic; USB drive].

KRUGER: Batteries.

CHUNG: Yeah, just batteries. Because here it says, "Using the recommended recording mode, the maximum recording time is five hours and 55 minutes," and we didn't hit that yet.

KRUGER: Didn't make it.

CHUNG: Yeah. It's really—

KRUGER: Unless you went to "super" recording. Who knows?

CHUNG: Oh, because I actually checked the recording mode, and it *was* the recommended mode.

KRUGER: Okay.

CHUNG: But, I mean, it's good that we have the other one here.

KRUGER: Okay.

CHUNG: So we'll just go on with that for now.

KRUGER: Okay.

CHUNG: So, yeah. So what was the experience like when you visited there? Like, you said it's really difference from, like, from—

KRUGER: Everything when I was there in 1967, while a raucous city, lots of military traffic with lots of traffic in the streets and lots of noise and yelling and screaming and very vibrant—the economy, I mean, driven by war spending, but driven nonetheless. Lots of employment. The hotels were well maintained for the westerners. You could get good food. I mean, everything was available.

In 1988, 20 years later, went back to the Rex Hotel, which is where we stayed, and the rooms were at best zero star. They were—paint flaking off the walls, no maintenance done, Russian air conditioners in the windows not working because they had no parts. Beds hadn't been—the linen may have been changed, but the beds were still there from 20 years before. It was decrepit. The dining facilities, which—I think we had all our meals in the hotel because restaurants were not available—the food was at best mediocre. But the hotel was only for foreigners.

And here we were, the westerners, and they put flags on each table from the countries represented, and we had—it looked like the United Nations. We had England and France and Germany and the U.S. and Hong Kong and Japan and wherever else in the flags on our table. One table over, there's a Soviet flag because the Soviet Union was still in business. The next one over was Polish. The next one over was East German. So all of the eastern bloc was there with their tables.

And as luck would have it, we had a Brit, although he was born in Poland and was part of the Free Polish Army that chose not to go back to Poland after World War II, so he was a Brit but living in Hong Kong, but Polish nonetheless. So seeing the Polish flag, he went over to chat with the Poles at the table, and they would not even recognize he was there.

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: The police state was certainly at work. I mean, the distrust for us was, I mean, enormous.

Another story: As we arrived in the hotel—I'd been there before and had cocktails up on the roof, which was the normal thing to do, but—said, you know, "I want to go walk out of the hotel into the square out in front and, you know, to look at the place. I don't need to sit in this decrepit room." And so we go down the creaky old elevator and walk out on the street, and quiet but lots of people walking around. And as we're walking along, the local Vietnamese are [snorts] hawking and spitting, just at our feet, just barely to miss us but just at our feet. And so I turned and said something to Jean, of course in English, and heard by the people who were spitting at us, saying, "Oh, oh, are you American?" In English. And I said, "Yes." And, "Oh, we're so sorry. We thought you were Russian." Interesting comment on what was going on in Vietnam at the time. It brought us right up to the reality right—I mean, instantly.

And then the word immediately went out, "Oh, my God, there are Americans here," so all the Amerasians came out of the woodwork. "Do you know Sgt. So-and-so from Texas?"

Reputedly, you know, the father of this poor Amerasian. Of course, we knew none of them, but that was sad.

CHUNG: Ah. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: Did go to a nightclub, where 20-something Vietnamese were there, all in their 20s and 30s, obviously children of the power elite, the cadre. Alcohol flowing freely. Drugs—no question, the drug community—with impunity. So you know, said, “Okay, you know, we see what’s going on at the upper end of this society today.”

And then out on the street, the poor beggar women selling cigarettes one at a time out of a pack, getting shaken down by the local police for—so, you know, you knew things weren’t right, but we were not hassled. Actually, going on that trip was advised by an acquaintance that I had, who was the U.S. ambassador to Thailand, because we had to go to Bangkok to get our visas to get to Vietnam. He said, “Where you goin’?” I told him. He said, “Don’t go.” He said, “I can’t protect your there. Do not go.” I said, “Well, my take on it is that the Vietnamese need us more than we need them. I don’t think we’re going to be in any trouble.” And that turned out to be absolutely the case,—

CHUNG: I see.

