

Transcript of Col. Irving C. Pahl interview:  
November 21, 2017

Intro - This is an interview with Col. Irving C. Pahl through the Wentford College oral history project by Rhonda Williams at Formby South Carolina on April 11, 1981 at 2:30 pm

R: Where were you born?

P: In Wisconsin.

R: On what date?

P: 9...The year was 1919, I was born on Dec 1919, in Wisconsin. The 2nd of December to be exact.

R: What can you remember about your childhood?

P: I can remember bits and flashes but nothing really falls into a mainstream of coherence until I am in my 8, 9, 10 years old and back then, then I can remember. I think probably the thing I remember most vividly is the terrible depression after the stock market crash in '29. I was in high school shortly after that and it was a most trying time. I remember it with great clarity.

R: All right. What, what was some of your feelings during that time?

P: Well, I suppose a 12 or 13 year old isn't, doesn't really have much feelings, he has impressions. I can remember how everyone had nothing. It sounds impossible, but I can remember old men and old ladies standing bundled up on street corners selling ... for a nickel and if they sold 2 or 3 a day they might be lucky. I can remember families of 3 and 4 children, a mother and father getting \$25 every two weeks and living like kings on it. I can remember going hungry, and I can remember hand-me-downs. This seemed to be the universally way of life in the larger urban areas. Hunger, lack of hope perhaps. This was true across the board. Except for very few of my student associates in school, all of us were in the same plateau of poorness, there was no degree of wealth.

R: What was your home like?

P: Typical average home I suppose. A mother, a father, two sisters. The usual problems, the usual warnings, the usual beltings. I don't think that home life has changed that much, in some respects.

R: How would you describe your mother and father?

P: I think that's very difficult, because in retrospect people change. And I think that each year as we grow older our concept of what they were and how they acted what their goals were, how well they succeeded in achieving them, change. I would have to describe my mother and father, I suppose, as ordinary people trying to do the best they could. Certainly, my mother is the one I owe my early ability to read and, to understand, because she insisted on my reading and, they had an ability in foreign languages, which I do not have, and I picked up a kind of a smattering of an ability from them to learn foreign languages with a little more ease than I learned math. I suppose I would have to describe them as people striving for success but never quite reaching the goal in which they hope. I think that is true of all of us (garbled).

R: Where did you attend school?

P: I went to school mostly in New England. As a matter of fact I didn't get into the first grade until I was about 9 years old. That is because we lived out of the United States, after I was born in Wisconsin we were overseas for some periods. And I can remember entering school up in New England, in Connecticut, and entering the first grade when I was 9 years old about 9 sizes bigger than all the rest of the students. I think I lasted in the first grade about 3 weeks and was moved to the third grade. And after another 5 weeks in the third grade, at 9 years of age I went to the 5th grade. Because I was already reading, when some students was just starting to read in high school. And if my math would have been as good I would have been alright.

R: What about high school? Where did you attend high school?

P: I went to Hartford Public High School in Hartford Connecticut, and I went to Putney High School. And during the depression years, things

were so difficult that I spent a year out of school, working, so that I would just have the clothes to wear to go back to school in. And I graduated from Hartford Public High School. And I then went to one of Mr. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's National Youth Assistance Program Colleges, until the federal minimum wage law got me. I was going to school five days a week, I was carrying 5 courses in college, and I was working 6 days a week for Western Union, 8 hours a night, and I was getting 14 cents an hour. And the federal minimum wage law came along and they had to boost this to 25 cents an hour. And in order to do that they let about 9 of us go. They could not afford to boost all of us to 25 cents an hour. So that 14 cents an hour loss was, was significant. I had to leave school and that's when I went into the service. In '39 ... went into to the service. Subsequent to that, after serving more that 34 1/2 years of active service, I went back to school and took 2 degrees.

R: When did you first meet Aunt Kitty?

P: I met Kay, Aunt Kitty as you call her, my wife, as of yesterday it was the conclusion of 33 years of married life. I met her when she worked for the director of the state employment services here in South Carolina, in 1947. And I was a young captain assigned to the military district. But not, we were not located in Fort Jackson, we were located in the Federal landmark ... on Halfland Street, it was called civilian ... and one of her room mates was the secretary of our commanding officer, was the way I met Kay

R: How long did you date before you married?