KRUGER: —that the Vietnamese—I mean, we weren’t treated as royalty, but we were totally protected against any potential backlash, because at that point, in 1988 they were making a turn. They’ve got to do something. From ’75 to ’85, Vietnam was in real extremis. And by ’88 they had figured out, “We’ve got to turn this tide.” And they were doing it.

And then we went to Phnom Penh, and we were there a month after the Vietnamese army had driven Pol Pot out. Pol Pot, of course, had shipped all the population of Phnom Penh out. It was a ghost town. Vietnamese had taken back over, and the people were filtering back in. And, boy, that was *really* sad. But that’s another story.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: What else?

CHUNG: You also went back to Vietnam once again, in 1993.

KRUGER: Ninety-three was to—was invited with the bank to—the Vietnam minister of finance wanted to convince us to open a branch in Vietnam. This was a year before we had actually reestablished diplomatic ties, but it was clear it was going to happen. And so the minister of finance had invited us to come, so I went. My wife and I were—we went to the hotel, stayed at the Metropole [Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi]. Wonderful hotel. Wonderful hotel. Even in 1993. It's even better now.

Monday morning, two great big limousines appeared, one for her and one for me because she had indicated that she would like to go see a bell temple, which—she had no idea where it was. As it turned out, it was right up on the Chinese border. So they took her off to the bell temple, and I went to see the minister of finance, who, as I walked into his office, without a translator—and the door shuts behind me, and a great big office, and there he is, sitting on his—just the two of us in there. I said, *You know, this is going to be interesting. My Vietnamese is rather limited. His English better be pretty good.* And it was.

We sit down, and the first thing he said was, "Welcome back to Vietnam, Mr. Kruger." I said, "Oh, you recognize—your intelligence is good. You recognized that my wife and I were in Hồ Chí Minh City in 1988." And he says, "Yes. Did note that, but I was really referring to the year you spent with us in 1967." *Oh, hello!* And then, with a big smile—perfect English—with a big smile on his face he says, "Well, don't"—he says, "I will maybe a little bit apologize." He says, "I do that to everybody." He as probably in his middle 40s, had been educated in England, and we then spent about three hours, just the two of us, talking about Vietnam and the economy and a place in the world and banking, and then, for the rest of the week, I spent with his minions to see if we'd open a branch, which we did not, by the way. There's no way we could make any money with them.

But among the things he said was, "I am taken by"—well, he said, first of all, "That was then; this is now." He says, "You have to remember that"—this is 1993—"more than half of our population in Vietnam weren't even alive in 1975." And he says, "We are over it, in part because we have to be over it, but that's in the past. We need to look forward. We are amazed at you in the United States, how you're not yet over it," which in fact was the case and still is the case. I mean, he knew what he was talking about. But we had a good conversation, and, as I say, I have never been in touch with him since, but we—we couldn't see a way to ever make any money there, so never opened an office.

CHUNG: I see. Great.

KRUGER: And then we've been back—my wife and I have been back—we were there a couple of months after 9/11, when we had the country to ourselves. Had a wonderful trip from Hanoi to China Beach. I mean, same itinerary you went on.

CHUNG: Mm-hm.

KRUGER: And nobody else was there because 9/11 had killed the tourist business.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: And then we were again there last year. Last year? Yeah, March last year, and going again in December of this year. I think it's the only way for the United States to get over it, is to—you know, we've got to put it in our past.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm. And, I guess, what about Vietnam that kind of keeps you kind of drawn back, like going back there constantly, again and again?

KRUGER: There are several countries in the world—we've been to about everywhere, almost literally, so we're going back to the places that we really enjoy. On that list of "really enjoy" are China, India, Brazil, Vietnam. That's about it. Any time you say, "Let's go," we'll go. And we've been to all of those multiple times, but we will continue because we enjoy the people, the countryside, the whole ambiance.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

KRUGER: A good place to go and—and we see something new and different every time.

CHUNG: Yeah. Great. Yeah, we'll actually talk more about your life after retirement after my class. It's about that time. I'm packing up, right?

[Recording interruption.]

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: We are back.

CHUNG: Yes, we're back, and now I would like to learn about, hear about your life after retirement.

KRUGER: [Chuckles.] Well, after my first retirement.

CHUNG: Uh-huh. All right.

KRUGER: I am not yet retired from the rest.

CHUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

KRUGER: Retirement from the business world, as I told you—took a decision in 1995 that—enough of the stress. I didn't need any more money. I didn't need any more of the aggravation. It was no longer fun being in the business world, so I said, "I want out." Had no problem transitioning into the next phase of life because I'd thought it through pretty carefully. I said that I wanted to spend half my time working on family history, research and writing family histories; a quarter of my time I would devote to pro bono work, boards of not-for-profit entities; and a quarter of my time on what I call the strong back, weak mind activity of working on an 18-acre, 18th-century farmhouse in Exeter, New Hampshire.

And I would devote, therefore, zero time to any for-profit activities and, indeed, the first year was approached a number of times by companies and people that I knew in the business world that asked me to come on their boards or come and be a consultant for their company. My first question was always, “Okay, is this a paying position?” And they said, “Oh, of course it’s a paying position.” And I said, “Well, okay, that’s fine. I don’t want it because I do not want to punch your clock. I’ve done that for 30 years. I’m not going to do it anymore.” So turned down all of the for-profit positions, not wanting any of the stress, responsibility that goes with that.

But with a love of travel—of the 30 years in the business world, every year for those 30 years, I traveled about 200 days a year, which was—I was, by all measures, out of my office, wherever that might be, more than I was in it, especially when we lived in Asia, as we had responsibility for the entire Eastern Hemisphere, from Australia to Korea to India and all points in between.

So travel was something that I thoroughly enjoyed, but not 200 days a year. So said, okay, here’s my 100 percent that I had wanted to do to allocate my time away from the business world, but out of that I would beg, borrow and steal 90 days a year, a quarter of the time, and that my wife and I would travel. And it’s been interesting. We’ve hit that 90 days, plus or minus three or four days, every single year in the last 20.

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: We don’t start out a year planning to actually do it, but it just works out that way. We’ll normally take two one-month trips a year, and then the third month, six, seven days here, ten days there, most of it international. So we continue to see the world. There are very few places still on the list that we’ve not been to that I would like to go to, so we are repeating a lot now.

We will, in this coming year, actually—I guess we’ll see three countries that we’ve not been to before. We’ve never been to Norway, which is amazing. Let’s see, is that—I guess—oh, a year from now, March next year we’ll be going to—although to other places—two places we’ve not been before, Colombia and Bolivia. So we’ll be [in] both of those next year. That will complete South America. There’s not anything else we haven’t seen in South America. [Chuckles.]

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: But we're not doing it just to check off countries; we're doing it to enjoy.

Started out with all the best intentions to keep that 50 percent, 25 percent, 25 percent, but I found—and within the first two years published my first family history, and without trying to do it, it won the National prize for genealogy [the Donald Lines Jacobus Award]. Very pleased with, as an example of how to do it.

But for the 25 percent of my time to pro bono, I had already been on the board of Wentworth Institute of Technology, stayed on that board, joined the board of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, which is the world's largest and oldest society of its type, and ended up—over the years—I have just left the board of both of them. I will probably rejoin the board of the Genealogical Society in a year, as I term-limited myself off that board.

But in both of those boards, I ended up being the chair, each for six years, and found that—you know, I was in Boston a day a week for each of them. Although not getting paid because I refused to take pay, to do it right takes a lot of work, so what I found was that my pro bono work—and I was on several of the boards—the pro bono work actually grew to more than half my time, and the research and writing of family histories suffered because the grass continued to grow and the trees continued to need to be chain-sawed in the back yard. So that 25 percent was—you had to do it.

So, oh, I'm going to say now about five years ago, I recognized what was happening and have quietly left several of the smaller boards. I'm now off—well, as I said, I'm now off both of those major boards and back to actually maybe 60, 70 percent of my time now in research and writing.

In the meantime, however, even with not as much time as I'd like, I published three more family histories of some size: two one-volume sets and one two-volume set, and I'm about ready to finish the next one, which will be four volumes, almost 5,000 pages, about 5,000 families traced, and I have three or four more to go.

The board work with the Genealogical Society was basically taking that society from the 19th century, when it was founded, to the 21st century. Just completely turned its governance around. It needed a lot of help, but we've done it successfully and have just completed a successful $55 million capital campaign, so we're doing very well.