P: Hmm let me see? I've got it figured out really. (Background mumbling October, November, December...) I knew her about 7 or 8 months. And she finally had to marry me so I could get some sleep.

R: And you had two children?

P: Yes, we have two children. We have a son who will be 31 this year, and a daughter who will be 26 this year. And the daughter of course is well traveled and doing quite well on her own.

R: You mentioned you have sisters.

P: I have two sisters. Both out in California. They live in the San Diego Area. And both of them were married to, horror of horrors, navy men. And both are widows.

R: Do you remember who your first love was?

P: Gentlemen never tell.

R: You said that you entered the service after college?

P: I entered the service after having been forced to leave college, because I no longer had a job. Do to the fact that they couldn't afford to pay me 25 cents an hour. And made others they couldn't afford...I entered the service in February of 1939. In order to take the exams, three months later, and make an attempt to be nominated to attend the military academy. Unfortunately, I stood 13th in all the New England states as a result of the exams, and no one in the first 12 failed their physical exams, so I was left holding the bag and I stayed in the service. And I had been in the service a touch less than 3 years when the hounds of war were unleashed in Europe in '39. And the spread of the trouble in Europe got larger and larger and involved England, and so in 1941 I was commissioned one month before we went to war.

R: Did you remember one commanding officer that just stands out in your mind as someone that you admired?

P: Many of them, very many of them.

R: Is there one in particular that?

P: This is difficult to say. We're talking about commanders from whom we were a number of echelons removed, of course. I mean one of the most admired of men just died recently. This is General Omar Bradley. If you're talking about commanders who I knew more intimately on a day to day basis. Yes, there were some I knew during the Korean war that I admired. There were some as late as Vietnam, only 9 years ago, when I was last in combat, that I admired. (voice in background) The one she's mentioning is a commander who was many times removed.

Yes, he was a marvelous commander. He was an airborne commander. Gen. Ganton[?]. I think one of the finest men I have ever known, and I first served for him when he as a Colonel, and I was a major, and he then later retired as a Lt. Gen., and could have been chief of staff of the Army one day, but he retired because his wife was found to have cancer. And I would have to nominate Lt. Gen. Harry W. O. Kenam[?]. probably one of the most outstanding men and soldiers that I have ever known. Known well. Known intimately, and served with closely.

R: Why was this?

P: He had that rare talent called leadership. And it is something that is not part of text books. They attempt to teach it, and they may teach leadership fundamentals to people and teach them some of the arts of leadership. But you don't create a leader through teaching. I think this is something that is innate to a man who's born with it. Some have it, some do not. He had it.

R: When did you come to Columbia, Fort Jackson?

P: I was first assigned to Columbia in 1947 and that's when I met Kay, as you asked earlier. And that's when I was assigned to the military district. I had never even heard of Fort Jackson. Or I had heard of it in the background somewhere, all soldiers know about a post. But as far as having any experience with it, ever having been there, know what it was, what it did. It could have been Turnip Seed Junction for all I knew. Fort Defiance, or something. But it was 1947 when I first came. July, August, September something.

R: What were your feelings when you first saw Fort Jackson, in Columbia?

P: Well, Fort Jackson when I first came here was just a WWII contoment[?] type structure in 1947, and they had a very very small troop strength here. But it was typical of so many of the posts that existed in the United States at that time, that it created no thoughts positive or negative, one way or the other. It was just there. It was a post like so many others. And its what a soldier expects, you know.

Columbia? I thought Columbia was a beautiful little town. It was small. The population of Columbia was only 90,000, and that was pushing it. I'm talking greater Columbia when I first came here. And just a nice quite town. And the thing that impressed me so much about it, was the friendliness of the people. I had never experienced anywhere else in my military career. I had been in the service almost ten years at this point. I had never experienced such a relationship as existed between the people of Columbia and the military. Other towns are notorious and will live in history because of their notoriety. I think the shining example of that was Fort Menning in Phenix City, Alabama, which will go down in the annals of history as a symbiotic relationship in which the soldier was always prayed on. But, Columbia was different it was a relationship there that made one want to come back. As a matter of fact, we are back here retired, as Kay tells everyone, freely and happily, it was my idea not hers.

R: When were you sent to Prague?

P: I was selected to go to Prague in 1966. And went to Prague in August of 1967. But during that interim period we were sent to Monterey, California where we studied the Czech language, the slavic tongue, and completed an 52 weeks of language training in 37 weeks. And my wife studied the same course I took, not missing a day. And she could do a beautiful job of conducting a prisoner of war interrogation asking: the location of machine guns, and how many troops there were, and where was the artillery. But you know what happened when we got to Prague? She couldn't order a pound of potatoes, or a piece of meat. But even today she reads it better than I do.

R: What were your feelings when you first saw Prague?

P: Well, remember, we had been overseas in the east and in the west prior to this trip to Prague. And so we had been immersed in the orient and we had been immersed in old Europe. And I think we were absolutely fascinated by the immersion and the history of middle Europe that we were going to be exposed to there. Because Prague, if you remember, goes back 1200 years, and even longer than that in

places. And to these people, they talk about the battle of [beula hara?], like something that you and I have never heard of, unless you study middle European history. They live that, they live [yon geus?]. But we're talking 4 centuries ago, and to them its just like it happened yesterday. But, we were just happy to be able to be saturated in the history of middle Europe. Because you've got to remember here's the heart of the Hapsburg Empire. Kings of Bohemia, and Hungary, and Austria, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. You've got your Vienna, you've got Budapest, and you've got Prague. And these three cities form the triangle of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. And here was the great middle culture of Europe. And under that Empire there was perhaps 100 years, of the nearest we have ever had, of real peace in the world, and cultural progress... And here were were being dumped right in the middle of it.

R: Why were you sent to Prague?

P: Officially, I was a representative of the US Army and the US Government to the armed forces, particularly the Army, of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Republic of Czechoslovakia.

R: What was the mood of the people a week before the invasion? Was it...?

P: They were still euphoric over the tremendous liberality and freedom of expression that they had. The newspapers printing anything again. First of all you have to live in an environment like that without the freedom of the press that we have, without the freedom of the newscaster on the radio, without the freedom to exchange information of disagreement with a government. And then all of a sudden to have it opened up. That's why they call it the Prague Spring. It's like spring after winter. The warmth. The political freedom of self expression. The mood in Prague a week before the invasion was one of euphoria, of gladness, of happiness. Here were people who were expressing their nationalism rather than their domin...subordination to Soviet dominance. And I say euphoria a week before the invasion, because

they didn't know the invasion until they saw the tanks rolling down their streets.

R: They had no idea?

P: No idea. No idea. As a matter fact we had no idea. No one in the world had an idea. Kay and I were getting ready to go to bed after a black tie aff... after a black tie affair, somewhere, it was about midnight And we knew that their using the airport close down after dark there were no flights in and out of there. It was a big airport, a big complex, and all of a sudden every minute we heard planes going over. I got up and got dressed and grabbed Mike climbed in the car and drove out there. Wanted to know what in the world was happening. I said I was going out. And I drove out there. I had Mike in the car you know, so two is better than one, in case anything happens, even though he was just a kid at the time. Here were Soviet aircraft landing all over the place. As a matter of fact there was a Polish airborne division landing out there at the time. And Soviet troops try to stop them three or four times and you know what I did I just stuck out my hand out the window and waved at them and I hollered...[something in Czech]...I didn't want to be stopped. My god, if they ever found me with a Czech ID card on them showing that I was a western military attache, I might have never seen daylight again. And what I hollered in Czech to them was "A hearty welcome, a beautiful welcome, comrade." You know as though I were a Czech communist, just welcoming them. So happy to have them there. And scared to death.

[background voice] You had diplomatic protection...