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: The Wentworth Institute of Technology—I joined that board when I was still at the bank, as a senior officer in the bank, we were all expected to serve on boards around in the Boston area, and that one fell to me. It became a very nice fit. It's a school for not the brightest of students. It's looking, quite frankly, at the B students from high school that are good kids—they're not dumb, but they're not going to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. They're very much doers rather than thinkers, and they need good training, and that's what Wentworth provides.

And I'm very proud of the success that Wentworth has now become. We now have 4,000 students and the best of—the reason for being is that when you train a student, to prepare them for life after college, first thing you have to look at is: Okay, are they employed? And this last year, for instance, 96 percent of the graduates were employed at graduation.

CHUNG: Wow.

KRUGER: There is not, I don't think, any other—certainly not in the liberal arts area—even Dartmouth can't come close to that.

CHUNG: Yeah.

KRUGER: Now, it doesn't compete with an MIT, although it's in the technology world, but companies love us because, as they say, MIT will do all the thinking and come up with these bright ideas, and the Wentworth graduates are the ones who make them work. And that's quite true. So very pleased with that. It's been very rewarding to have that association. I was on that board, until I got off of it the last few months, 24 years.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Right.

KRUGER: Other than that, I'm traveling 90 days a year, staying in reasonable health, still mowing the damn lawn.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. [Both chuckle.]

KRUGER: What else can I tell you.

CHUNG: I guess we've pretty much covered everything—you life—unless there's anything else that you would like to kind of go back and add.

KRUGER: Yeah, one thing. We didn't—I'm pretty sure I mentioned it the last time we sat down, but go back a little bit and say: Okay, what was my reception coming back from Vietnam, back into the United States? Because that has—I've now learned, that has become quite a point of disappointment with a lot of my fellow veterans that were spit on, were blamed for the war, if you will, which is totally unfair. I do believe that it was a bad war, but we were good soldiers in that bad war.

So a lot of my compatriots have gone into denial or at least saying, *I'm distancing myself from it. I'm not gonna think about it or even talk about it ever again* because of the bad reception they received on the way back to reintegrate into U.S. society.

For whatever reason, I guess I was very fortunate. As I said, you know, I came back and interviewed for a job in my uniform, proudly, and it was in part what got me the job. But the first year back from Vietnam—came back into the Washington, D.C., area. Of course, Tet happened, and, you know, there was an uproar, and the press was—I'm not sure when [the] Kent State [massacre] took place, but I think it was in that same time period. All these events and all these protests—and none of them affected me directly.

First year back, I was in the Washington, D.C., area, which was largely insulated or certainly where I was within Washington was certainly insulated from the protest movement, because I was in the military and all the people around me were in the military, and we weren't protesting.

CHUNG: Mmm. Right.

KRUGER: So I didn't see a lot of it, other than in the press, but it was always somewhere else, in the distance. So, as I say, it didn't affect me directly. I continued to have family support and friends—many of my friends had also served in the military, and even those that I had not served with, but—so I never had that bad experience, if you will, unlike I guess maybe even the majority of the returning veterans.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: But I should also continue to say that I do not regret my year I spent in Vietnam, and I've said it—I have said it before, and I think I still believe that: To do it again—knowing what I knew then, would I do it again? And, yes, yeah, I would do it again for the first time. I would also decline to go back again. I think that was also the right decision. So I don't regret my service. I think I did, for the military, some good.

And I should also—I don't think I said it specifically—say it again for the record: The morale while I was in Vietnam before Tet—the morale of the troops everywhere I was, everywhere I looked was very good. Most if not all of the soldiers in Vietnam at that time thought that we—they were there for the right reasons, doing the right things.

Again, in history, in our 20/20 hindsight, which by the way is not 20/20 because facts get turned every which way—there were, I believe, some strategic, serious strategic issues and errors that were made. But the military was ordered to do—and although I have to be very careful and say, "That was my orders," you've got to be a little bit careful because that is not an excuse.

I do believe that we could have had a better outcome with either—either do it more intensely or not at all, and you would have had, in both cases, a better outcome than what we had, because we were doing it halfway, and you had the worst of both worlds. I do believe that we could have upped the ante and done a lot more and military had a different, quote, "better," unquote, outcome, or not go in at all.