I know, but I could have still been a a communist ... welcoming them, and that led to a long period of no sleep, and, movement of dependents out of the civilian community into a center. Americans you know were sent in to hold them and there a lot of things, the next week after that was the worst. There was so little knowledge that such a thing was going to happen, that the there was in international conclave of geologists in Vienna, In Prague at that time, worldwide a major conference of all the geologist in the free world and the communist world, and the non-aligned world. And

[background voice] And Shirley Temple Black

And uh, yeah Shirley Temple Black was there at the time. It was a most difficult time for the Czech people. Our hearts went out to them. Because, the Czech, people we found were just marvelous individual people. I was [stopped]

I saw Czech men and women crying at tanks on the streets. The Czech were so independent at this time that they would, they refused to even give drinking water to the invading troops. They wouldn't even let them come in to their yards and turn on their water. And the Russians had told all the satellite nations that invaded along with the Russian troops, and there was Hungarian troops, there was Polish troops, there were some East German troops, but I don't know what there were many troops or just a few observers that I saw in uniforms. But there were Romanians. Everybody in the communist world that was part of the block nations. The Soviet block nations were there. They were told to be there. And they had been told that the Czechs would welcome them with open arms. Well the Czechs didn't welcome them with open arms. They wouldn't feed them. They wouldn't give them water, and they had to drink water from the river. And there were a number of cases of reported typhoid as a result. They hated them with a passion. Did you know that the Czechs took down every street sign in every town and crossroads in Czechoslovakia. In a city the size Prague which is a major city in Europe. They took down every street sign. They put up new street signs. And every street sign was either . [Chechlova or Dubchekla] the name of the first secretary of the Czech party. They named every street in the Soviet Union [repeat names] so they couldn't find their way.

R: Well, you were talking earlier before when we were taping about the Czechs with the picks?

P: Oh, in Prague there is a large public square with a national museum. And it is a big square where everything happens. It's called [Exislaus] Square. Or in Czech [cant understand] And we had been there many times. The Soviets shot up the national museum and friends of ours from another nation, their windows were shot out, in the house where they live, by the Soviets. And the, of course with hands

you can't fight a tank. You can't even fight an armored car with hands. But on some of the small winding streets leaving [speaking Czech] Czech students grabbed picks, and, 'cause all of Prague back then is cobblestone, you have to use picks to dig it up and re-lay the stone. Grabbed picks and drove holes in the spare gas tanks that are carried on the back of all the tanks, they have 55 gallon drums filled with gasoline on the back of them so they have spare gas to keep moving. 'Cause a tank only gets about 3 miles per gallon of gasoline. Maybe less than that. And they would puncture the tanks, and the gas would start running out and throw matches into this and catch fire. And if the Soviet soldiers couldn't get out and release the tanks to roll off in the street, their tanks burnt. We saw a number of burned tanks. They had the city ringed with artillery, they were abusive, they were absolutely ruthless, absolutely ruthless.

R: You also said that several of the Czechs burned themselves

P: Yes. There were three of the Czech students at Charles University, which is a major university there. Kind of the [garbles] That poured gasoline, took a 5 gallon jerry can of gasoline, and its called a jerry can in Czechoslovakia too. Poured it over themselves and set themselves on fire to protest the Soviet invasion. I was fortunate, I knew the number two man in the Czech government, Smirkofski, a very fine man, but a sick man. He's communist of course, but first he was nationalist. And while they might have been fine as individuals it doesn't mean by any stretch of the imagination that I subscribe to the communist theory of politics, because it's just not a tenable one for any thinking person. But, he admitted and relayed some information though me one time, but he admitted they were in for a tough time... gosh [garbled they were?].

R: You had guards outside of your home in Prague, did you?

P: No. No. In front of, what we lived about a I would suppose about 4 kilometers, 5 kilometers from the embassy, and [garbled park?] was near our home that we could see from our home and this was the headquarters of an anti- ... mechanized anti-aircraft battalion, which gave them tanks which gave them multi-barreled machine guns and

light artillery. And, they sure kept a real tight eye on our place. But, no there were no, there were not guards provided for our people. As a matter of fact there was no security provided for our people by any foreign nationals that time. The only security provided for our people was our ambassador's concern and his directions to our own people to take certain actions to minimize danger to themselves. In other words those of our embassy family that lived around the town in various locations as we did. The women who were not working in the embassy were all pulled together in the ambassadors residence, which was a park in itself, and he had a palace there, that had been bought in 1922 by an ambassador, all of the ladies were pulled into that to bring them together where they were relatively safe and secure. Because the ambassador's wife who was quite a tremendous lady, who was [Czech] who I think if the, there would have been second thoughts on the part of anyone who violated the grounds. And the rest of us course pulled into the main embassy itself which there was no way we could drive. And we had no idea how long we would be safe or anything else. As a matter of fact, we destroyed all our classified communications. We burned for day and night there. We could set the embassy afire burning in the incinerator. I burned all of my classified communications, everything. Because my Airforce counterpart, he was on vacation in Italy. I was the only western attache left in the country when the invasion occurred. And...

Garbled...and there was a marine... one marine

My job was not to be safe and in the embassy. I was out driving around, day and night. I got very little sleep. I could argue with them and fight with them. I had one real chilling experience that scared the fool out of me, one night about dark, as I was driving they let me through a check point, and then they started firing on me and chasing me in an armored personnel carrier. And fortunately through the use of German, English, and Czech some Czecholovik, when they found out the Russians were after me, they led me on a motorcycle through fields, hid me in a barn, then out the back of a barn, then up along the [Votiva] river, and I came in below [Terazine] and brought me back

into Prague, 180 degrees and 70 miles from where I had gone/run out of the city, near the airport. And wouldn't even take gasoline for it. I tried to give them a 5 gallon jerry can of gas out of car. It was marvelous.

R: They seem like wonderful people.

P: Well, most of the individual people are. I think that if you watch television at all, you've seen these people, the Polish laborers, all is they want is a certain amount of freedom for themselves, politically, financially, economically. The Czechs are the same way. The Romanians are the same way. Kalcheska has managed to do that for Romania. And this is what they are looking for. They want self-determination. And whether its they're called Soviet Republics, KSSI, Czesko Slovenska Sovetska Republic is the name of Czechoslovakia in their language. And first they are nationalists, then they are communists, then they are members of the Soviets. And the relations between the countries aren't always smooth either. Some of those people sort of despise each other. And you know that after the invasion Czechoslovaks didn't think much of the people that came in. But of course they are realists and know that they didn't have much choice of coming in. In other words the people from Hungary didn't have much choice. The people from Romania didn't have much choice. They were told to go in. Maybe there would have been an extra Soviet division [garbled]. I think that our general experience over there indicated that the most despised people coming into Czechoslovakia were East Germans. They even disliked them more than the Russians. For the simple reason that the East Germans probably had a better standard of living than any of the other Soviet block nations. And the East Germans had plenty of money. And they would come into Czechoslovakia and they would buy these beautiful hams, and they would buy food, and they would buy anything that the Czechs produced so there was not available for the Czechs, and take it back into East Germany. And the Czechs resented that.

R: Could you describe a day in your life during the invasion. Just some things you did, and some of the dangers that you had to go through.

P: I think that the best way to describe it would be that is as sort of a kaleidoscopic. You really couldn't, couldn't break it down, because there was all activity. I mean you grabbed a bite where and when you could, to eat. Maybe someone at the embassy might give me something. I might get back to the house after I get back, or released go back to quarters, I might get a bite to eat there. I might not eat. I'd be out, I'd be gone night and day. Except when they established a curfew I wasn't, because the Soviets shot first and asked questions later. And though we pretty much didn't obey the curfew because we carried diplomatic immunity. Because we were on diplomatic passports. But, I think probably the high point of each day was a couple times a day I sat down and would write classified reports, in short terse, telegameese, and get them on a radio to Washington. And that was a must everyday. At least once and if anything happened, twice.

R: How about having to take a convoy?

P: Oh, yes, I took a couple of convoys to the border. By that I mean, we formed up in Prague, American citizens caught in the country, ambassador also took responsibility for giving out British, German, Canadian, and any citizens of the free world who wanted to take advantage of it. And I would line up 30, 40, 50 cars of these people. And with the lead car with a great big American flag on it, and I'd be riding in it or driving it, and take off for the border and take them to it. Without some diplomatic [garbled] around. That might entail numerous arguments with soviet patrols and check points en-route that wanted to turn us around and I mean a matter of fist pounding, and, usually when we ran out of intelligent conversation, it became a shouting match in three or four languages, tracing the other's ancestors back to the trees. You know, just to keep the conversation going so that there wasn't a lull, eventually, eventually shoving your piece of paper at him often enough, which had been translated into Russian, you'd get through. Sometimes when you get to the border check point, on one occasion, I got to the border check point and they checked that I knew there, because I used to come through this border check point before they, they told me that if I went out I wasn't coming back in. The