And also, if I had one thing to change in the whole Vietnam morass, would be to go back to 1945 and when Hồ Chí Minh asked the OSS [Office of Strategic Services], "Support me, and keep me in power now that we have ejected the Japanese," we should have said yes. And it would have been a totally different outcome.

CHUNG: I agree.

KRUGER: The one thing to change would have been that, yet some—I was going to say "small minds"; they weren't small minds, they were simply minds that could not accept other people's ways of thinking, and, no, we had to support the French because "they're our friends," and it was—you know, there was no way we could have won that war the way we played it, because it was a colonialist's war, and the enemy were not communists; the enemies were nationalists. And there was no way in the long run we were going to win that. The only way to have done that would have been to find the way to work *with* the nationalists, not against them, because eventually it won't happen, as history proved.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And then my longer view of Vietnam: While their system of government and of society is not my ideal, I have no basic issues with it because for them it works, and so, fine, you can call it communist, but communism is not in place in Vietnam. It is a market economy. There is not communal farming. I mean, it is not communism. They tried that very briefly after 1975, and they immediately saw "it ain't gonna work." And quit.

So it simply was a convenient banner for the nationalists to march behind, because it got the military and economic support from "the communists": China and the Soviet Union.

So anyway, I'm a little bit of ranting and raving about, you know, my geopolitical view of what happened. It's a shame that we did what we did, but the outcome today is certainly not all bad, because I've had people tell me that "Oh, no, we are hated by the Vietnamese." I do not believe we are hated by the Vietnamese. I think we rank a lot higher on their scale than do the French, for instance.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Yeah.

KRUGER: But as long as you treat people as equals, rather than subjects or slaves, then I think you're going to be better off.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And one day—well, no. No, no, no. Never will the American people ever learn that other people in the world think differently and "if you don't think my way, it can't be any good." Oh boy!

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: And that, I'm afraid, is the root of many problems. And there were lessons—all those lessons on nationalism, communism, all these issues—we still never learn.

CHUNG: It's true.

KRUGER: Take a look at some of those against the intractable problems with Islam.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. True.

KRUGER: So I'm not too optimistic about—well, no time soon are they going to come and gut us, but no time soon are we going to change them, either.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Yep. I agree.

KRUGER: So anyhow, you got to somehow find a way to come to terms. You know, although you may have issues in your country, in Korea, I view that as another example of—for better or worse, it's working.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. Yep.

KRUGER: I can say that because in part it's working to the American way of thinking. It may not be working the same way, but, hey, they're an ally, so they can't be all bad. [Both chuckle.]

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: Okay. I mean, I can go on and on and on and on, but I'm not going to. What else have you not asked me that you need to ask me?

CHUNG: I have asked everything I have prepared.

KRUGER: All right, how about some things you haven't prepared?

CHUNG: Let's see.

KRUGER: [Chuckles.]

CHUNG: So I guess your plans for [the] future.

KRUGER: I plan to live until forever.

CHUNG: [Chuckles.]

KRUGER: I plan to continue to travel. I plan to be available to talk to people when they want to talk. I actually talked to the father of a Dartmouth graduate yesterday, who at 91 was still trying to run his 37-year-old son's life. Ahhh!

CHUNG: Mmm.

KRUGER: Again, there were things that we people never learn, and that is that parents will never stop trying to mold their children into their way of thinking, and children will never, never conform.

CHUNG: Right.

KRUGER: [Laughs.] And that is across all cultures—I'm sure Korean as well as Vietnamese as well as you name it.

CHUNG: Mm-hm. That's true.

KRUGER: It was an interesting discussion with—actually the 91-year-old's 37-year-old son was not only a Dartmouth graduate, he was also an Exeter graduate, and not gainfully employed. He's enjoying himself and on occasion works as a carpenter. Well, okay. Hey, whatever. Daddy can't stand it. Okay. As long as we have those differences of opinion, we will have interesting times.

CHUNG: Yeah.

KRUGER: So for the future, I’ll continue to travel. I will continue to put out the family history books because that is something I want to leave for posterity.

CHUNG: Mmm. Right. Great.

KRUGER: And other than that, I don’t know nothin’.

CHUNG: [Chuckles.] Yeah. Great! Thank you so much.

KRUGER: Yup. Mm-hm.

CHUNG: Thank you.

[End of interview.]