Soviets wouldn't let me back in. And so, that's when I was taking the children out. I was taking embassy people out with very small children. I was taking some old people out that had been caught in-country. I guess it was about 9-10 cars in that section of the convoy. And Julie and Mike were coming out to go to school. And that's when I, Julie got a briefing, and as soon as she got across the border American military met her in West Germany, and they knew she was coming out, and they drove her into Frankfurt in a sedan and conducted a debriefing of her there. She had some pretty good information for them. but that's when she went out across the border. She was what 13 or 14 at this time [consults someone in background] She was 14. and she went out just a 14 year old girl leading a couple little children by the hand who had to walk across the border. And Mike went across the border carrying suitcases, and carrying a kid in his arms, who was too small to walk, that belonged to somebody else. That's when the Norwegian, not the Norwegian, the Danish embassy, I came up there and found the lady seated there with her small children that we knew. Anyway, I took responsibility for a Western European nation. She was stuck there at the border check point and no transportation, small kids, baggage on hand, major problems, they weren't going to let her go either way. And I mean tiny children. And I threw her baggage on a car and one of our people, who went across put the baggage on a car, and took the car, and she walked across and he took care of her then and military took control, the Danes, when they got into West Germany.

R: How long was it before you saw Julie and Mike again?

P: Three months. Six weeks. Six weeks.

R: Is this when you came to the United States?

P: No. We came out into Nuremberg, went to Frankfurt. No we were there for another year after that.

R: And then you came back to the United States.

P: 1979. 1969. I was lovingly referred to in the Czech papers as a dirty, filthy, capitalistic spy. It always paraphrased it, when my name appeared it was always an "imperialistic, capitalistic spy".

R: When did you leave Prague?

P: The last day of August. The 28th 29th of August '69. We didn't get back here 'til September. So late in the month.

P: How did you feel when you got back to the states?

R: I think that our reactions were a little funny. Before we'd carry on a real conversation, and talk about anything, we'd look around to see if anybody was listening. We'd get in the house and we'd automatically look to see whether there were any bugs there. Electronic sensing devices. Because we had to live with the assumption, for two years, that anything that we said was recorded. That we had no privacy at all. No privacy at all.

[background garbled conversation]

P: What do you do now?

R: I do mostly volunteer work now. I did substitute teach for a while, but after I had open heart surgery in 1979, I quit substitute teaching. Now I carry just as busy a schedule. I'm taking two days a week, what I say, usually it runs about three days a week that I spend on it, I'm the administrator for St. Michaels [garbled] Church. And I used to several days a week conduct lectures and tours out at the zoo, but I now do that just one day a week. And right now I hang my head in shame because I'm taking the top half of an electronic engineering course, building my own computer, and I haven't hit a lick on it in about 10 weeks. And I'm way behind now. I kept some test bed equipment set up, and I'm running some tests and building some equipment.  
[garbled]

P: How do you feel about Poland's situation?

R: I think that we're standing in the same relative situation that we were on the 15th of August of 1968, and I think that we are on the

threshold of watching an invasion of Poland by Soviet Block forces. And it's not just a matter of a Polish labor movement. That is minor. What is important is that political concessions have been made, and of course if you understand, Soviet brand of communism and government, that no one decides anything except the central committee. A small powerful handful of men. And Soviet Russia today will be in a position of watching, of power [garbled] if Poland "gets away" with this. And we may see another Hungary. We may see another Czechoslovakia. Anytime, the movement, solidarity movement, has success in Poland in achieving their aims. I just think its a matter of time, when the world situation dies down a little more, like to quite off with respect to Poland, and then zoom, their in overnight. They have their command and control in position, their headquarters in position, this means their communications are all there. With the fleet of aircraft that the Soviet military are, has, they can move 10 divisions into Poland in 10 hours time. You must remember, that at the time of the invasion, the only troops, Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia were there illegally. They were not known to be there, it was an army division. I knew it was there, because I had been a prisoner of it a month before the invasion for a short time. But the poor Polish people, I think there are 9 Soviet divisions located in Poland. A Soviet division is about 12,000 men. You are talking in the neighborhood of 120,000 combat troops. There already. It is a matter of bringing in any additional external support. It is the same pattern [as Czechoslovakia]. It's the same pattern exactly. In Czechoslovakia they had maneuvers. A month before the invasion the maneuvers ended, and supposedly all the troops went home. Now I say supposedly, because I spend hundreds of hours on the road, and I drove thousands of thousands of miles looking for those Soviet troops. And in July, I did, I found the Soviet army division in Czechoslovakia in July of 1968, one month before the invasion. And there were reports that there were none. I didn't leave well enough alone, I wasn't smart enough, I hounded 'em for three days and they grabbed me and put me in the Soviet column within the [garbled] of the Soviet Union. When I finally got free I was out at western, eastern Slovakia which is near the Soviet border. And we did get a telephone call through from

the ambassador telling me to get my little self back to Prague, because there was suppose to be an accident happening, a fatal accident. So I got back fast. We went nowhere in the Soviet Union, I mean in Czechoslovakia, she or I, that we did not have three cars of the [speaking Czech] following us. They put six operatives in three cars on us where ever we went, and sometimes, when we took deep trips there were four vehicles on us. We became expert in evasion. And she got to the point where she could smell secret police. There was never any question in my mind that if she would comment that she thought such a people were secret police, we would always, absolutely confirm it in the next town. She was marvelous in that respect. She saved my bacon a lot of times.

You know, one morning, talking about the Czech secret police that stuck in [garbled] mostly. One morning I was traveling , we were traveling, I was traveling with the academy [garbled] anyway we were up near the Polish Czech border, in Moravia, which is central Czechoslovakia, and instead of getting out of the hotel at the usual time of the morning, we had everything ready and we made a quick duck out about 5 o'clock. Down to the car, into the car and off. And the secret police were a little slow, and they got one car after us, the man that was up all night took after us. I turned around on a one way street and came right back, and sort of foxed him. He didn't know what to do, 'cause a simple breaking of the law they just didn't understand, you know. And drove like a bat out of Hades and up into the mountains. Outside of the area. And I got lost up in the mountains, 'cause I didn't know the starting point from my map, we had excellent maps, and it was quite foggy. And just about dawn we came to a small town. When I say small town, I mean maybe a population of 50-60, rural mountain [garbled]. And pulled the car up when I saw a couple of old ladies walking down the street, or what would pass for the sidewalk on the street, and because I spoke Czech, better than all my colleagues spoke Czech, I had [garbled] crossed them, and spoke to these old ladies, and you could tell they were quite old, maybe 80-90, tall, erect, wearing the typical full black costume, head to the ground, and I had all the world [garbled] I stuck my head out [speaks Czech]. And one of

them stuck her head down and started dancing, the other one pulled her aside and she stuck her head in the window and she asked me in perfect German [speaks German]. Now I don't know what prompted me to do it, but I looked at her and I said [speaks German], "East German, naturally, good lady, are there any others." And she stood up, and she spit on the windshield and hood of my car and walked off. I felt that tall, I turned red, I was, I was like a school boy trying to kiss his first girl, when he is only 11, and she's 15.

You see we found out about 5 minutes later where we were, we saw a sign. [garbled]

R: What would you say your philosophy of life is?

P: I don't know. I don't whether I have any real philosophy. I suppose live and let live would pretty well sum it up. If you wanted to talk about philosophy, you could probably get into a discussion of Socratic ethics. But, I think that belongs in a classroom, not in real life.

R: Well, thank you for your time. It's been very interesting.

P: It has been interesting reliving these few moments. Because, though this was a short episode in our lives. It was a very poignant episode. A very pointed episode. And a very dangerous episode at many times. The thing is, we wouldn't take a million dollars for it. But, we wouldn't do it again, because they wanted us to go back behind the iron curtain after we had been back in the United States just about a year. And because of Julie's education, and the fact she would be so far away, we just said a flat no. So, this is why, when I had almost 34 years 33 years service I was sent back to Vietnam into combat again in [garbled].

R: Well thank you for sharing...

P: Your welcome.